

STREET CATS IN DUBAI

Street cats probably exist in most countries in the world but their presence in Dubai is more noticeable because of the position they hold on the bins on the roadside and the territories they establish. Due to their ability to adapt to even the most hostile environments, cats survive here with very little shelter, feeding on vermin and scraps of food. In other countries they are less visible because of the abundance of hedgerows and forests.

Due to the efforts of one lady, Petra Mueller, the Dubai street cats are now a recognized breed THE ARABIAN MAU and this breed is registered with the World Cat Federation.

Unfortunately not everybody is pleased to see the "bin cats". Some believe they are a nuisance, carriers of disease and should be removed from the streets. Their nightly "singing" is not to everyone's liking. Healthy cats do have a part to play in our society, if properly controlled they keep down rats and mice, cockroaches, snakes and other unwelcome visitors from built up areas. Cats which have been sterilized can be recognized by the recommended practice of tipping the top of the left ear. This replaces the V cut in the left ear as this was likely to tear and therefore become unrecognizable. Both Feline Friends and the Dubai Municipality agree that this is the best way of indicating that a street cat has been sterilized. A non-sterilized cat can produce up to 20,000 offspring in 4 to 5 years. It is also recommended that cats be sterilized to reduce the likelihood of disease later in life, the territorial fighting between male cats is greatly reduced and they are less likely to roam into territories belonging to pets.

Feline Friends, a local cat charity, in co-operation with the Dubai Municipality is conducting a trap/neuter and release program which means that street cats are trapped humanely, taken to be neutered and then released back in the same area from where they came. Sick or badly injured cats are euthanized and where possible, friendly, healthy cats are re-homed.

Dubai residents can help by being involved in the sterilization program. This can be in the form of sponsoring the supply of traps or donating towards the cost of caring for injured or sick cats. Sterilization avoids adding to the number of unwanted cats and improves the quality of life for all involved. Responsible owners leaving Dubai should plan well in advance in order to ensure that their pet is ready to travel or if this is not possible, then an alternative home should be found. Pet cats left behind struggle to survive on the streets as they are not used to foraging for food, get attacked by the resident stray or get run over by cars as they are not streetwise.

Donations can be made at most veterinary clinics or to Feline Friends. Our clinic has a "Rescue Fund" which is used to treat sick or injured animals brought in to us. We will also assist with the loan of traps if anybody has a problem with their neighborhood cat problem, and should speak to us with regards to a different price strategy.

Many street cats are quite happy in their environment, and if not in distress should be left alone just to enjoy the Dubai sun.



Linda Tedd