

EARTHQUAKE CRISIS FOR ANIMALS

Just one year ago, last January, TV news programmes showed horrific pictures of the carnage caused by the Great Hanshin earthquake in Japan, which left 6,000 people dead and flattened towns and cities for miles around. Devastated areas are being rebuilt and the citizens have tried to return to their normal lives but the earthquake left one legacy that may never be resolved - thousands of homeless and ownerless stray dogs and cats still wandering the streets.

Some of these animals were miraculously reunited with their owners, only to be left to fend for themselves because pets were not allowed to stay in the makeshift shelters that had to be set up for the refugees. Even now, animals who have managed to survive amongst the mountains of rubble are still being found as bulldozers move in to demolish the last of the quake damaged buildings.

Volunteers at the Animal Refuge Kansai in Osaka, south west of Tokyo, are doing their best to rehome the strays - but with an estimated 250,000 dogs and 500,000 cats, it is a tall order. The Refuge's Director, Elizabeth Oliver says, "Most cats tended to stay inside the wreckage of their former homes, since there was some measure of shelter and security there. But the dogs fled in panic because the noise of sirens and the general chaos terrified them, and many of them ended up lost.

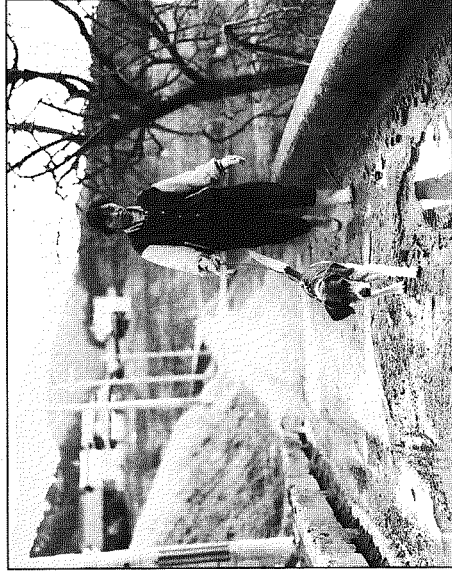
"We have urged local governments to allow people to have their pets with them. It is disheartening that even in a crisis like this, there is no sympathy for the

HOW YOU CAN HELP

One of the ways to help is to sponsor a dog (or cat) by making a one-off, or regular, donation to pay for the pet's upkeep. Readers who do this will receive frequent updates on their sponsored pet and will be able to help ensure that a dog is guaranteed a safe home until it is returned to its owner or can be rehomed.

Donations (made payable to ARK Animal Refuge Kansai) can be sent to: ARK Animal Refuge Kansai, Lloyd's Bank, Jersey, account number 0527350, or directly to ARK, 595 Noma Ohara, Nose-cho, Toyono-gun, Osaka-fu, Japan.

ARK are always looking for volunteers to work at the refuge. If you would like to know more write direct to ARK (address above).



Above: a rescued stray is taken for a walk near the refuge.



Left: Takatori is blind and semi deaf. Rescued from the worst affected area, he has since been rehomed.

plight of people with pets and certainly none for the animal victims themselves. The rebuilding work is taking much longer than at first predicted, due to the scale of the disaster."