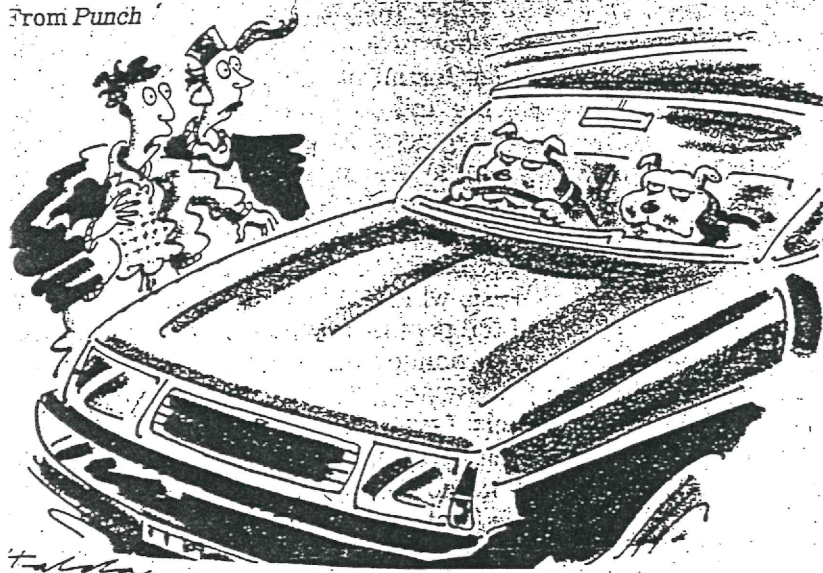


READERS IN COUNCIL

From Punch



"The ultimate horror. Joy-riding pit bulls!"

The plight of Japanese dogs

I'd like to follow up Susan S. Tenhor's letter ("Pets are misreated in Japan," Jan. 19) by supporting her views and observations and adding some of my own.

Before coming to Japan nine months ago I was of the impression, after watching an Australian "60 Minutes" segment entitled "Japan's Pampered Pooches" that the Japanese not only

indulged their pets but in fact overindulged them.

I know now it's only the toy breeds that are so fortunate. Most other dogs lead miserable lives, exiled day and night, in all weather, on a chain, in a corner of their backyard where they can neither see their owners nor even an occasional passer-by.

Their only respite from this unmitigated suffering is at feeding time and the morning and evening half-hour walk (still chained of course), then back to their solitary confinement. Are pet shop owners or dog breeders concerned about this? Are vets or vet students concerned? I hoped so.

Public opinion could change people's total acceptance of this cruelty. How can one educate these pet owners to know that man's best friend is above all a social animal? It needs company — only to sit at its master's feet — that's all.

Are there any dog training schools in Japan? Maybe an animal-loving entrepreneur out there might like to start one. Maybe one of the TV channels might like to increase its ratings and at the same time help these pitiful creatures by purchasing from the BBC and airing some of the late Barbara Woodhouse's entertaining and informative programs about how to train your pet to live with you — inside — not outside all its life on a short chain. Imagine doing this not for one hour or even one day — but all your life!! Many forms of suffering we can't stop but this form could be. Education and media coverage can quickly change attitudes. Let's keep at it.

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