

A Senile Man Keeping Abandoned Dogs Collapsed ...

40 ABANDONED DOGS TO BE HOUSED BY NARA PREFECTURE

REQUESTS FROM ANIMAL WELFARE/PROTECTION ORGANIZATIONS

Dogs To Be Treated and New Homes To Be Arranged

About 40 dogs, which had been kept in poor surroundings with not enough food to eat in the mountainous district of Tenri City, Nara Prefecture, are to be in the custody of the Public Health & Environment Department of Nara Prefecture and others by the 14th and are to be given medical treatment at the housing facilities to be newly built. A senile man, who had been receiving abandoned dogs, became too sick to take care of the dogs, and at the request of animal welfare/protection organizations, Nara Prefecture set about to cope with the problem. It is quite rare for authorities to arrange even the housing facilities. Nara Prefecture will be looking for new owners for the dogs as soon as they are properly treated.

The senile man is a 71-year old man with no fixed occupation. He had a prefabricated hut built on leased land (about 200 m²) in the mountainous region--no other houses in the area--in the east of Tenri City 15 years ago and kept 7 dogs. He then started taking over dogs from people who could no longer keep their dogs for various reasons, and the number of dogs reportedly reached 250 at one time.

The number of dogs there was too large to keep and sanitary problems occurred too. Despite the repeated guidance for improvement from the authorities, the neglect continued. Since the end of last year, when the senile man's neuralgia worsened, the dogs had been confined in small cages with inadequate care. Because of excrement which was not disposed of, the condition deteriorated and the skin disease prevailed.

An animal protection organization "ARK" (in Nose-cho, Osaka-fu; representative: Elizabeth Oliver) and others, who had been informed of the plight of animals there, started rescue activities and have sent about 9,000 letters (Note: Error by the reporter. To be read "9,000 protest postcards") to animal welfare/protection organizations in various countries in Europe and USA, informing them of the hell-hole situation. Nara Prefecture has so far received about 400 protest letters (cards) requesting improvement measures from citizens in various countries.

Pressed by these voices, the Public Health & Environment Department of Nara Prefecture and others put 5 dogs in serious condition suffering skin disease in animal clinic(s) on the 10th and the 11th and moved 32 dogs to a vacancy close to the prefab hut. Nara Prefecture plans to build housing facilities for the dogs somewhere in Tenri City by the end of October, and to treat the dogs and look for new homes for them after the treatment. A Deputy Manager of Public Health & Environment Department of Nara Prefecture said, "This is an exceptional case. We'd like to make this the start of real animal protection/care awareness among the public by revealing the actual situation of dogs abandoned by irresponsible owners."

A vet in charge of these dogs, who is on the staff of one of Hokenjo (public health offices) in Nara Prefecture, said, "This tragedy was created by the selfishness of dog owners who found it less tormenting to let others take over their dogs rather than to take their dogs to Hokenjo for disposal."

Photo: Some of the dogs after rescue, waiting for treatment