

What would YOU do ? Part 6

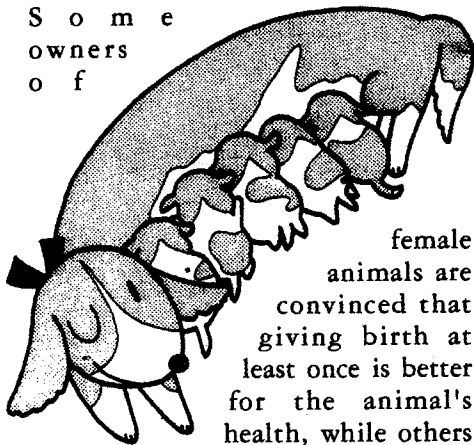
Can you truly call yourself an Animal Lover ?

by Masayo Furuki

There are a lot of people out there who call themselves animal lovers, and indeed many of them have dogs and cats of their own. But looking at them from our perspective, we have to wonder whether many of them truly can be called animal lovers in the real sense of the word. I'll introduce several examples here, so that readers can judge for themselves.

Many pet owners do not neuter their dogs or cats -- and what are their reasons? Some say they do not want their pets to undergo such a painful experience, while others believe in "the laws of nature."

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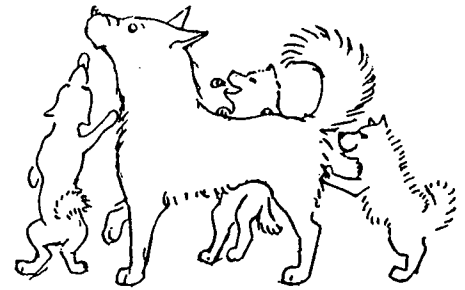
female animals are convinced that giving birth at least once is better for the animal's health, while others

who think of their pets as family members look forward to puppies or kittens almost as if they were their own grandchildren (in the case of pedigree animals, even paying breeders a lot of money to make this happen). Some owners of male animals assert that castration is cruel, while others are so irresponsible as to say it's no business of theirs where their pet fathers broods offspring. All of these people, regardless of their reasons, are self-centred enough to think that if their own pet is all right, that's all that matters. Many say they find proper homes for the puppies and kittens that are born, but one pair of dogs will beget 16 puppies in one year, and if these also have offspring, the number rises to more than 500 puppies over three years. Asked if they really can find homes for so many

puppies, they will say they can't look so far ahead. This frivolous, irresponsible attitude is what leads to so many unwanted animals being born, many of them eventually to be exterminated by the authorities.

Anesthesia and medical techniques are far advanced today, so that neutering is not an undue burden either physically or psychologically for the animals themselves. In fact, neutering has been proved to have various positive effects medically. Castrating a male animal is by no means cruel. And just as a parent who does not take his child for vaccinations because the injection is painful would be derided for his ignorance and foolishness, we must say that pet owners who reject neutering for reasons of shallow sentimentality are guilty of criminal irrationality, considering the large numbers of unwanted animals this produces. Not only will these unwanted animals suffer terrible fear, hunger and abuse in the case of abandonment and homelessness, and cruel deaths at the pound, but extermination by the authorities is paid for by large amounts of tax money, which can surely be used for better purposes. Respecting "the laws of nature" is also hypocritical, given the fact that homeless animals cannot live in peace and good health in Japanese society today, and dogs don't even have the basic right of life as far as the authorities are concerned.

Another reason for opposing neutering is given by people who seriously believe that it will lead to the eventual extinction of cats and dogs, while some veterinarians are against the practice for the incredibly selfish and idiotic reason that decreasing the number of cats and dogs will reduce their cases and therefore earnings. It is true that the neutering movement led by animal welfare organizations are making headway, so that less dogs and cats are being exterminated in the pounds as compared with before. But the idea that domesticated dogs and cats could be listed in the Red Data



Book of endangered species is preposterous, while it is anyway unlikely that every dog or cat ever born will be taken to a veterinarian. On the other hand, if people neglect to neuter their pets, it is certain that the number of unwanted puppies and kittens born into this world will continue to rise, causing the number of exterminations to multiply as well.

As neutering costs a considerable amount of money, some people hesitate for this reason. This seems to be particularly true for people who have very large numbers of animals. It is true that the cost of feeding alone is no small burden in such a case, but unless all the animals are of the same sex, they will continue to multiply unless they are neutered -- and what happens to the cost of feeding them then? If large numbers of animals are being cared for in an environment completely closed off from the outside, then only the males--for whom the process is cheaper--can be neutered. Otherwise, it is necessary to keep the males and females separate at all times, or they will keep reproducing until their owner simply cannot care for them all.

Some prefectural and municipal authorities, as well as some animal welfare organizations, provide subsidies for neutering or periodically hold neutering sessions at a reduced cost. ARK is currently considering the idea of subsidies as well. By making use of these available services, we can neuter our pets and prevent needless suffering. Wouldn't you say that correcting false perceptions and changing your own mindset is the first step toward becoming a true lover of animals?