

Raising standards in Eastern Europe

The Fifth International Companion Animal Welfare Conference, sponsored by NCDL (National Canine Defence League) of the UK and North Shore Animal League International, was held in Prague mid-November 2002, attended by 270 delegates from 40 countries.

Eastern Europe is rapidly changing since the fall of communism and many former Soviet bloc countries like the Czech Republic are set to join the EC in the near future. In adopting western standards, animal welfare is also on the agenda.

During our five day stay in Prague we did not see a single stray animal (with the exception of two well-fed semi-feral cats greeting visitors at Prague Castle). Indeed it was a pleasure to see the communication between owners and their dogs out on walks along the city streets. Not only were the dogs well-brushed, but also well-behaved, mostly walked off-lead and with the owners often patting and playing with them.

We found out why Prague has no stray animal problem when we visited the city-run shelter about 30 minutes drive away. Five years ago the Czech Animal Control Agency visited Britain to study shelter management and design. As a result they built a modern spacious shelter on the site of a former chemical factory. The shelter contains a clinic, offices and a welcome centre where potential owners can look at pictures of animals up for adoption. It is a no-kill shelter with a holding capacity for 150 dogs and 80 cats though at the time of our visit there were 120 dogs and only 26 cats. About 3000 dogs are brought in annually and the rehoming rate is 100%, even biting dogs are rehomed to responsible owners. (90% of cats are rehomed too). The staff of 32 include two veterinarians, two veterinary technicians and an animal behaviourist. Dogs are regularly

walked or played with in spacious runs by volunteers or the shelter staff. The floods which devastated Prague last summer also affected the shelter as it is near a river, but the animals were all safely transferred to higher ground.

Fees from compulsory registration of city dogs fund the operation of the shelter, including salaries of the staff and the animal control officers who answer calls about stray animals or who deal with animal problems. They also operate a TNR (Trap Neuter Return) programme for feral cats.



Prague Castle cat
プラハのお城の猫

It is remarkable that a city, which only five years ago had a run-down pound bent only on catching and killing stray animals, has had a complete turn around and is on its way to reaching the same destination as that of its neighbours in northern Europe, in maintaining high standards of pet keeping and animal welfare.

Report by
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Better Late than Never

An ordinance passed at the end of last year by Tottori Prefecture, banning the keeping of 10 or more cats and dogs in designated areas, is welcome news. Violation of the ordinance is punishable by up to six months imprisonment or 300,000 yen in fine.

However the ordinance only applies if neighbours complain about noise or smell, not about inhumane treatment of animals. We would like to see this ordinance not only extended to other prefectures but also contain more substance.

All facilities housing more than 10 animals, including breeders, pet shops, dog training kennels, zoos, amusement parks where animals are displayed, shelters like ARK and especially hoarders, should be licensed and inspected regularly. Standards should be set to ensure that animals are housed hygienically, kept in healthy conditions and humanely treated.

Effective ordinances would curtail the proliferation of hoarders of the type ARK has recently had to deal with.

今からでも遅くない——多頭飼いに規制を！

昨年末、鳥取県で多頭飼いを禁ずる条例が可決されたのは、朗報です。県内の指定区域では、10頭以上の犬猫飼育を禁止し、違反者には6か月以下の禁固刑、または、30万円以下の罰金を課すことができるというものです。

しかし、条例が適用されるのは近隣者から騒音や悪臭についての苦情が出た場合に限られており、動物虐待という視点が欠けているのは残念です。同様の条例が他県にも広がると同時に、より実質的なものになるよう注目したいと思います。10頭以上の動物を飼育する施設——この中には、ブリーダー、ペットショップ、犬の訓練所、動物園、動物を見世物にする遊園地など、また、アークのようなシェルター、それに、厄介な「動物収集マニア」も含まれますが——これらは、すべて許可制にして、定期的に検査すべきです。動物は、必ず、衛生的な居住環境の中で健康に、しかも、人道的に飼育するよう、明確な基準を定める必要があります。

有効な条例が施行されれば、最近私どもが扱ったような（動物を収集しては貯め込む）「ホーダー」の増加を抑えることにもなるでしょう。