

# Neutering helps check stray felines

## FOCUS ON KEEPING NUMBERS SUSTAINABLE

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Staff Reporter

**Abu Dhabi** Creating a sustainable feline population that is not threatened by disease and competition among existing members is the goal of the Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programme that has considerably reduced the number of stray cats across Abu Dhabi emirate, a leading veterinarian said in the capital yesterday.

In addition to making the population sustainable, the TNR programme begun last year also ensures that stray animals, including dogs, get treated for diseases when they are brought to the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital for neutering, Dr Margit Muller, director of the hospital, told *Gulf News*.

"Overpopulation is a major threat to the feline population, especially because they fight with one another and get sick easily. We are therefore attempting to balance the population so that there are enough to prevent the spread of mice and rodents, but not too many for the cats to harm themselves," Dr Muller said.

As part of the TNR programme, pest control companies contracted by the Centre of Waste Management trap stray cats and dogs across Abu Dhabi emirate, and bring them in separate cages to the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital, the only agency authorised for neutering. Trained veterinarians then check the general health of the animals, neuter them, and insert microchips in each animal. Thereafter, the cats are returned by the pest control companies to the same areas where they were trapped, whereas dogs are kept in the shelter till they are homed.

Last year, the programme



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### Powwow time

Dr Margit Muller, Director, Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital, is seen with a family bringing their pet dogs for a check-up at the hospital's Pet Care Centre.

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**Dr Margit Muller**

Director, Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital

neutered 2,500 animals and expects to neuter 3,000 animals during 2011.

When asked why pest control companies were used for the trapping process, Dr Muller said it was because the trappers are experienced.

### Misleading name

"The name 'pest control' can be misleading but we use these firms because they are skilled at trapping animals in a humane manner. In addition, we conducted numerous meetings with the workers to ensure that the process is as smooth and as comfortable for the animals as possible," Dr Muller explained.

Although the hospital has so far not neutered pregnant cats, Dr Muller said the hospital would soon have the capacity to both neuter and house pregnant

cats till they had recovered fully. "Till now, we have had to send back pregnant cats without neutering them because we did not have the space to house them till they had recovered fully. We will however be able to do so when our new shelter buildings open next month," she added.

Animal lovers in Abu Dhabi also lauded the TNR programme, which they said was a humane way of ensuring that there wasn't an unsustainable number of strays on the streets.

"This is a step in the right direction for animal welfare in the emirate, and it is certainly a better way than euthanasia to deal with overpopulation and illness among strays in the emirate," said B. Nina, a 31-year-old freelancer and animal lover from Spain.

