

# World Animal Day



Photo Salim Batlouni

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October 4, 2010 is World Animal Day when people around the world come together to push for animal rights and animal welfare in our homes, our businesses and of course in the wild. The Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences at the American University of Beirut in collaboration with Beirut for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (BETA) joined forces to promote awareness on campus through two animal parades and a series of mini-lectures in the FAFS department. The event was full of surprises, most notably that the “animal parade” was in fact BETA

activists and AUB students wearing animal masks and carrying banners with slogans such as “it’s their planet too” and “they have souls too.” Animal lovers were not disappointed though, for participants got to meet and play with Fifi and Sonya, two lovely dogs who were the only two that got onto campus.

The attendance included people from the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture, the private animal sector, the Lebanese Syndicate of Veterinarians, students and a dozens of animal lovers. The speakers were Associate Dean of FAFS, Dr. Jad Chaaban, who welcomed the participants and visitors,

Dr. Fawwak Sleiman, Dr. Shady Hamadeh, Dr. Mohammad Farran, and Dr. Elie Barbour from the Animal and Veterinary Sciences Department. The presentations included different topics related to the role of education in animal welfare.

Mr. Bechara Hitti from the BETA team’s presentation had a profound effect on the audience. The facts and figures presented were deeply disturbing, with graphic images and heartbreaking stories of animal cruelty in Lebanon.

On a more upbeat note, BETA’s ever-expanding animal shelter provides some 300 dogs with the care and love they need. What’s encouraging is that the Lebanese Penal Code, article 672 and 673 safeguard animal rights and dictates fining an individual abusing his/her or any animal a fine of 10,000 L.L. to 20,000 L.L. It is not much, but at least such a law exists. Unfortunately, the law does not properly define abuse and thus would be difficult to contend in court.

Other proposed measures to help animals in Lebanon include properly enforcing hunting seasons and hunting permits and insurance. The lecturers stress that the biggest hurdle animal activists face is changing Lebanese hunters’ mindset and properly educating hunters on the ethics of hunting. For example, not shooting a nursing fox, which will inevitably lead to the death of its pups and the next generation (photos of which were featured in the BETA presentation).

At the end of the series of lectures, a generous reception was given and an abused, 12-year-old Siberian Husky, Diva, was adopted by one of the participants in perfect sign-off for an event that promises to be an annual success at AUB.