



PART 5: Euthanization versus Extermination

What would you do?

使役不能な馬を終生牧場などで委託飼育して貰うには多額の預託料が必要であるため実行する馬主は少なく、例え不要馬として殺処分されるにしても、安楽死してもらえる馬は非常に恵まれていると言えるのです。

犬や猫はペット（コンパニオンアニマル）として人間にとって最も身近な存在であり、安楽死絶対反対を唱える人が多いのは当然のことでしょう。しかし保護を必要としている動物の数は余りにも多すぎ、動物愛護家として不特定多数の不幸な境遇にあるペットを保護し良い里親を見つけるのは容易なことではありません。一時的にでも収容出来る数には限度があり、全てを救護してやることは到底不可能です。

限られた動物だけを終生面倒みてやりそれ以外は見殺しにするか、無制限に引き取って一定期間飼ってやり順番に安楽死していく方がよいのか簡単に結論を出すことは困難です。またこの両方を満たそうとして、自己の能力を考えず無計画に受け入れてその全てを飼い続ければ最後には天理や静岡の事件のように劣悪な状況となるでしょう。

安楽死などせずに済めば理想ですが、現状ではそれぞれ自分の信念に基づいた方法で保護活動をするしかないと思います。ただ、自分の理念と異なる考え方やみくもに批判し攻撃するのは感心出来ません。人間の考えは千差万別、他人の意見を肯定しなくてもある程度は尊重することも必要ではないかと思います。殊に自分は平気で安楽死させているにもかかわらず、相手を故意に陥しめる為に他人が行う安楽死をことさら非難するというような卑劣な行為だけは真の動物愛護家ならば慎むべきです。

アークのやり方に対して異を唱える方もあるかと思いますが、アークはアークの理念に従ってこれからも動物の保護活動を続けていきたいと思っています。

※ 今回に限り、アーク諮問委員会に諮り、その承認を得て掲載致しました。

ARK receives two to three telephone calls daily from people who want us to take in homeless dogs and cats. At present, we are forced to refuse almost all such requests, as ARK's facilities have gone beyond full to overcrowded and it is simply impossible for us to accept any more animals. It is plain, from their tone of voice on the phone, that the majority of callers have turned to ARK as a last resort in a difficult situation, and it is terribly painful for us to tell them we cannot help. The agony of refusal is not made easier by the fact that some callers are ARK supporters who have donated money to us, and expect special treatment; other callers, who seemed to have ARK confused with the hokensho (pound), have shouted at us that taking in animals is our duty. It is heartbreaking to say no; after all, what will become of these animals if ARK doesn't take them? Nevertheless, even if we accepted just one animal a day, that would be 30 animals a month -- unfortunately, far too many for ARK's already strained capacity.

Some organizations will accept any animal that comes their way, but with the understanding that it will be euthanized if not claimed or rehomed within a fixed period. There is a limit to everything, after all: if full capacity is reached, but animals keep arriving, some way of reducing their numbers must be sought. Euthanasia (mercy killing, or "putting to sleep" by lethal injection) is at least better than the pain and terror experienced by animals in the extermination chambers of the hokensho.

All living creatures must eventually die; wishing to die in peace, without suffering, is only natural. However, when such a death is brought about by human agency, i.e. as euthanasia, there are a host of ethical issues that arise and opinion becomes sharply divided. It will probably remain divided forever. With regard to non-human animals, particularly pets such as dogs and cats, there is the reality of extermination by the authorities, which is practiced for human convenience as a means of "disposal"; consequently, there is much debate among animal welfare advocates regarding euthanasia and some activists are staunchly opposed to it under any circumstances. On the other hand, others argue that leaving stray dogs and cats on the street means likely death anyway from starvation or a speeding car, while rehoming them is no guarantee of a happy life either. Their position is that euthanasia is more humane than allowing animals to suffer.

ARK does not euthanize animals in order to reduce the number in our care; that would be against our principles. If our veterinarian determines that an animal is in pain and in a

terminal state, with no hope of recovery, then ARK's advisory committee, which is our highest decision-making body, will discuss the possibility of euthanasia. If the committee agrees that this is the only way to keep the animal from suffering for the rest of his days, ARK will request that the veterinarian euthanize him. Our philosophy is to prevent needless suffering in sick or injured animals; for those that are healthy but abused by heartless human beings, we try to offer refuge whenever possible.

In England, the decision whether or not to euthanize is generally left to veterinarians and shelter specialists. Although England is known for its high standard of animal welfare, the English are also extremely practical. According to Inspector Frank Milner of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), there are numerous laws on the books regarding animals. For example, human beings who abuse animals either physically or psychologically must either pay a hefty fine and/or go to prison. Meanwhile, if a dog bites a person, he is let off if it is a first offense -- but if it is a repeat offense, he must, as a rule, be euthanized in the absence of extenuating circumstances. (British authorities do not deal with unwanted dogs by exterminating them, however, as is the case in Japan).

I once saw a Western in which a man's horse suffers a broken leg while they are crossing the desert. The man takes the injured animal behind a boulder and shoots it dead. At the time, I thought it was a terribly cruel thing to do -- but now, when I think of how the horse would have starved under the hot sun if left, alive and hurt, in the desert, I think it was better that it died instantly, with one rifle shot. Today, I understand that the man acted out of compassion. This reminds me that horses are still used in Japan for pulling plows and other heavy labour. Very few of these workhorses live out their natural lives, as many suffer leg and shoulder injuries which cause them to become "useless"; they are traded in like used cars. Eventually, most end up being sold to slaughterhouses, where they are killed in brutal conditions for their meat. Euthanasia is carried out with drugs, which makes the flesh inedible, and disposal of a dead horse--so much larger than a dog or cat--involves tremendous expense. Selling a live horse for meat, on the other hand, brings in money to the seller. Although there are "retirement farms" for old and injured horses, this too costs a great deal of money, which most owners are not able or willing to spare.

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