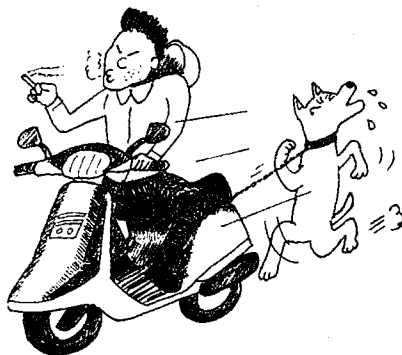


をつけるべき健康問題がある場合は、それを説明します。犬種、性別、年齢に関係なく、基本料として一律に1万5千円を請求します。この金額は、予防接種と去勢／不妊手術を済ませ、マイクロチップを挿入した、健康なペットが手に入ることを思うと、飼い主にとって決して高くはないはずです。唯一例外として去勢・不妊手術をせずに動物を送り出すのは、人工哺乳を必要とする幼犬／猫だけで、この場合は時間がかかって私どもの手に余るからです。新しい飼い主に哺乳経験があり、自分で育てたいと望む場合は、彼らから2万円の保証金を預かって、後日、手術を済ませたという確証が得られたときに払い戻すことになります。

よくあることですが、動物を助けて新しい飼い主をさがす人は、その将来の幸せと安全を考えるよりも、できるだけ早く手放そうとします。周囲の人に「お願いだから貰ってちょうだい」と頭

を下げてまわったりするのは、「中古」や「捨て犬／猫」なんか誰もほしがらないという誤った思い込みからくるものです。実際、避妊手術の費用を全額負担するとか、ひどい場合は、新しい飼い主に前払いで金を渡す人さえいま



す。金だけ自分のものにして、手術など面倒なことはしないという結果が予想されるのに、まったく馬鹿げています。何よりもまず、私たち自身がこういう動物を「かけがえのない価値ある

もの」と考えることが大切です。何といても、雑種犬の魅力は、それぞれに見かけも個性も独特で、二つとして同じものがないところにあるのです。

ロンドンのバタシー・ドッグズ・ホームは世界的に有名なシェルターです。毎年1万頭以上の野良犬や、捨てられたり、迷子になった犬がその門をくぐります。人々は、ホームの犬を手に入れようと長蛇の列を作り、何時間も辛抱強く待ちます。「子供を養子にするよりもバタシーの犬の里親になる方がむずかしい」ことをホームは誇りにしています。首尾よく「1匹」をもらうことに成功した人は、「どんな犬を飼っているの？」と聞かれると、胸を張って答えます。「バタシーの犬ですよ」と。肝心なのは、捨てられたペットの数ではなく、むしろ、その種の動物に対する人々のイメージです。イメージを変えることこそ先決問題ではないでしょうか。

have their own personal preference as to what kind of dog they want; "small, brown male Shiba-type with pointed ears" but in fact may end up taking home a "white female with floppy ears." We always point out that character and temperament are more important than looks. We try to home check where possible and will also take back an animal if it doesn't work out. But our success rate is pretty high and the main reason that animals are returned to us is more likely to do with changing family situation like bankruptcy or divorce rather than problems with the animal.

Process of Adoption

Once the decision to adopt is made, we go over all the necessary check points with the new owner; general care, diet, exercise, ID essentials, training, vaccinations, health checks and so on. If there is any health condition which needs attention, we explain this. We charge a basic 15,000 yen regardless of breed, sex or age. This cost is very reasonable considering the fact that they are getting a healthy animal that has been fully vaccinated, neutered and micro-chipped. The only case where we let an animal go out un-neutered is when we have very small puppies or kittens that need bottle-feeding and therefore take up a lot of our time. If the potential owner has had experience in hand-rearing and wants to do it, we take a deposit of 20,000 yen which will be repaid once we receive proof that neutering has been completed.

Too often people who rescue and rehome are more concerned with getting the animal 'off their hands' as soon as possible, than with the future happiness and security of that animal. They almost beg people to take it as they also wrongly assume that people don't want a second-hand or thrown away dog or cat. In fact some go so far as to pay all the neutering cost themselves, even going to the point of paying up front, which is crazy since the new owner merely pockets the money and doesn't bother to neuter in the end. It is important that we ourselves see this animal as something of value. After all every stray mongrel dog is unique in personality and appearance and no two are the same.

The Battersea Dogs Home in London is well-known all around the world. More than 10,000 stray, unwanted and lost dogs pass through its doors every year. People form queues and wait for hours in the hope of adopting one of the Home's stray dogs. Battersea prides itself that it more difficult to adopt a dog from Battersea than it is to adopt a child. And people who are lucky enough to have one, when asked what kind of dog they own, say with pride, "my dog is a Battersea dog." It's not so much a problem of the number of stray animals but one of changing the general public's image of them.