PEOPLE WORKING FOR ANIMALS OVERSEAS

Animal welfare is scarcely an issue in Japan, and those who try to help animals face a formidable task. ELIZABETH OLIVER, a teacher of English, is one such brave person who has established in Osaka, Animal Refuge Kansai (ARK) which is affiliated with the Japan Animal Welfare Society (JAWS).

Sentenced to death.

Elizabeth has been rescuing animals for about ten years and she runs a small rescue centre from her own home. The kennels and outhouses can accommodate about 60 animals and besides dogs and cats she has taken in goats, a pony and various birds.

Mrs Oliver believes that public education is the only way to solve the immense stray companion animal problem in Japan, especially in large cities such as Osaka. She hopes to build a separate office/PR centre on land adjoining hers and to undertake, in addition to her rescue work, the task of data collection, reporting, and compiling educational literature which will encourage Japanese pet owners to care for their animals properly, and to take more responsibility for them.

The following extracts are from an article Elizabeth Oliver wrote for the Kansai *Time Out,* a monthly English language magazine.

"Fifteen thousand yen is not a bad deal for a three day stay in the centre of Osaka. With such favourable terms however, there are bound to be snags. Unfortunately the accommodation is in the second basement down several flights of steps with no lift. They are mean about the lighting. In fact the lights are only switched on for passing visitors. Naturally it's draughty, damp and cold, especially freezing in winter as there's no heating. Sorry, no beds or even blankets, and food is provided irregularly or not at all. Surprisingly, the place is packed which means there's not much room to sit down. The major drawback is that once you enter, they won't let you leave again. Oh — I forgot to mention, they are a bit picky about customers: you have to be homeless, sick, injured, abused, thrown away, unwanted, stray — and only dogs qualify.

"I had heard about Morinomiya. I had seen pictures of the place and its inmates, but nothing had prepared me for the actual horror scene I witnessed. Indeed, Morinomiya, Osaka Prefecture's (not city) hokensho is dubbed the Auschwitz of Osaka, and it is.

"The place had a deathly silence. The dogs — the spirit gone from them — were sitting, standing, lying; immobile, shivering, trembling, many facing the wall. Scarcely a head turned to look at me. All were sopping wet — the floor is hosed down daily. Soggy dog biscuits mixed with excrement lay untouched. Not even a starving dog would eat in these circumstances.

"We retraced our steps to the office. On the notice board was chalked, *10 dogs Osaka Prefectural Hospital.* They were destined for days/weeks of vivisection.

"Not all hokensho are as bad. Nagoya has a very modern facility where the public are free to visit, where animals are offered for re-homing and where people are given advice on how to care properly for pets as well as plenty of PR. Morinomiya is out of bounds to the public and the only pretext for entry is to say you've lost your dog (as I did). Unless you can prove ownership, no animal is released however hard you plead or offer to give it a good home.

"Dogs are held for a mandatory three days and are then killed. At Morinomiya the gas chamber lies comfortingly beside the inmates. Euthanasing individual animals by painless injection is considered too troublesome and costly."

For more information, or to offer help, contact Elizabeth Oliver, 595, Noma Ohara, Nose-Cho, Toyono-Gun, Osaka-Fu, 563-01, Japan. Phone: 81-727-37-0712, Fax: 81-727-37-1645. ■

Action: Write to the Japanese Ambassador in Canberra and point out that the inhumanity of conditions for strays at Morinomiya, Osaka, tarnishes the Japanese image. Or you can write directly to the Osaka Prefectural Office, Otemaeno-cho, Higashi-ku, Osaka 540, Japan, and ask them to re-site the hokensho, with better facilities for the animals, a re-homing scheme and access for the public.