

"The road to hell is paved with good intentions" (16th century proverb)

As expected, the Yomiuri Shimbun article of 24 January 2003, highlighting the plight of the animals in the Kameoka hell-hole and that an NPO animal welfare organization had been euthanizing those animals, drew howls of protest from the "sentimentalist brigades." (These are individuals or groups who want to 'save' animals whatever the cost, even though they might end up in another hell-hole.) But many people drew the wrong conclusions simply because they didn't understand the terrible situation we were faced with, nor the horrendous conditions these animals were in.

Some have compared the Toyama case in 1997, where a company called the Blue Cross which had been using dogs for experiments in blood products, went bankrupt, leaving over 400 dogs in its laboratory cages. Animal welfare groups moved in and (we hope) found good homes for these animals.

However the two cases are entirely different. The Blue Cross dogs were all pedigrees (highly desirable for Japanese) and they were used to being handled. (Only placid, friendly and easy to handle dogs are chosen for experiments). The place was not a hell-hole but a facility with a sterile laboratory environment with healthy dogs in single cages. The original staff continued to care for the animals after the bankruptcy. Such dogs could easily find homes.

At the hell-hole packs of dogs roamed around, the stronger savaging the weak. They had all become semi-feral and indeed out of 93, only five dogs could be easily touched. The thought of an ordinary family coming and taking one home as a 'friendly pet', is beyond comprehension. These

creatures had never been outside, never been walked or handled. Indeed anyone trying to touch them would result in total panic; dogs trying to climb walls, crouching shivering in corners and just peeing and pooping in sheer terror. In addition over half were suffering from acariasis, an almost incurable skin disease in dogs over one year of age. So what ordinary family is going to adopt a schizophrenic animal with severe health problems. Who is going to take the trouble, the time and spend the money for rehabilitation and veterinary costs?

Since early December when the accident occurred, no-one has come forward to offer help, nor to adopt one of these dogs. As usual the sentimentalists are all words and no action. Instead four or five members of ARK staff have been over to the hell-hole everyday in appalling freezing conditions, shovelling shit for hours at a time, trying to care for those animals as best we could. The majority of the females had enlarged teats indicating they had had litters of puppies and if all these had survived, the hell-hole would contain not 93 dogs but over 500. We suspect that newly-born pups were eaten by the ravenous adults.

ARK has taken in 24 dogs and six cats. It will take a long time and a lot of costly veterinary treatment to rehabilitate these animals. Those who seek to criticize had better put their energies into questioning the reason why such cases are allowed to exist, why there is no overall system for dealing with them in a humane way and why animal welfare in Japan is in such a shambles.

Elizabeth Oliver ARK

NPO kills 60 dogs of comatose woman

The Yomiuri Shimbun

KYOTO—About 60 dogs that were left unattended by a 37-year-old woman in Kameoka, Kyoto Prefecture, after she was seriously injured in an automobile accident, were humanely put down by an Osaka nonprofit animal-protection organization, The Yomiuri Shimbun has learned.

Of the 100 or so dogs kept by the woman, 10 have been adopted by new owners, but the remaining 30 may also have to be put down.

The woman remains in a coma following a car accident on Dec. 8 in which a car rammed into the back of her car, which was parked on the side of a road.

The nonprofit organization, which was assigned to take care of her dogs, found most of the dogs either confined in a shed on the woman's property, or wandering about the premises.

Some of the dogs were found to be suffering from skin diseases that were beyond treatment.

Under such situations, the group started euthanizing the dogs after re-

ceiving permission from the woman's daughter. Five dogs were put down twice a week at an animal clinic in Osaka.

"We want the dogs to be killed without pain," one of the group said.

The woman started keeping the dogs about four years ago. As the number of dogs increased, her neighbors started complaining about them.

In response to the complaints, officials of the local health-care center warned the woman three years ago, but did not carefully inspect the dogs or the premises as it was beyond the center's authority to tell her how to care for the animals.

The Animal Protection Law only regulates business operators on animal farming and husbandry techniques, but there are no regulations relating to private pet owners.

In response to the limitation of the law, some governments such as Shima-neprefectural government enacted an ordinance prohibiting people from keeping more than 10 dogs or cats at a single premises.

あるボランティアの視点から 豊かな国の貧しい現実

あの哀れなチビ犬の姿が、悪夢のように今でも私の脳裏に焼きついています——大きな茶色い目、ぴんと立ったかわいい耳、そして……まさに「ばらばらに引き裂こう」とかかってくる自分より数倍も大きい犬3頭を相手に、必死で闘っていたときの恐怖におびえた顔。

その子がいたのは、亀岡の屋敷内にある母屋の2階。昨年12月第3週目、アークのスタッフが毎日通いはじめて2週間になろうとする頃のことでした。私も、それまでに3度足を運んで、掃除や食事の世話をしたり、助かる見込みのないものを安楽死処置のために運び出したりする手伝いをしていました。ほぼ14日間毎日餌を与えていたにもかかわらず、現場に着くと、いつも、荒々しい狂気のようなものが感じられるのでした。その日、私たちが敷地内に入ったとき、40頭以上の犬が暮らす2階の部屋から悲鳴のような鋭い声が聞こえてきました。階段を駆け上がり、入り口を塞いでいる板を急いで取り外すと……あの子が命がけで闘っていたのです。大声で叫び、足をどんどんと踏み鳴らしながら駆け込みましたが、犬たちは構わず、私がすぐそばに寄るまで、攻撃をゆるめようとはしません。2つに引き裂こうと食いつかれたため、小犬の首と両後脚には深い傷が口をあけていました。もはや歩けないのに、ありったけの力をふりしぼって片隅に引きこもろうとし

ます。彼は、攻撃してくる犬と同様に私のことも恐がっていました。床を這う小犬の衰弱と迫り来る死を嗅ぎつけて、他の犬が突ついたり、咬んだりします。私は、弱々しく抵抗する彼を毛布を使って抱き上げ、ケージに入れました。

その晩、チビ犬は、他の5頭の犬とともに安らかな眠りにつきました。他に取るべき道はありませんでした。そうすることが、何の苦痛も伴わない最善の方法でした。彼らのように、見捨てられ、病に苦しみ、不安と恐怖におののいてきた動物にとって、安楽死こそが最も慈悲深く、尊厳に満ちた選択なのです。もしも、保健所が踏み込んできて、これらの犬を捕獲し、ガス室で処分したとすれば……それは、あまりにもひどい扱いをしてきた社会からの「最後の侮辱」となったことでしょう。夜、あの子が獣医の手で安らかな眠りにつくとき、私は傍らに立って、小さな体を撫でてやりました。その後、家路に車を走らせながら、私は泣きました。チビ犬のためではなく——彼が安らかに逝ったことは疑いありません——私の涙は、経済先進国G7の1つであることを誇る近代的で、豊かなハイテク社会でありながら、動物保護に関しては「中世暗黒時代さながらの後進国」であるこの国のために流したものです。

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