

Scientists need cats, dogs for research experiments

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Medical researchers of 26 universities in the Tokyo metropolitan area will hand in a written appeal to the governors of Tokyo and neighboring prefectures to supply them with animals for experimentation, it was learned Tuesday.

An increasing number of self-governing bodies have stopped giving medical schools abandoned dogs and cats for research. Researchers complain that if the trend continues, they will not be able to conduct research using animals.

Animal protection organizations criticize experimentation with animals, saying that not only is it brutal, but accurate medical data cannot be obtained from dogs and cats whose medical histories are unknown, and that vary widely in birth and breeding.

A committee, headed by Professors Kazuyoshi Maejima of Keio University and Michio Fujiwara of Tokyo University, will hand in the petition to the governors of Tokyo and five neighboring prefectures, as well as to the mayors of two major cities in the Kanto region next month.

About 800,000 dogs and cats are captured and handed over to self-governing bodies every year.

According to a Japan Anti-Vivisection Association investigation, about 80,000 animals are given to university medical and veterinary departments a year, free of charge or for about ¥1,000 a piece.

Prefectures in the metropolitan area, including Tokyo, have decided to stop delivering stray animals for experimentation.

Researchers say that if they will not be able to receive stray animals, they will have to raise them themselves, which would cost more and strain the institutions' budgets.

They add that for researching medicine's side effects, it is more effective to use animals with a variety of genes and backgrounds.

Most abandoned animals that are not delivered to the researchers for experimentation are killed.

Animal protection groups insist that the ability to cultivate cells makes experimentation with animals unnecessary. Researchers object, saying that many experiments still necessitate living animals.