

To the Editor:

I am writing this in response to Elizabeth Oliver's letter "Respect for Animals ..." carried in the Aug. 14 MDN (Aug. 15 in some areas). Why blame Japanese children for perpetuating torture of pet animals when the kids are doing exactly what they have been tutored to do by their parents?

I live in a place which may have the distinction of being the most densely dog-populated area in the world. Here the majority of households, standing on the uniform 46 *tsubo* of land — roughly 15 by 15 meters — have one wife and two cars,

three children and four to eight pet dogs.

For quick reference, cases in point: My neighbor to the left has three dogs. One is eternally chained, and is hoodwinked into a five-minute, 400-meter long daily walk around this block. Every time a postman, delivery boy, meter-reader etc., visits, the poor creature almost wrenches her neck out of the leash, not to completely devour the visitor but just to satisfy her natural instinct of smell.

Mr. Left leaves home for work around 5 in the morning, shown off by none of his family whose bread-winner he is. Two days and one night later he

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### Dog days

returns to his house at 3 or 3.30 in the dead of the night, himself opens the door, again received by nobody, goes to sleep for a complete day, to leave again at 5 a.m. — year in and year out! Has he been given a fairer deal in life than the one he is disbur-

ing to his dogs? Of course he is born a Japanese. Every human being needs a song and a dream to hang on to in times of adversity. How many songs and

haikus has this society bestowed on this man?

The house at the back is content with only one dog, which is chained on a neighbor's vacant plot. In 36 degrees Celsius to 37 degrees Celsius sultry heat during summer, this dog's meat is slowly and tenderly barbecued from seven in the morning till sundown and during winter is kept in deep-freeze in a "house" only one size larger than the

dog! To be taken out for a walk? NEVER. Is this humble creature less ascetic than old Orthodox Russian monks! Mr. Back rarely returns home. Mrs. Back is a devout ancestor-worshipper — while the dog is barking his brains out, the sound of cymbals can sometimes be heard.

Laudable as Oliver's efforts are, they will have precious little effect. This can be attested by the ever-growing and not diminishing numbers of pets kept perpetually on a chain, when simultaneously their cruel owners are not! Because this has been ordained by the police department, only to save themselves of unnecessary head-

aches.

Any one, animal lover or not, who has respect for life embodied in forms large or small, should write to newspapers in as many countries as possible. There is a sufficient number of people to take up the cudgels for these unfortunate creatures. Only if one person is prepared to spare a drop of sympathy and an infinitesimal amount of money, and can be persuaded to write to his/her respective country's Japanese Embassy or consulate, will lawmakers here awakened to take remedial steps.

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## Readers' Forum

### Respect for animals engenders respect for life

placed on Japan's legal system, in particular its lack of laws in regard to animal abuse.

If Japan had strict laws against animal abuse this terrible tragedy might never have happened. The accused student began his career of violence by taking pleasure in torturing cats and birds while they were still alive, mutilating their bodies and then boasting to friends what he had done. His school mates knew about it, so did the

neighbors, so did his family. Yet nobody reported him to the police and even if they had done so it is unlikely that any action would have been taken.

Why does Japanese society and the law have such a nonchalant view towards animal abuse? Why is it not a serious offense in Japan to torture animals for fun?

Studies in America and Europe have shown there is a definite link between animal

abuse and violence against children or other humans. Youngsters who are cruel to animals are more likely to become aggressive towards humans as they develop. Most serial killers and mass murderers have a history of abusing animals in their childhood. Abused children may act out aggression and frustration on animals they perceive as more vulnerable than themselves.

Abuse against animals is taken seriously in these countries, where almost certainly this young suspect would have been placed in a reformatory, or at least under psychiatric treatment before things had gone too far. In Japan a child

who pulls wings off dragon flies, throws stones at cats, teases a chained dog or even glues up young puppy's eyes is indulged by parents and teachers who regard his actions as a childish prank. In this society, killing and mutilating animals is not regarded as abnormal as this case has shown.

Until animal abuse is recognized as a crime in Japan and punished accordingly, this cycle of violence is likely to be repeated with similar tragic results.

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• Please keep letters within 500 words. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity.

• All letters must be typed. Letters without the writer's name and address will not be accepted, although a pseudonym may be used if so desired.

• The original copy will not be returned to the writer. • Avoid writing letters in poetry form.

• Send your letters directly to "Reader's Forum," c/o MDN Tokyo office at: 1-1-1 Hitotsubashi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 〒100-51

To the Editor:

The recent murder-decapitation of an 11-year-old schoolboy in Kobe has shocked and stunned Japan, even more so since the accused in this crime is a 15-year-old boy.

Everyone from the media, education authorities, government officials to so-called "experts" like child psychologists have put forward their own theories on the root causes of this crime, laying the blame on the current school system, the breakdown of the family system, or the stress of modern life. There may be answers in all of these but more than anything the blame should be

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