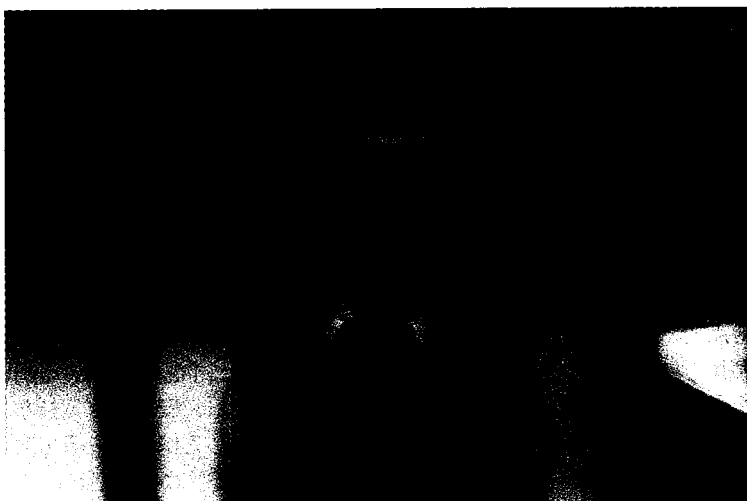




児玉小枝氏は、保健所で殺処分になる直前の動物達の衝撃的な写真展を日本全国に巡回させ、望まれない動物がたどる運命を多くの人々に伝えました。このページの写真及び、2、3ページの写真は児玉小枝氏の許可の下使用しています。

Sae Kodama through her heart-breaking and moving photographs of animals on 'death row' in hokensho throughout Japan has brought many ordinary people's attention to the fate of unwanted pets in this country. All the photos on this page and the previous pages 2/3 are printed with permission of Sae Kodama.



In the spring of 1997, I came across a blue plastic garbage bag on the roadside near my then-workplace. There was a piece of paper saying "Dog (dead)" taped on the bag, and indeed it contained the body of a white dog, which I carried to a nearby riverbank and buried. It struck me forcefully then that there were people who could throw away the remains of their dog, a member of their family, like garbage, that this was the reality of present-day Japan. At the same time, I began to feel that I would like to speak for animals, who have no voice of their own, through photography and writing. That summer, I visited a pound in Kansai and took portraits of dogs and cats who, abandoned by their owners, were now living out their final days on Death Row. Starting the following spring, I began touring the country with these photographs in an exhibition entitled "Animal Requiem." In the six years since, I have held exhibitions and lectures all over Japan. Sometimes, as part of these activities, I visited local pounds. Here I would like to share some of the events from those visits that stand out most starkly in my memory.

There is a hokensho in the Chugoku region, which several times a month sets aside a day for people to bring in "unwanted kittens." When I visited on such a day, people began to appear at ten a.m., the starting time, holding cardboard boxes holding four to five kittens each. All sorts of people came: Young women in their teens, housewives, salarymen, school teachers, policemen... They all gave their reasons for bringing

in the kittens; their pet cat had had a litter, a stray cat had given birth in their garden, the kittens had been abandoned in front of their school, signed the requisite documents, laid the boxes down and left without batting an eye. The kittens were immediately thrown into a large burlap sack by the hokensho workers.

"Where did you get those kittens?" I asked a housewife. "Our cat had them, but we can't keep them and couldn't find anybody to take them," she answered. When I said, "Wouldn't it be better to neuter your pet cat?" she replied, "Oh, I could never do that to her, poor thing." "But these kittens are going to be killed in a gas chamber, suffering terribly. Don't you feel sorry for them?" I said, in a desperate attempt to have her reconsider, but she only mumbled something like "I don't know about that" and hurriedly walked away. The last words I heard her mutter were, "Plus, the neutering operation costs money..." This, I guessed, was her real concern. That day alone, about sixty kittens were brought to that hokensho to be gassed.

I was there at that same hokensho when a pick-up truck carrying two doghouses pulled into the parking lot. It was driven by a hokensho worker, who apparently had gone to pick up the dogs at the owner's request. The owner, a middle-aged man, sat in the passenger seat. In one of the doghouses on the pick-up were two white dogs, who