

日本国内では現在捨てて余りあるほどの子犬が繁殖されています。そのペットブームの陰でペットショップで買われたものの、始めの数年は可愛がられた後、家の裏のゴミ箱の横で雨風直射日光にさらされ一生を終える犬が、とても多くおります。ペットブームとはいったい何なのでしょう？生命の大切さとはいったい誰が教えてくれるのでしょうか？命を金銭で売り買いすることへの抵抗を日本人は感じられないのでしょうか？

6月19日、検討に検討を重ね、日本ではアーク以外には行き場がないであろうと考えられる8頭の犬が新しい出会いを求める為イギリスロンドンへ出発しました。残念ながら、いまだ小さな小さな命をペットショップで購入することに何の疑問も抱かぬ日本人が大勢います。そして犬を飼うのは子犬から、という考えが根強くあります。そういつたわけで、元捨て犬や、不要ペットとして飼育放棄された成犬、ましてや老犬の最期を看取る覚悟で里親となってくださる方はまだまだ少なく、また、アークで保護してあげられる動物の数にも限界があります。そこで苦肉の策として、日本での里親探しを諦め、海外へ助けを求める試みを実施しました。とても胸を張れるようなことではありませんが、この事実（日本では日本犬ミックスの里親探しが困難）を多

くの日本人の方に知っていただき、命の流行り廃りについて、ほんの少しでも考えていただければ嬉しく思います。

イギリス、ロンドンに本部をおくバタシー・ドッグズ&キャッツ・ホームは、今回初の試みをとても快く引き受けてくださいました。いま思えばそれもそのはず、彼らには実に確かな、”必ずどの子にも新しい家族を見つけてあげられる”、と言う自信があったからだと思います。それはたとえ老犬であっても、たとえ治療や介護が必要な子であっても。日本で動物の保護に携わり、里親探しを何年も続けてきた者にとっては、本当にびっくりさせられる話でありましたが、彼らのその自信に我々は希望を託しました。

まだ夜も明けきらぬ午前4時にアークを出発し、関西国際空港検疫所を経ていよいよ飛行機へ乗り込むまでの間、どの子も一様に緊張の面持ちで私達アークスタッフの顔をじっと見ていました。見送りにやって来たスタッフや付き添いスタッフも、彼らの不安をひしひしと感じ、同様に不安を感じずにはいられませんでした。しかし実際にイギリスのヒースロー国際空港に到着した彼らは、意外にもすっきりとした面持ちで私達の前に現われました。犬用大型ケージは検疫官によりすっきり綺麗に整えられており、うんちやおしっこ

で汚れた子は一匹もいませんでした。乱れることなく、アークを出発した時のケージの中の状態のまま現れた子もいたほどでした。そしてバタシーからのお迎えのトラック二台に分かれて空港を後にしました。そのトラック一つにも、私達スタッフは驚かされました。トラックの中は三つから五つにそれぞれ区切られたスペースがあり、ケージ無しでも犬を何頭もケンカをさせずに移動させることができます。

バタシーへ到着し、約一日振りに外の空気を吸った彼らは何かなんだかわからないまま、それぞれに用意されていた犬舎へ誘導されていきました。外はまだ明るかったのですが、実際には夜の八時を過ぎていました。誘導されて入った犬舎の中にはすでに夕食まで用意されていました。それに直ぐ気付きペロリと平らげる子もいれば、ウロウロと犬舎の中をチェックし回っておしっこをかけては、臭い付けに忙しい子もいたり、それぞれの性格が現われた一時でした。ひとまずその夜は、私達はそっと彼らの犬舎を後にしました。

翌朝、私達は朝食を済ませた後、8匹の子たちの犬舎へと向かいました。すっかり目を覚ました彼らは私達の顔を見るなり、ヒーヒーと鼻を鳴らして甘えておりました。一匹ずつ、コンクリートで走り回れる広さのあ

Too many puppies have been bred and sold in Japan. Behind the so-called 'pet boom,' most of the dogs bought from pet shops are forced to lead miserable life; after a year or two of living happily with his owner, the pet dogs are banished to a dirty place beside a dustbin at the back of a house, exposed to rain, wind, and the hot sun, chained and neglected all through his life. What is a pet boom? Who teaches children the value of life? Do Japanese people who get "little living things" from pet shops not feel guilty?

On 19th June, eight dogs left Ark for London to find new homes over there. The plan to send our dogs to the UK started more than a year ago. In the background of this, is the Japanese society where people prefer pedigree puppies to crossbreed adults, which means it is difficult for shelter dogs like ours to be rehomed in this country. Ark has made every possible effort to rescue abandoned, unwanted, neglected animals and find them new homes, but we know our limitations. That was one of the reasons Ark decided to send our dogs abroad as a last resort.

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home in London said that they would be willing to accept our dogs. They must have been quite sure to find the best home for every dog including the aged or those in need of special care. As we had been fully aware of the difficulties of rehoming, from our long-time experience, we were completely impressed by their policy and confidence. And so, we decided to trust our dogs to them in the hopes of them getting a better chance.

On the day of departure, the 8 dogs left Ark at an early hour of 4 a.m. for Kansai International Airport. After going through the Animal Quarantine, while waiting to board the plane, they all looked extremely nervous, gazing at us. Both members of Ark staff who were travelling with the dogs and those who came to see them off also looked uneasy. However, after arriving at London Heathrow Airport, the dogs

appeared much better than we had expected, each in a cage, tidy and clean; in fact, none of them looked in a mess. They were carried in two separate vans from Battersea, and we were surprised to find the inside of each van partitioned into 3 to 5 spaces so as to carry several dogs in safe and peace without cages.

On arriving at Battersea Home Old Windsor, the dogs got outside, breathing in fresh air for the first time in 24 hours, and before long, each one was led into the individual kennel ready for them. It was past 8 in the evening, though it was still light outside. Supper was ready in the kennel. Some saw food and ate it up quickly, and some others were busy sniffing around, peeing and marking here and there in the kennel. After some time, we left them in peace for that night.

The next morning, after breakfast, we went down to the kennels to meet our dogs. They were all awake, whining at us. The space allotted to each one of them consisted of two sections; an outdoor concrete playground connected to an indoor sleeping area (approximately one square meter). It was spacious enough, unlike our kennels here at Ark. Later we found out that every new dog had to be kept there for isolation for a week, and so it needed a spacious room to get rid of stress. The dogs still looked nervous, but they were delighted to see us, jumping up and down for joy. Two of them (Hamlet and Marmul) were too restless to enjoy their meal. It would naturally take some time for them to get used to local people and their language. In fact, they gradually seemed to settle in to the new environment, with their expression softening as days went by.

After a week, the day came when we, three members of Ark staff, had to leave London for Japan. It was time to say good-bye to our eight dogs, hoping Battersea people would find a suitable home for each one of them. Therefore, to our great regret, we could not see the Battersea-style assessment that the dogs were going to take. As Ark staff, we have often found it difficult to give a professional assessment