

2 arcades remove live lobster games

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Protests by animal rights' activists have forced two game arcades—one in Shinagawa Ward, Tokyo, and the other in Osaka—to remove game machines in which players try to capture live lobsters and other sea creatures, it was learned Wednesday.

The removal of the game machines, called Submarine Catcher, came after the Tokyo-based Japan Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals demanded that arcades remove the machines because they torment living creatures. According to a spokesperson of the organization, the two arcades agreed to remove the machines after realizing that the game could have a bad influence on juveniles.

The society has sent letters of

protest to the manufacturers of the game and to 18 arcades, in prefectures throughout the country.

The game machines are produced by several manufacturers, including Osaka-based US Industrial Corp., and appeared on the national market this month. To date, 100 of the game machines, which cost ¥1.8 million each, have been sold, and orders have been received for another 200.

The manufacturers have responded to the society's protest by saying that lobsters are a food item. They pointed out that if the society's argument was taken to its logical conclusion, fishing ponds and some traditional games at festivals, such as scooping up goldfish—which are commonly accepted—would also be unacceptable.

A game arcade in Kobe refused to comply with the society's demand, saying that the game machine provides city dwellers—who usually have no chance of encountering live lobsters—with an opportunity to do so.

The society plans to send further letters of protest to the game makers and arcades that have not complied with their demand.

"There are game machines of the same maneuver-the-crane-and-catch type that offer toys as prizes instead of live animals. Therefore, our fear is that children will consider living creatures as being identical to toys. Players could enjoy the game purely as a game and throw away what they have caught—living creatures—after they've had their fun," the society said.