



# New Leaf

The Official Newsletter of STOLA – Saluki Tree of Life Alliance  
Fall, 2009

## Middle Eastern Surprises

Rescuing Salukis from the Middle East is proving to be a challenging yet worthwhile endeavor –and one filled with surprises. We have received quite a few comments from people both against and in favor of the operation, with the pros far outnumbering the cons. Just to be sure we were serving the Saluki community in the most advantageous way possible, we used our annual fundraising drive to renew STOLA Buddy support to include a separate request for Middle Eastern Saluki Funding. In essence, we asked people to vote with their checkbooks. If people wished to support U.S. Saluki rescue they could donate to that cause. If they wished to support rescuing Salukis from the Middle East, they could support that cause. Or, they could support both. We set up separate funding for each rescue category so that public support would dictate how we would proceed.

Well - the response in support of aiding rescue Salukis from the Middle East has been staggering. We have received an outpouring of supportive letters and e-mails accompanied by very generous donations in support of the Middle Eastern rescue operation. In fact, the ME Fund has received more donations than the U.S. Fund. Those not in favor of aiding the Middle Eastern Salukis are concerned that an influx of dogs in the U.S. will bring problems. We have replied that these Salukis are being sent to the U.S. anyway, with or without STOLA's help. If we do not intervene, they will go to questionable "rescue" groups who are thinly disguised puppy mills or to groups who do not know how to properly care for or place Salukis. By working closely with these Middle Eastern groups we have been able to limit the numbers entering the U.S. and to ensure that the ones who do arrive will be properly cared for and will be neutered so they will not compromise U.S.



Mitch from Qatar

breeding and will not be fodder for puppy millers.

Right after our annual fund-raising letter went in the mail we learned the awful news that the animal shelter in Qatar had burned to the ground. All the dogs were saved, but the cats did not survive. This, of course, has put an even greater burden on the need to find suitable homes for Salukis.

We are currently working to bring an abandoned Saluki mother and her pups from Bahrain, as well as four pups from Qatar and an additional pup, Mitch, found abandoned at a garbage dump, a place no Saluki should have to live. Mitch is currently in foster care awaiting transport to the U.S. He is an adorable and loving pup who, like the others waiting in line, deserves a chance at a decent life.

# Questions, Questions, Questions

As might be expected, we get a lot of questions about rescue, adoptions, Saluki health care, training, and so on. Some of the questions come up again and again, so we thought we would take the time to address them in print. Here are some of the most common:

## HOW DO I KNOW IT'S A REAL SALUKI?

STOLA occasionally finds itself in a quandry. Is this a pure bred Saluki or not? How do we determine the dog's background? We have access to no registration papers and in most cases, these Salukis come to us through shelters. We have no idea of their parentage. We have had cases where Salukis have been turned over to STOLA via animal control authorities or in one instance, a court ordered animal surrender. These Salukis were most probably registered or the sire/dam was registered, but without registrations, we cannot be 100% sure that the Salukis surrendered to us are/were purebred Salukis.

We make it plain to potential adopters that STOLA cannot guarantee the authenticity of the Salukis that we place as unquestionably 100% a purebred Saluki. If an adopter wants an AKC registered Saluki we always refer these folks to breeders and we explain why we have no access to AKC registered Salukis.

STOLA places Saluki rescues. We do not sell Salukis, we rescue them from abusive or neglectful situations or from shelters where they are likely to be euthanized. Our adoption donation of \$250 does not begin to cover the expenses incurred. On average each Saluki we rescue costs between \$750 to \$1000 for veterinary care, so we must make up the difference by constant fund raising. Most potential adopters realize that we are a rescue group, not breeders. They know that we take the Salukis on an "as is" basis, provide them with veterinary medical care, grooming and lots of socialization before considering them ready for placement. Rescue Salukis may be turned over to STOLA for many reasons: because their owner could no longer care for them or has died; or they have been wandering the streets for days or even weeks; or an animal control facility who has confiscated Salukis from an undesirable living situation seeks out STOLA for appropriate placement.

The physical appearance of Salukis can vary greatly—feathered, smooth, square in body, longer in body, heavy boned, small boned, pendulum ears, airplane ears, English lines versus American lines versus Middle Eastern lines all having variations which can impact the appearance.

Sometimes, all we have is a photograph from a shelter to go on as to whether or not to accept a Saluki from imminent death. Sometimes, those photographs are taken from odd angles or in less than optimum conditions which make identification difficult. We submit each photograph to a team of experienced Saluki owners/breeders for their opinions prior to accepting a questionable dog - but sometimes we have only an hour or two to make a decision.

STOLA'S criteria is really quite simple: if the dog we bring into our database looks like a Saluki and acts like a Saluki then we will take this dog into our caseload database as a Saluki, and we will place this dog as a Saluki. If we are in doubt and think the dog may be a mix, then we will use private funding to provide care prior to placement. Some people have asked, "How do you know this is a Saluki?" And we say "How do you know he or she isn't a Saluki?" With the number of variables in lines from different countries, determining with pinpoint accuracy a dog's genetic background without expensive genetic testing, is extremely difficult, if not impossible. This is why we are very clear with potential adopters that we do our very best to ensure that the Saluki is purebred, but we are not in the business of breeding - our mission is to save lives, to give second chances - and if we have to make a split second decision to give a beautiful, loving animal the chance at a good home, we will choose that path.

## WHY CAN'T I SHOW MY RESCUE SALUKI?

This question relates directly to the previous question. STOLA is not a breeder, nor a kennel club, STOLA is a rescue charity whose mission is to rescue Salukis from harmful situations and place them in loving, adoptive homes. Because we are a rescue group we are mandated to spay/neuter each of the dogs we place. American Kennel Club regulations do not allow neutered dogs to be shown, nor do they allow dogs without AKC registration papers to be shown. We do not have AKC papers on rescue Salukis. Since most come from shelters or are found abandoned or running loose without any means of microchip or other ID, we have no way to know their backgrounds, nor to verify their identity. So, they are ineligible for AKC shows.

Rescue dogs can still participate in agility trials, and can compete in lure coursing trials.

The bottom line is that any person considering adopting a rescue Saluki must ask themselves why they want a rescue? If they want to show, then obviously they should seek out a breeder. If they want to give a second chance to a beautiful Saluki who has fallen on hard times, then rescue may be their best option. Rescue is not for everyone anymore than breeding is for everyone. We strongly encourage people to thoroughly investigate and understand the joys and responsibilities of ownership before making that decision.



Pups from Qatar after being rescued



Skeletal Bahrain Mama



Bahrain Mama and pups after being rescued in Bahrain

## WHY ARE YOU WORKING WITH MIDDLE EASTERN RESCUE GROUPS?

The answer to this question is very simple - in a nutshell we are working with Middle Eastern rescue groups to help the Saluki community at large. Now, to the longer and more complex reply to that question.

It began a little over two years ago. A chance online meeting with a nonprofit animal rescue group in Kuwait eventually led to our finding homes in the U.S. for abandoned Middle Eastern Salukis. We at STOLA were very surprised to learn of what we were told was a growing problem with abandoned Salukis in the Middle East. We were even more surprised to be asked for help from so far away. Soon, other messages followed from groups in Qatar, then Bahrain. Next, we began hearing from individuals. The number and dire nature of the messages made us prick up our ears. When we formed STOLA back in 2000, we never expected to be asked for help from foreign countries but, thinking back on the Elektra Kennels hoarding case in which we rescued 49 Salukis in Virginia, we were so grateful for all of the help we received from groups internationally that we felt we should try to reciprocate if at all possible, given the limited funds and resources at our disposal.

We began working with the Animal Friends League of Kuwait to find homes in the U.S. for abandoned Salukis who could not find homes there. We also learned that animal cruelty laws are few and far between, and those that exist are not given priority. We were told time and time again from varied sources that abandoned dogs were often left to wander the streets where they formed packs. When people complain to the police, the dogs are used for target practice. Some take hours to die.

Our initial transport from the Middle East came about from a partnering with Animal Friends League of Kuwait who were able to secure the funds to have a group of eleven Salukis transported to the U.S. Once they arrived, we then took care of putting them into foster care to ensure they were healthy and properly socialized before placing them in carefully screened homes. Our screening process is quite intensive and requires a home visit prior to placement resulting in a very high positive placement rate. This group of eleven Salukis have flourished and we regularly hear from their new families what a joy they are.

As the number and severity of requests for help in the Middle East grew, we tried to get assistance from other groups or individuals in the area. Many people did not believe there was a problem in the Middle East at all. They reasoned that in such rich countries, they should be able to take care of their own animal control problems. We quickly learned that the wealth of a country has nothing to do with the way its animals are treated, so we continued to reach out for help. Our pleas for help either fell on deaf ears or caused an outpouring of disbelief and rancor among others. Mercifully, there were a few kind and generous souls who understood that Salukis undergoing pain and suffering need to be helped wherever they may be.



Below, in Julie's words, is the beginning of their story.....

*"It starts when I'm taking my beautiful German shepherd, Foxy, for his evening walk around the building sites of the rapidly developing suburb of Doha, where we live. Without warning, he drags me off to a piece of waste ground at the side of the road, and I soon see why: a group of very young pups have emerged from under the untidy heaps of construction material. I am curious as well, so we move towards them. As we approach, a snarling, barking, saluki mother, barely more than a living skeleton, charges from nowhere, ready to attack even a large and powerful male, making it clear that she'll do whatever it takes to protect her young. So we back off and continue walking.*

*The sight of her haunts me. The next day, I go back alone, with some food and water. Its only March, but the daytime temperature can already reach mid 30s. Momma is there at the site, not aggressive now, but clearly exhausted and weak, but no way intending to let me get close. I put down some soft food and move away: she approaches, sniffs, but barely takes a bite. I put some water in a bowl, and again move back: she takes a small drink and withdraws. It's as if she has gone beyond being able to nourish herself.*

*I go each day at 3pm, with food and water. Gradually, the puppies gain confidence and eat the small biscuits on the ground, as well as the rice and chicken I take. Momma is a problem, because no matter what food I put down, if her pups want to eat it (and they never say no), she stands back. She makes sure they are fed before feeding herself. Just occasionally, she gets up enough confidence to take pieces of meat from my hand, delicately, but otherwise, she won't let me get near enough to touch her. If I can distract the pups long enough, she loves to drink the milk I bring.*

*The old watchman on the site comes each day to see them eat: he keeps a protective eye on the pups, and is amused at their antics. He finds an old safety helmet, hollows out the hard ground, and this becomes their water bowl. He explains, with signs and in broken Arabic, that a car had passed by one day and pregnant Momma had been thrown out. She'd just stayed in that place to give birth to her pups, keeping them safe by hiding them under the rubble.*

*Within a short time, the six pups become three, and he tries to tell me where the others went, but can only explain that someone took them. I don't know who, or why.*

*One day I go and the pups are playing alone, so I drive around the area looking for Momma. I'm starting to worry when suddenly she appears, I swear she looks so happy when she recognizes me, and gracefully races at full speed at the side of my car, back to home base. The pleasure I get from seeing her well and almost playful is immense.*

*My friend Annette gives up her lunch break to take some pictures for a local website: maybe someone will be able to adopt the family. But I'm being overly optimistic: dog lovers in Qatar tend to have dogs already, many being rescued from the streets. Kim, the manager of the local vets practice, sees the photos and immediately gets in contact offering to help. She comes to see them, and, appalled by their plight, resolves to find them safe homes. Kim is a woman of action (she's already taken in many other strays) and we plan to catch the family within a few days.*

*Life starts to take on a pleasurable routine. The 3pm visit becomes the highlight of my day: the pups get excited, bouncing towards me when they see my car, Momma is still cautious, friendly and looking far more lively, as the pups now depend less on her for their food.*

*But Doha is a perilous place for stray dogs. Other strays have started to hang around the family, attracted by the food, water and security of a pack. I'm walking nearby one evening, with Foxy, when I hear shouting: a gang of teenage boys are baiting the family by throwing rocks at them. Momma, by nature such a gentle and peaceful spirit, defends her young, charging towards them, snarling, barking but plainly terrified; the boys then retreat in panic onto a busy main road. They collect themselves and retaliate. The situation is clearly dangerous, not only for the dogs. The watchman is helpless to confront these young locals; I also keep my distance, partly because I'm fearful for Foxy and partly because I don't want to escalate the situation. Even if I calm things now, the boys could take their revenge when I'm gone. I'm sick with apprehension as I don't know if the family will be safe and alive when I next go. I let Kim know that the situation is critical. The puppies can easily be killed for sport.*

*The next day, I'm nervous as I drive towards the site. Will they all be safe? Two pups emerge from their hiding place. Please let the other one be safe. I try to steel myself, if they're gone, they're gone...then, as the food hits the ground, No. 3 comes running all safe and without a care in the world.*

*I've tried to keep my visits low profile, but today one of the neighbors approaches me asking if these are my dogs. I say no, I'm just feeding the mother and babies. He explains that his wife and children are afraid of them as they are near the house, and if I can't do anything to ease the situation, he'll have to call the police.*

*In Doha, when the police are called to deal with stray dogs, they don't trap them, they drive around and shoot them from their cars. As they may not be accurate shots, dogs are pursued, injured and terrorized before they are finally killed. It's a kind of target practice. This will be done in broad daylight, witnessed by whoever is around, and the process can last a couple of hours. Pets*

*can also be caught up in these indiscriminate massacres.*

*So Kim, and Mohammed, her assistant, spring into action. The first night we sedate and catch two of the puppies. Even sedated, saluki puppies can run like the wind and have learned that its best not to get caught. Momma is nowhere to be seen. On Friday, members of the local rescue group come with the intention of catching the whole group of strays: but they are nowhere to be seen, so only the remaining boy pup is taken into safe keeping at the vets. Kim talks to the neighbor, and reassures him that we are taking action. He doesn't want to see the dogs shot, but here there is no other solution provided by the city council or the government. He's a reasonable person and agrees not to call the police for a couple of days to give us chance to clear the rest of the dogs away.*

*The watchman wasn't around when we took the boy pup, and when I next see him, he's clearly distressed. He tells me that the 3rd puppy ('Thal-atha') is lost, that Momma was howling and calling to him all night, and he's looked everywhere but can't find him. When I explain that we have him safe in the clinic, tears of relief stream down his face. Even this man, who lives in deep poverty and appalling conditions himself, understands the need to love and protect these gentle creatures.*

*Next day, I walk past with Foxy, Momma approaches. The other dogs aren't around. As she goes back to her bed ie a piece of sacking, lies down and howls the most haunting lonely song, crying for the loss of her babies.*

*So, we now have to catch Momma and reunite the family. The first batch of sedatives, in her food, seem to make her groggy, but she wont be touched. We wait, and decide to give her more. She lies down and may go to sleep, but as we approach, she jumps up and staggers off into the night. We're concerned because if she runs towards the road, disoriented... to cut a long story short, three more doses of sedatives, and she finally cannot move*

*nally cannot move from the spot where she stands, gives up the struggle, and lies down to sleep. For the first time, I get the chance to stroke her. She doesn't understand that she'll soon be out of danger.*

*After inoculating them all, Kim and Mohamed take her to a farm where a young Qatari man is helping by offering a temporary haven to strays Kim brings. Momma is overjoyed as she is finally reunited with her pups, and for a time the family is happy and content to be together. She is treated with kindness, fed, walked and is slowly learning to trust people. The puppies return to the vets so people can see them. Boy pup, who has never seemed well or put on weight, sadly, dies.*

*Tazi, the brown girl, is fostered with me, as she wasn't eating in her pen, and seemed listless and depressed. She's now settled in with my other 5 dogs and is amazing: happy, fast, bouncy, fearless, cute, soft, gentle and destructive. So smart, its scary.*

*The cream girl is still at the vets: happy but needing to be fostered/adopted soon, as she needs exercise and the chance to develop her Saluki nature.*

*These are the lucky ones: a seemingly endless stream of abandoned, starved and abused Salukis arrive at the rescue shelter, and many more never even make it to that safe haven, but live and die on the streets and in the desert. If they aren't hit by cars, they can starve or die of thirst.*

We are so happy to report that their story does, indeed, have a wonderful ending. By working closely with Julie and Kim our amazing adoption counselor Lori was able to locate an angel who wanted to adopt all three of the Salukis, Mom and the two pups. By arranging for volunteers to fly with the Salukis, Mom Saluki and one pup came to the U.S. and were transported from the airport to their new home by another wonderful volunteer. Once the Salukis were airborne, Julie contacted us saying "the angels are flying" and we did extensive nail biting until the flight was safely on the ground and we learned they were fine. Expenses for this trio were covered by private donations, separate from STOLA funds. We are now locating another volunteer to fly with the second pup. Mom & pups have been through hell and now they deserve the wonderful life they will have with plenty of food and free from taunting and danger.

After so much work and nail biting until the girls arrived, it was so gratifying to receive a report from their new home:

"The girls are just incredible I do not know how you pulled all this off..one day in Doha now relaxing at their new home..they are the best behaved Salukis I ever saw....they rode home with me in the back seat of the car...they are gentle kind tail waggers...they love each other, love people... whoever looked after them did a wonderful job....and they loved to be cuddled and kissed...they are more than I ever hoped for....."

We are currently working to help a Bahrain Saluki mom and her pups. The mother is so skeletal it seems a miracle that she was able to survive delivery of the pups but, like so many other abandoned Salukis, she is a fighter, a survivor, and she deserves to get the help she so desperately needs. Behind her there is a line forming - a line of abandoned and neglected Salukis who are just as desperate in their need for help.

Still, people have contacted us, concerned that these Middle Eastern Salukis are entering the U.S. They reason that life is tough all over and ask if our concern is misplaced. Here is the reply to that question.

Early on we realized we had neither the funding nor the resources to continue to help with the Middle Eastern Salukis, so we told the groups in Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain that we were very sorry, but we could not help any further. Quite quickly after that, we learned that in their desperation to help these Salukis they were forming potentially dangerous liaisons with very questionable so-called rescue groups in the U.S., some of whom were simply puppy mills masquerading as rescue groups, some were legitimate rescue groups with absolutely no knowledge of Salukis or their needs. It soon became apparent that with, or without, STOLA's help these Middle Eastern Salukis would be coming to the U.S. anyway. That put STOLA between a rock and a hard place. We were stretched to the max if we tried to help them. But, if we did not help them, then these unneutered Salukis would come to the U.S. and very possibly wind up in puppy mills where they would not only have miserable, short lives but potentially damage the U.S. breeding program over time. The ones who went to rescue groups without Saluki knowledge could also have miserable lives by being placed in inappropriate homes, and there was some question if some of these groups fulfilled their obligation to spay/neuter so once again, U.S. breeding programs could be jeopardized. The Middle Eastern Salukis coming in to STOLA are thoroughly checked by vets, spayed/neutered and placed into foster care for evaluation prior to placement. Also, and perhaps most importantly, so far we have been able to negotiate with the Middle Eastern groups to limit the numbers being sent to the U.S.

The situation in the Middle East is a real and growing dilemma which seems only to be solved if we can involve an international community of people willing to help. To this end, we have contacted Saluki groups in numerous countries, we have written articles about the situation for distribution in international publications, but so far help is very limited. So, we will keep doing as much as we can to keep control of the situation while knowing beyond a doubt that if international help is not available the situation will only worsen.

If you have Saluki friends overseas, please consider opening a dialog with them and encourage them to get

involved, to talk to their friends in the Saluki community. STOLA is based on a simple premise: ordinary people working together can do extraordinary things. Let's work together to improve this situation.

## Coming Soon to the STOLA Store



**What is it?  
It's a surprise!  
Stay tuned - it's worth it!**

**In a few days check out  
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## Mr. Bark says.....

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