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Arshad Ali/Gulf News

Aisha Kelaif's son Khalifa feeds their pet pony Sandy. Aisha urged residents to give animals the love and care they deserve. She has rescued countless animals over the past ten years, most of whom were abandoned by owners.

World animal day restates pets' role as stress-busters

By Huda Tabrez, Community Web Editor
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Dubai: It's probably the best relationship you'll ever have - the love is unconditional, the commitment complete and there isn't much space for argument. According to Dr Monique Strange, a Dubai-based veterinarian, having a pet is often better than having a life partner.

On World Animal Day, celebrated every year on October 4 to recognise the importance of animals in our lives, Dr Strange spoke about her job and how she tries every day to provide a better life to pets and abandoned animals.

Gallery: World Animal Day
In depth: Arabian Wildlife

A veterinarian with over 16 years' experience, she has worked with clinics and animal protection institutions in the UK, Hong Kong and Australia, before moving to the UAE five years ago.

Since then, she has observed a significant shift in people's attitude towards animals.

She said: "I think people are generally

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aware of the kindness, empathy and responsibility involved when they interact with animals, but most often do not deem it important enough."

However, Dr. Strange underlined the importance animals merit, adding that recent studies have showed pet owners live longer.

"Stroking your pet can help lower your blood pressure and control your heart rate. So, while people might like to go out and socialise to de-stress after a long day at work, they might as well spend time with their pets. It's a healthier alternative."

Aisha Kelaif, a 43-year-old Emirati, will be spending this day with animals she has rescued over the past 10 years.

Her house in Al Barsha, Dubai, is home to 90-odd animals, most of whom were brought from countries around the world by owners who later abandoned them.

She said: "The satisfaction I get from caring for these animals and the love they give me in return is so much more than any human being is capable of."

She has adopted animals as varied as maras, the fourth largest rodents in the world, chinchillas, smaller rodents that look like furry mice, llamas and ponies.

These animals in return have become a significant part of Aisha's life, as two of her own children have grown up and now live in Australia.

She urged people to respect animal rights and report any abuse or mistreatment to authorities.

"I once saw a dog tied to a tree by its

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owners. They had just left him there and all he could do was bark for attention. Animals need the love and care just like we do, so just be kind to them."

She also proposed organising more discussions to spread awareness on animal rights and their ethical treatment.

It was a proposal backed by Ursula Manvatkar, an Indian expatriate, who has been actively involved in rescuing abandoned animals.

She said: "I am no one to judge, but it makes sense to give importance to a race that shares the planet with us."

Manvatkar's first pet was a street cat, at the age of five. She says that she has come to understand the needs and behaviour of animals better, a connection that was missing when she was a child.

"I still remember discarding the bodies of newly born sparrows that had fallen off nests built on towering buildings in our community in India. Then, I did not feel the pain in picking up their limp bodies and throwing them in a garbage bin."

However, today, Manvatkar has helped rescue, sterilise and re-home many cats and dogs. She felt that there was a need to institutionalise these efforts to provide better care to animals, which would bring in more volunteers and also encourage donations.

*How do you intend to mark this day?
What would be a creative way to raise awareness regarding the endangered species?*

Your comments

Hi, i am very touched by some of your

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comments. i am a french expate leaving in dubai since nearly 2 years. i have 2 cats that i have rescued from the street in guadeloupe when they were 2-3 weeks old. i never had cats or dogs before. all i can say is that i am not the one who saved their life but there are those who did. i love them more every day than he day before. there are my eyes and my heart. i love them more than me and my own familly. they mean the world to me. they give you so much that i jst can be amazed every single day by them. i thank God every day and night for bringing them into my life and i let them know all the time how much i love them. I wish people could understand it and become better person because of animal and pet. they worth much more than human being most of the time because they are innocent just like children.

Mariam Bouhouche

Dubai, UAE

Posted: October 04, 2009, 16:37

This is such a significant day. I have three rescued cats and they are such an important part of my life. Having never had pets before, this experience has made me even more sensitive to the needs of society. When you can show unconditional love to another species, it makes you a better person. I hope that people realise animals are truly innocent and that if children can show them kindness, they will in turn be better towards other people.

Radhika

Dubai, UAE

Posted: October 04, 2009, 12:47

Dr Monique is Absolutely right The love of animals is unconditional. They give you so much love.i cant see my self living without the love of animals.

Aisha

Dubai, UAE

Posted: October 04, 2009, 11:03

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