

因果関係——一連の事件から見えてくるもの

農水省は狂犬病について懸念しています。3月半ばのNHKニュースによれば、農水省はペット輸入業者に生後4か月未満の子犬の輸入を“差し控える”ように要請したとのこと。昨年1年間に17,358頭の犬が輸入され、そのうち770頭は4か月齢以下です。狂犬病ワクチンはこの時期の子犬には有効ではありません。毎年、狂犬病による死者数は約4万人にのぼり、主として、中東、インド、中国で発生しています。昨年中国では1,987人が狂犬病で死んでおり、これは、実に、前年度に比べて71%の増加でした。日本では、ここ30年以上狂犬病の発生は見られません——最後の死者が出たのは1957年のことでした。しかし、昨今明るみに出た米国産

牛肉のBSE(牛海綿状脳症、狂牛病)問題と、鳥インフルエンザによる莫大な損害、及び、失われた信頼とを重く受けとめて、農水省は少しでも可能性のある感染を食い止めたいと考えたのでしょう。その意気込みは評価するとしても、過去及び現在の対応からして、我々は危機を抱かざるを得ません。

規制強化についての政府の実績はお粗末なものです。農産物から動物虐待に至るまで、動物に関する規制や法律の運用は殆ど実施されないのが現実です。それだからこそ、原因不明で死んだ何百羽もの鶏が鶏舎にあふれているというのに、生産業者は卵を出荷し、鶏を処理し続けることができたのです。その結

果、鳥インフルエンザの感染は他の2県にも広がってしまいました。国産牛肉買い取り不正事件、偽装工作の捜査も続行しています。政府は、容疑者の虚偽の請求によって巨万の大金をだまし取られ、一方、汚染された牛肉が市場に出まわった可能性も否定できません。アークには動物虐待を心配する電話が毎週数件かかってきます。人々はなぜ警察に通報しないのでしょうか? 法律を遵守させることは、権限を持つ彼らの務めではありませんか。残念ながら、警察が動物愛護管理法の下に執行することは殆どないのが現実で、市民はそれを承知しているのです。現在、アークは滋賀県の虐待事件について告発をしています——警察と保健所が関与を断わったか

Cause and Effect

The Ministry of Agriculture is worried about rabies. In a story which appeared on NHK in mid-March, the ministry has asked the pet import industry to 'refrain from' importing puppies under four months of age. Last year 17,358 dogs were imported and of that number 770 were less than four months old. Rabies vaccines are not effective at this early age. About 40,000 people die of rabies every year mostly in the Middle East, India and China. Last year there were 1,980 fatalities in China a 71% increase over the previous year. There have been no cases of rabies in Japan for over thirty years, with the last fatality in 1957. However with the recent discovery of BSE in US beef and the huge losses in profit and confidence from the Avian flu epidemic, the Ministry wants to prevent any possible outbreak. The Ministry's efforts are laudable, but past and present experience give us very little assurance.

The Government's record on enforcement is dismal. From food production to animal cruelty there is very little enforcement of regulations or laws regarding animals. This is how a farmer could continue to ship eggs to market and birds to slaughter while at the same time having barns overflowing with hundreds of dead chickens from unknown causes. As a result the Avian flu epidemic was spread to two other prefectures. There is the continuing investigation into the domestic beef buy back scam and labeling fraud in which the government was swindled out of millions in fraudulent claims and possibly tainted beef was sold for consumption. ARK receives calls every week about possible animal cruelty cases. Why don't people call the police? After all isn't it the law enforcement's job to enforce the laws? The unfortunate reality is that the police rarely enforce animal cruelty laws and most citizens know this only too well. Right now ARK is prosecuting a case of cruelty in Shiga prefecture because the police and Hokencho declined to get involved. Incidentally this case involves an irresponsible breeder.

From ARK's perspective the obvious first question is why does a society that kills almost half a million dogs and cats a year need to import puppies? Hokencho figures from Kobe show that 80% of pets destroyed are puppies and kittens. If there is a high possibility of rabies entering the country, why not impose a ban the import of puppies altogether? The answer of course is money. Over the past three years the number of imported pets has increased by one and a half percent, and with responsible, conscientious local breeders

few, the demand for imported puppies continues to rise. With no enforcement and very large profits being made, there is not much hope that the animal's welfare or interests will be considered.

In 2002 at an overseas animal welfare conference, ARK staff met representatives of The Kennel Club of the United Kingdom. ARK learned of campaigns by reputable breeders in the UK to prevent the export of puppies overseas for profit. The Kennel Club is regularly approached by dealers from Japan, China, Korea and Thailand looking to purchase vast quantities of puppies, something which the Kennel Club would never condone. In its literature on exports the Kennel Club has this to say:

'To ensure the best quality of life for the animal in question, the Kennel Club would suggest that breeders or owners consider the following points very carefully, before exporting a dog to an overseas destination:

1. The final destination of the puppy/dog is known.
2. The person receiving the animal is known to the exporter.
3. The reason for purchase and the accommodation for the dog are acceptable to the exporter.
4. The country of final destination has sufficient and effective animal protection legislation and animal welfare standards.
5. IF EXPORTERS ARE IN ANY DOUBT THEY SHOULD NOT EXPORT.'

Any breeder following these guidelines would find it very difficult to export to Japan. This is not to say that there are no reputable breeders or dog owners in this country, but that the pet import industry's view of puppies as purely products to be sold for profit is the standard. Only through more oversight, regulation, inspection and enforcement can this situation be modified. Citizens appealing for change and calling on the authorities for greater efforts in these areas is useful and ARK urges its members to do so. This society must change its view of animals from commodities to be bought and sold to living, sentient, beings which need protection and care. This will not be accomplished by government legislation, but only through a change in values upheld by its citizens.

Jeff Bryant