



ARK ANIMAL REFUGE KANSAI

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TENRI UPDATE February 1993

Thanks to the protest by friends of animals around the world, Nara Prefecture has taken steps to clean up the Tenri mess.

Without international pressure that awful situation undoubtedly would have remained the same, with the senile old man physically declining, more dogs coming in and the daily death toll rising.

From the move in September to temporary facilities, the Prefecture has now built more permanent structures on a new site, complete with heated kennels, outside runs, a clinic, bathing facilities (for dogs) and has a round the clock team of vets treating the dogs.

They are also using media and advertising, trying to find suitable homes for all the animals once they have recovered and have been neutered. The total cost for this one case has probably come to nearly 100 million yen, which Nara Prefecture has borne. Other prefectures have complained that Nara has gone too far and has set a precedent they may have to follow. It is the first time that the hokensho has decided to save dogs rather than destroy them as is their usual policy. Other people query why the Tenri dogs have been singled out for special attention while healthy young animals are destroyed daily by the hokensho.

Whatever the criticism Nara must be commended for having taken a step in the right direction. However, they were able to take possession of the dogs only with the consent of the old man, who was persuaded his physical and mental health had deteriorated to a point where he could no longer look after so many animals. (This point had actually been reached many years before but nothing had been done to stop him collecting animals.) Without his consent they would have been powerless to act, even though the Animal Protection Law classifies his case as cruelty to animals. This is why the old woman's dogs are still incarcerated in wire cages. She refuses to give them up and Nara Prefecture has no power to force her.

Both these cases are clear cut violations of the Animal Protection Law and it would be in order for the Prefecture authorities to move ahead to prosecute the pair for cruelty to animals. JAWS (Japan Animal Welfare Society) has sent a strongly worded letter to Nara proposing Nara authorities and the police proceed with prosecution. Nara has no intention to do this, so we wonder why JAWS doesn't go ahead with the prosecution itself. There are many excuses, such as being complicated, taking too long, or doubtful if it will have any effect.

From Nara's point of view the case is closed and their only problem now is to find homes for the rescued dogs. Whether they can build on this experience and promote more education on the responsibility of keeping pets, the necessity to neuter and so on, remains to be seen.