

were dragged off of the truck by the hokensho worker pulling their leads. Their tails curled tight between their legs and their ears laid flat, they resisted every step of the way to the building, shaking all the while. The moment they were locked inside a cage there, they began a heartbreaking howling. Their owner, who had seen and heard the whole thing, seemed totally indifferent, signing the papers without the least sign of concern. The papers had a space for writing the dogs' names, which I noticed he left blank. "What are their names?" I asked. "They don't have any," he replied curtly. In response to my questions, he told me he had had one of the dogs for three years, and the other for six. The reason he couldn't keep them anymore, he said, was that he'd hurt his back and could no longer walk them. When I asked whether he had no family who could help him with the dog walks, his answer was vague: "Well, there's my wife, but..." I tried to persuade him to reconsider, telling him how his dogs would die and asking if he might know anybody who could take the dogs, but his heart seemed to be made of stone. As soon as he was done filling out the papers, he left.

At another facility, this time in the Tokai region, I was there when a middle-aged woman arrived with a Pomeranian in a carry bag covered with a beautiful scarf. The dog was already over ten years old, and when it was placed in the corner of a cage inside the building, it trembled violently in the bag and stared up at us with frightened eyes. When I asked a worker about it, he said he supposed the woman didn't want to care for the dog in its old age. "There are a lot of people like that," he told me. "They say it's too sad, or too much expense and trouble if the dog gets sick, and ask us to dispose of it for them." Like so many other such facilities, this one disposed of the animals brought in to it by asphyxiating them with carbon dioxide gas. A staff member from that facility, one who carries out the extermination, came to see my exhibition. He also spoke to me of his thoughts and feelings regarding his work. "The national government recognizes death by gas as euthanasia," he said. "But from what I've seen, I cannot agree. When we start sending in the gas, the animals writhe and convulse terribly, and we can hear them howling and whining. But I've never been inside there myself, so I cannot prove they suffer. If there was some hard evidence that they are dying in pain, of course I would like to change to a different method, one that causes no suffering. But the gas chambers cost tremendous sums of money to build, so it would probably be very difficult to change to another method."

An animal foster care volunteer in the Tohoku region told me about an acquaintance who loved animals, and who worked at the city hall as a civil servant. One year, this acquaintance was transferred to an Animal Control Center which exterminated dogs and cats. After working there a while, the man suffered a nervous breakdown and had to be hospitalized. He was unable to go back to work, and ended up getting divorced by his wife.

The head of a hokensho in the Chugoku region, a man currently in his fifties, told me about his career in animal administration. "When I was still in my twenties, my main duty was as a dog-catcher. People who saw me catching stray dogs would yell 'Dog-killer!' and throw stones at me, and I couldn't even tell my own family about what I did at work. But I don't want my younger colleagues to go through what I did. When I retire, I want to leave behind a workplace where people can take pride in what they do. This is why I want to put more effort into finding new homes for the animals brought in to our facility. That way, our staff will be able to go home and tell their families that their work is to save

animals' lives. I want to change our jobs from killing animals to saving them." In spite of his good intentions, however, he was having trouble securing space and funds for housing the animals he wants to re-home. The reality is that most of them are still being killed.

A facility I visited in the Tohoku region was working with a local animal welfare group to find homes for the adult dogs that were brought there. On the day of my visit as well, one lucky dog went home with its new family. Whenever a dog was brought to this facility, its particulars: breed, age, size etc., were faxed to the animal welfare group, which keeps a list of people wishing to adopt a dog. If there was a suitable rehome on that list, the group notified the people immediately. This animal welfare group uses the Internet (a website), posters and local newspapers and magazines to recruit rehome families. The posters carry photographs of animals needing a home, and are put up in several hundred locations around the prefecture. Once a month, they are replaced with new posters giving more up-to-date information. Because they are put up in all kinds of locations, such as supermarket bulletin boards and vets' offices, they reach far and wide into local communities, as demonstrated by the fact that the group often receives phone calls from people saying, "We always see your posters, and were waiting to find the right dog for us." Dogs that do not find new homes right away are placed with volunteer foster families until a permanent home for them can be found. Also, local vets cooperate with the group by offering treatment and neutering operations for these dogs at special discounts.

I was also amazed to hear that this same facility sees almost no puppies. According to the director, this is because the facility has put a great deal of effort, over many years, into educating the community about the importance of neutering pets, and of keeping them from roaming the streets. "Before, pet dogs would be allowed to roam free, and they would often mate and produce puppies. This is happening much less now, due to our activities. Of course, if a puppy is brought in, we make efforts to find it a home. Puppies are very popular, and all the rehome applicants start out saying they want a puppy. But if we have no puppies, they say, 'All right, we'll take an adult dog then.'" This is what has made it possible for us to find homes for adult dogs."

When this facility does put animals to death, it does not use a gas chamber but injects anesthetic instead. However, the anesthetic is not administered intravenously as in veterinary hospitals, but is injected straight into the muscles, which sometimes causes convulsions and writhing such as is seen in gas chambers. Euthanasia as practiced in veterinary hospitals is, according to the facility's director, difficult to carry out for reasons of staffing and cost. "Dying peacefully while being held in the arms of a trusted family member, through intravenous anesthesia, that is euthanasia," said the director. "Death through any other method is not."

While there are facilities all over Japan that do nothing besides exterminate the animals people bring there, there are also some facilities that are making positive efforts to save animals' lives. It is my fervent hope that, with the spread of general understanding for the need for neutering and proper training, the adoption of more vigorous rehoming activities, and the improvement of extermination methods (increased funding and staffing for a transition to pain-free euthanasia), there will be fewer people in this country who abandon animals to a painful death, and more facilities designed to save, not kill, the animals placed in their care.