

失われる子犬の命——ある都市の実態から

悲劇を絶つために、今こそ根本策の実施を！

神戸市は人口150万の中規模都市で、国際的な雰囲気のある街です。飼い犬の「公式」数、すなわち、市当局に登録された犬の概数は7万頭。しかし、登録手続きをしている飼い主は約半数と思われるので、実際の犬の数は14万くらいでしょう。統計表は、1997年から2001年の間に保健所に収容された犬——当局に捕獲された野良犬、または、飼い主から持ち込まれたものの——の数を示しています。

この表から明らかなのは、飼い主が持ち込む子犬の率が35～51%と不名誉にも高いこと。保健所の定義では「子犬」とは生後3か月未満のものを指すので、これに6か月までの犬を加えるとすれば、

割合は2倍にふえると思われます。これらの子犬はメスの野良犬が産んだものではなく、飼い犬の子です。もしも、飼い主が避妊手術を受けさせていれば、子犬が生まれることはなく、小さな命が奪われずにすんだのです。

保健所は「飼っているペットに避妊手術を！」という主張を市民に啓発すべき役割を自覚していないようです。飼い主のプライバシーや権利を侵害する権限はないと感じているのでしょうか。しかし、同じ人が飼い犬に産ませた「不要な」子犬数匹を持って年に2度も保健所にやって来るのです。行政当局のわずかな努力によって、多くの命が救われるばかりか、市民が納めた税金を大いに節約すること

にもなるのです。

なぜ飼っている動物に不妊手術をさせないのか？ その理由をさぐる体系的調査が日本で行なわれたことはありません。日本人の多くは、子孫を残そうとする本能をペットから奪うのは不自然で、残酷だとさえ考えているようです。また、自分のペットに母親になるチャンスを与えてやりたいと思う人もいます。それに、信じられないことですが……一度はお産を経験した方がメス犬／猫の健康に良いと飼い主に説明する獣医も多いのです。

不妊手術代が高いとこぼす人もいます——生まれてきた数匹の子犬／猫を育てる費用に比べれば結局は安くつくのですが

神戸市保健所殺処分状況

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
持込まれた犬の合計 Total no. of dogs brought in	1,747	1,545	1,241	1,170	928
野良犬・捨て犬・迷い犬 Stray dogs	29% 509	29% 455	33% 417	23% 266	26% 245
飼い主による持込 Dogs brought in by owners	1,238	1,090	824	904	683
野良犬・捨て犬・迷い犬（子犬） Stray puppies	136	112	128	59	66
飼主による持込（子犬） Puppies brought in by owners	51% 901	45% 706	35% 438	46% 536	39% 361
子犬の合計 Total no. of puppies	1,037	818	566	595	427
飼い主が見つかった犬 Returned to owner	97	87	77	78	64
里親が見つかった子犬 Rehomed puppies				17	84
殺処分合計 Dogs/Puppies destroyed	1,650	1,458	1,164	1,075	780
飼犬登録数 No. of dogs officially registered	45,747	49,601	53,433	56,923	60,559

The Tail of One City

Kobe is a medium-sized cosmopolitan city of 1.5 million people with an international ambience. It's 'official' dog population, i.e. dogs registered with the city authorities, is around 70,000. Since we guess that only about half of the dog owners bother to register their pets, the dog population is probably nearer 140,000. The chart shows the numbers of dogs brought into Kobe city's hokensho (pound) between 1997 and 2001, caught either as strays by the city or brought in by their owners.

What is revealing in these statistics is the shamefully high number of puppies brought in by their owners, between 35% and 51%. The hokensho definition of a 'puppy' is one under three months of age, so if we include those upto six months of age, the percentage would surely double. These puppies are not the progeny of a feral mother but a family pet. If the owners had neutered the mother these puppies would not have been born to die.

The hokensho probably does not see its role in advising or insisting that owners should neuter their pets. It may feel it has no authority to

infringe on the privacy or rights of pet owners. Yet the same people turn up at the hokensho twice a year with an unwanted litter. Huge amounts of taxpayers' money as well as many lives, could be saved, if the authorities took this small step.

Why don't owners neuter their animals? So far no systematic survey has been carried out in Japan to find the reasons. We guess that many people think it is unnatural, even cruel, to deprive their pet of their natural instinct to mate and give birth. Others feel that their pet should have the opportunity to become a mother at least once. And, unbelievably, many veterinarians tell their clients that it is healthier for a pet to have at least one litter.

Some people complain about the high cost of neutering, although it actually costs less in the long run than rearing a litter. If cost is the main factor in deterring people from neutering then veterinarians and veterinary associations can be held partly responsible for unnecessary killing of puppies and kittens in the hokensho gas chambers. They may not see the connection between themselves and hokensho killing but