

Press Release | 8 November 2022

Qatar: Rich, Modern and Cosmopolitan – What about Animal Welfare?



Cow Ulrike from Germany is sold for slaughter at a market in Qatar. © Animals' Angels e.V.

The Football World Cup is just around the corner. Doha is being brightly polished. The sophisticated city in the desert wants to impress and is looking forward to welcoming its guests. Visitors experience the country and its people as cosmopolitan. But Qatar is a country of contrasts. The internationally operating animal welfare organization Animals' Angels encounters these contrasts during its investigations in the country.

Animal welfare is of no significance in Qatar. Animals are considered consumer goods like everything else. On the tourist market Souq Waqif, one can acquire animals of all kinds and each origin: Huskies, parrots, and turtles stacked on top of each other in small terrariums. Those who buy them usually use them as decoration for the garden in their weekend villa, as a pastime or as a toy for their children. Shortly afterwards, the animals are usually given away to the overflowing animal shelters – because they unexpectedly grow, or even needed care and attention. Horror stories circulate about the state-run animal shelter, which is completely shielded from the public. Meanwhile, in the zoo, people enjoy overfed zebras or desert foxes spending their lives in small glass boxes. Species conservation or public relations are being ignored – entertainment is the only value.

The so-called 'farm' animals in Qatar are no better off. Qatar imports them from almost all over the world.¹ The animals arrive by truck, ship, or plane. Many of them end up at the slaughter markets. Here, the sheep suffer from the desert climate and high humidity. The animal handlers at the markets have no training. Animals are regularly injured or sick and left to their fate. The handlers look the other way because they have no means to help the animals. Veterinary inspections are not about the welfare of the animals, but whether they are fit for human consumption.

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<https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-product/sheep-live/reporter/qat>

<https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-product/bovine-animals-live-pure-bred-breeding/reporter/qat>

<https://baladna.com/the-first-batches-of-imported-cows-arrive-in-doha-via-qatar-airways/>

At one of these markets, the Animals' Angels team meets Ulrike and Elisa, two cows from Germany. Both are miserable: Ulrike is extremely thin. Her ribs are boldly visible, her hip bones stand out. Her face shows severe pain. Elisa can hardly walk. Her right front leg is injured. Her overlong claws indicate neglect. The next day, the two cows are brought to the slaughterhouse. The veterinarian there is unaware of the glaring animal welfare problems. For him, there would be no reason to worry, because he would perform a meat inspection after the slaughter.

Qatar wants to be a modern country, with good education and a high standard of living. What's more, it is one of the richest countries in the world. Yet it has no animal welfare law. To meet its own high standards, Qatar cannot continue to ignore animal welfare. The world is watching Qatar in the coming weeks. This gives the country the chance to show it is ready for a new start that does not forget the animals. Because a country can only be considered modern if it protects its animals.

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About Animals' Angels

Animals' Angels is an internationally operating animal welfare organization based in Frankfurt. The organization is committed to the protection of 'farm' animals. Animals' Angels has broad expertise and many years of experience, particularly with animal transports and animal markets around the world. Animals' Angels aims to improve the welfare and protection of animals worldwide and does not pursue commercial interests.

www.animals-angels.de