

Definition of Cruelty

from a Seminar by veterinarian Yuko Nishiyama

Following our report on breeding and neutering in the last issue, this time we will focus on animal abuse.

Recent years have seen a succession of cases in which animals have been the target of abuse, with some cases horrific beyond imagination. ARK has received many inquiries from people wanting advice or help in stopping such abuse, but the large majority of these have been emotional appeals prompted by momentary pity, and lacking in sober, objective assessments of the situation.

Of course we will mount a rescue operation immediately in urgent cases, but it is difficult to assess what exactly is happening when the report is being made over the phone by an agitated caller. And if the case being reported is in a distant location, it is even harder for us to go there right away to confirm what is going on.

Because the definition of what constitutes abuse differs from person to person, we need to see evidence, such as photographs or videos, from which we can make an objective assessment. The same goes for reporting animal abuse to the police: Circumstantial evidence is not enough to prompt an investigation, meaning direct evidence is required.

In collecting evidence, it is important that you go to the site not always at the same time of day, but repeatedly at different hours, such as early morning, mid-morning, midday, evening and late at night. For example, we recently received a report that two dogs had been left behind without food or water at what looked to be an empty house for a week already. When ARK staff rushed to the site to investigate, the dogs' owners were present, and in the midst of moving into the house.

When discovering a possible case of animal abuse, do not rush off to report it before first doing all you can do to make sure it is indeed abuse. Calm down, observe and note down the indications, and question the neighbors. Such information will form the basis for ARK making an objective assessment of the situation.

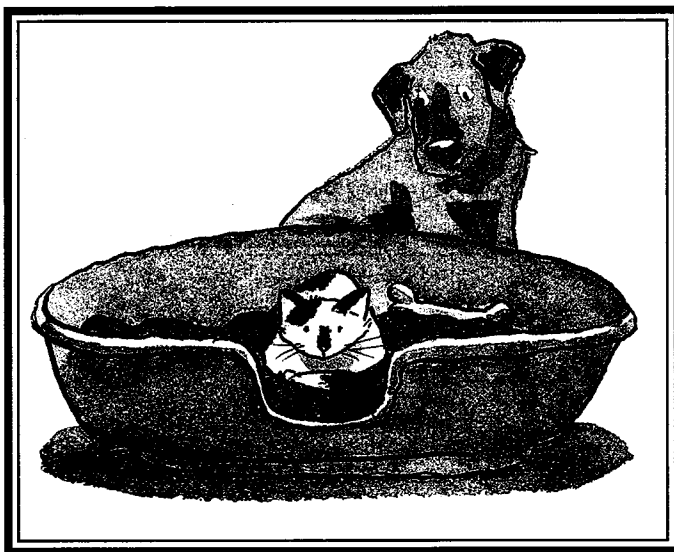
At last December's Wan's Tail seminar, Dr. Yuko Nishiyama stressed the importance of following guidelines in assessing cases of animal abuse. A long checklist regarding the animal's condition, such as how thin or feeble it is, is used with reference to guidelines for ascertaining stages of abuse. These guidelines do not stop at abuse at the hands of what are generally considered "cruel owners." Dogs overfed by doting owners until they are so fat they cannot stand up on their own

are, according to these guidelines, victims of abuse as well.

We need to learn from such a system in our own efforts to prevent animal abuse. This does not mean simply imitating what is done in other countries, but taking into consideration local factors, such as Japanese modes of pet ownership, the climate, and so on, and cross-referencing a wide variety of past cases, to draw up effective guidelines of our own.

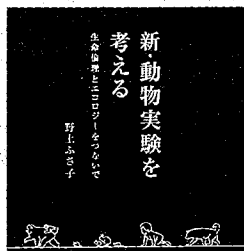
Hasty, unconsidered action prompted by pity can often drive the animals we are trying to save into even worse situations. What is needed above all is calm, objective assessment of each individual case both by the person who discovered it and by the rescuers. Of course, there are many animals who, while not judged to be suffering from actual abuse, are nevertheless treated badly as a result of their owners' ignorance. In such cases, we will make active efforts to improve their situation by talking to the owners about proper, responsible animal care and if necessary, requesting the authorities to step in.

Finally, and most importantly, we have to ensure that people who abuse animals, whether willfully or unconsciously through their ignorance, never again cause animals to suffer through their actions. For this, we all need to have the courage to confront abusers wherever we encounter them, and to take steps suitable to the situation.



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新・動物実験を考える 生命倫理とエコロジーをつないで

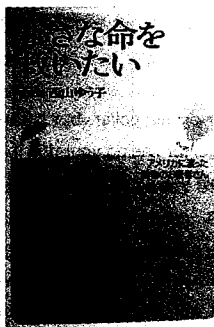


動物を傷つけ苦しめる動物実験
とどう向き合うか
動物実験を考へる
野上ふさ子

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