

Jerusalem's dilemma over hordes of stray cats

Dozen cats wake up in cages stacked on top of one another, a pungent odor in the air, while in a room next door two vets work diligently. Captured in the streets of Jerusalem by city workers or brought in by residents, at least 15 cats a day are sterilized at the municipal veterinary center. But experts say that is far too few to stabilize the city's burgeoning street cat population and allay fears about the impact on its environment and ecosystem from the felines. The concentration of stray cats in the Holy City is among the highest in the Middle East or even the world, experts say.

With nearly 2,000 cats per square kilometer (mile), it has a total of some 240,000, in a city of more than 900,000 residents, the Israeli official in charge of its veterinarian services, Asaf Brill, said. Only a large-scale, rapid program to sterilize some 80 percent of the cats within a six-month period would be capable of bringing the population under control, he said. "To achieve that result, 25 clinics like mine would be needed to sterilize 500 cats per day," he said, at the veterinary services center, a collection of fading buildings on the edge of Jerusalem.

Going underground

Reducing the cats' access to their main source of food is another option for bringing the stray population under control. The hordes of cats find most of their food in rubbish bins that sometimes overflow, especially in mainly Palestinian east Jerusalem, which Israel occupied in the Six-Day War of 1967 and later annexed. Israel considers the entire city its capital, though public services in parts of east Jerusalem are noticeably poorer than in the mainly Jewish western sector.

The city council recently launched a plan to modernize rubbish collection, moving some bins underground and therefore depriving the cats of

the food source. "Ultimately, underground rubbish bins that reduce the availability of food for cats are the only solution to control the size of the population," Amir Balaban, of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, said. But not everyone backs the idea of food deprivation.

Jerusalem's newly elected mayor, Moshe Lion, announced in January the creation of feeding stations around the city, with the food in granule form notably, and budgeted 100,000 shekels (\$28,000, 24,000 euros) a year for the scheme. The decision aims to provide a transition that is clean and more controlled between the current, free-for-all access to the bins and their eventual removal.

'Political decision needed'

For Inbal Keidar, a lawyer specializing in animal welfare issues, it is merely a cosmetic measure and fails to adequately address the problem. "What is needed is a real political decision to solve the problem with a massive sterilization campaign for cats while mobilizing associations and public authorities," she said. But she acknowledged that sterilization was not acceptable to everyone. In 2015, Agriculture Minister Uri Ariel refused to use \$4.5 million (four million euros) in government funding made available for the sterilization of stray cats, Keidar noted.

As an Orthodox Jew, the minister had said that castrating cats was contrary to Jewish religious law and had proposed sending stray cats and dogs to other countries instead. Associations and volunteers have sought to fill the void for what they complain is a lack of political will and public funding. Teacher Ilana Ben Joya feeds dozens of cats twice a day in a working-class area of Jerusalem.

"It's my second job," said the mother of two, aged in her 50s. "I can't handle knowing that



there are so many outside hungry. What worries me is knowing that in a few weeks the females will have babies and we will again hear the meows of kittens." She, too, believes that there should be a large-scale sterilization program.

A threat to some species

Balaban said that fixed feeding areas can also prove problematic since the food attracts other animals, including jackals which have been spotted in some Jerusalem neighborhoods. Some of the wild animals carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans, such as rabies and leishmaniasis. He said the challenge was striking the right

balance between protecting the cats and the environment.

"Wild cats are active in the nighttime. They eat rodents," he said. "Domestic cats, like gutter cats, depend on people, are active in the daytime and hunt small animals—lizards, reptiles and small birds," he added. When there are too many cats, "as is the case currently in Jerusalem and in a number of large Israeli cities, they threaten those species", he said. — AFP

Jerusalem municipal veterinary center employee Ahmed Abu Sineh attempts to lure stray cats into a cage with food so that they can be sterilized. — AFP Photos



A trapped cat about to be transported for sterilization at the Jerusalem municipal veterinary center.



A veterinarian prepares a stray cat for sterilization surgery at the Jerusalem municipal veterinary center.



Jerusalem municipal veterinary center employee Ahmed Abu Sineh shows a trapped cat who will be transported for sterilization.

Tissot Gentleman permanent elegance

As innovator by tradition, Tissot is dedicating its new Gentleman to the elegant man of today. Sophisticated yet understated, made of steel and solid 18 ct pink gold, it is available in four versions. This 40 mm-diameter model shows Tissot's devotion to fine workmanship in its watchmaking, with carefully-wrought details.

Versatility

The Tissot Gentleman is a multi-purpose watch, both ergonomic and elegant in any circumstance. It is equally suitable for wearing in a business environment, where conventional dress codes apply, as at the weekend, when it adapts easily to leisure activities. As part of the life of a modern, active man, the Tissot Gentleman becomes the perfect companion for every day, every occasion and every style.



High-quality materials

The steel of which its case is made is embellished by a bezel made entirely of 18 ct pink gold. This precious metal catches the eye and adds warmth to the Gentleman's colouring, especially since it also appears on the dial. Measuring 40 mm in diameter by 10.64 in thickness, the case is extended by horns with a pronounced curvature, enabling it to hug the lines of the wrist more closely. These design features make the Tissot Gentleman a watch that is comfortable and easy to wear, gliding under the sleeve of a shirt finely woven from the best cotton.

Colours

Two straps adorn the Tissot Gentleman. They add the defining touch to two types of model. The first is a steel bracelet, consisting of three wide links. The one positioned in the centre is burnished while the ones surrounding it have a satin finish. The solid attachment is more sporty and is the natural extension of a silver dial. The second option consists of a selection of smooth calfskin straps, in colours that match the dials: black, camel and chocolate.

Details

All the dials, whatever their colour, sport four noteworthy features. Firstly, a central marking in the shape of a circular sighting-line makes the dial easy to read and gives it a contemporary appearance. Secondly, the ring of applique hour markers, bevelled and buffed to a satin finish, and accentuated by faceted dauphine hands with white luminescent material and a date aperture at 3 o'clock, reveal the subtle elegance of the dial. The pink gold colour of this magnificent dial has precisely the same warmth as the 18 ct pink gold bezel. A very slender second hand enables the time to be read with great precision, to the second. Lastly, the "Powermatic 80 Silicon" indication is a reminder that the Gentleman has an exceptional calibre.

The heart

In fact, Tissot uses the ETA C07.811, better known under the name of Powermatic 80, in the version with a silicon balance-spring. This spring provides greater longevity, more precise running and greater resistance to magnetic fields. The self-winding movement has a very convenient power reserve of 80 hours, hence its name. With over three days of running time when not being worn, the Tissot Gentleman allows its owner to get through the weekend without having to rewind his watch or reset the time.

The Gentleman's watch

The Tissot Gentleman can thus be worn for both work and leisure, formal and informal occasions, sporty or smart events. And it always looks elegant with its bezel in solid 18 ct pink gold and its finely-wrought dials. It's the very watch for a gentleman. Always at ease, without ever overdoing things, no matter what the situation.

Features

- Steel case, burnished details
- Solid 18 ct pink gold bezel
- Diameter 40 mm, thickness 10.64 mm
- Sapphire glass and mineral glass on plate
- Water-resistant 50 m (5 ATM)
- Steel crown with embossed T
- Mechanical self-winding movement
- Powermatic 80 (ETA C07.811) calibre with silicon spring
- Hours, minutes, seconds, date
- Engraved rotor and "Waves of Time" decoration
- Power reserve of 80 hours
- Dial in black, cream opaline, chocolate or silver
- Pink gold applique hour markers, bevelled, buffed to a satin finish with white Super-LumiNova applique
- Pink gold hands, faceted and filled with white Super-LumiNova
- Day-of-the-month window, pink gold applique
- Steel strap with 3 links, buffed to a satin finish or in black, camel or chocolate calfskin with contrasting topstitching
- Foldover steel clasp with safety push-buttons

Spain's Prado museum unveils restored Fra Angelico masterpiece

Spain's Prado unveiled yesterday the restoration of "The Annunciation", a 15th-century altarpiece by Renaissance painter Fra Angelico ahead of the museum's bicentenary celebrations. Experts worked for nearly a year at the Madrid museum to enhance the colors of the altarpiece, one of the best known works by the Italian painter and Dominican friar.

The central panel of the altarpiece depicts the moment in the New Testament when the Archangel Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary she will give birth to Christ with the left

side showing Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise. "We have recovered the intense white light that envelops the entire composition, the bright and transparent colors of Fra Angelico," the chief restorer of the work, Almudena Sanchez, told AFP. The cost of the restoration — 150,000 euros (\$169,000) — was covered by donations from two patronage associations.

"The Annunciation" will be the centerpiece of an exhibition dedicated to works from the Early Renaissance which the Prado museum will hold from May 28 to September 15. Spain's flagship art museum, which received 2.9 million visitors last year, is holding a series of special events and exhibitions to celebrate its 200th anniversary this year. Its walls are lined with masterpieces from the Spanish, Italian and Flemish schools, including Velazquez's "Las Meninas" and Goya's "Third of May". — AFP



Picture shows tools and materials used during the restoration process of "The Annunciation" retablo (background) by Italian painter Fra Angelico, at the Spanish 'Museo del Prado' in Madrid yesterday. — AFP Photos



Almudena Sanchez, restorer of Spanish 'Museo del Prado', poses next to "The Annunciation" retablo by Italian painter Fra Angelico in Madrid yesterday. — AFP Photos



Picture shows hardcopy graphics used during the restoration process of "The Annunciation" retablo by Italian painter Fra Angelico.