

Unsimple solution of putting pets to sleep

Inside the Weeklies

Putting pet dogs or cats to sleep out of pity or for convenience has sparked the same kind of debate and questions euthanasia has, reports the Feb. 22 issue of the Shukan Asahi.

The weekly cites an Asahi Shimbun newspaper article from last November that reported instances of foreign workers, who lived alone in Japan, putting their pets to sleep before returning to their homelands.

This article inspired many letters from angry readers, many of whom said keeping a pet to help lessen one's loneliness and then putting it to sleep because one is leaving for home is plain selfishness. Other readers felt the foreign workers did the right thing.

Teruo Iwamoto, who operates a hospital for animals, cited the case of an American who asked him to put his poodle to sleep because he was leaving for the United States. According to the weekly, the American had kept the dog for six years. The dog had a good pedigree and was in excellent health.

The veterinarian said he would try to find a Japanese owner for the dog. But the American insisted that it be put to sleep because it wouldn't be happy with any other owner. So the vet reluctantly gave the poodle a strong dose of anesthetic and ended its life.

Iwamoto said, "They (Americans in this instance) have a different religious outlook than the Japanese. I personally feel that a dog or cat should be put to sleep when keeping it alive will cause it pain. I think it is also permissible when the owner's job transfers him to another city

and his only other option is to force his pet onto another person."

Yuko Kato of the Ueno Zoo favors mercy killing of pets, especially in the case of a foreign owner who is temporarily living in Japan and therefore has few close Japanese acquaintances to leave his pet with when returning home.

Local governments nationwide disposed of 380,000 stray or abandoned dogs and 320,000 cats in 1989 by legally putting them to death.

The weekly says that a decision on the issue of putting pets to sleep is not easy to reach, just as the issue of human euthanasia is never easy to resolve.

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A group of men stand in the square facing the JR Fujimiya Station in Shizuoka Prefecture. Each one in turn sings at the top of his voice.

This is part of the curriculum of the "hell training" program provided by the Managers Training School in Shibakawa in the prefecture. Perhaps this is one of the most embarrassing moments for the students, but it is intended to reduce the inherent bashfulness of the Japanese, reports the Feb. 21 issue of the Shukan Shincho.

The school conducts two 13-day programs every month. It periodically places ads in the nation's leading dailies. It accepts 200 participants each time, and the cost is ¥288,000, plus ¥3,000 for materials and consumption tax.

Most of the students are sent to the school by small companies. The school claims that a total of 42,766 persons have enrolled in the "hell" program since the school was opened 12 years ago.

The weekly says that in virtually all cases the employers pay the expenses of the 13-day course during which the students live at the school.

The school's principal, Yasuo Motohashi, is quoted:

"The purpose of this school is to tap and develop the latent wishes and abilities of the salaried people and make these people aware of their abilities through training. When they complete the course they hug one another in joy, emotionally moved that they were able to show strength beyond what they thought capable."

The schedule is very rigorous. The wake up call is at 4:55 a.m., followed by two hours of early morning training. Breakfast, 7-8 a.m. Training again for four hours till noon. This includes vocal training, how to talk on the telephone, civilities, rapid writing, etc. More training in groups from 1 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Singing and discussing while eating dinner till 9:30 p.m. Altogether the program involves 160 hours of training during the 13 days.

Motohashi says that courtesy is given foremost importance, for it is the basis for developing human relations in the workplace. "Look at the other person's face, say 'good morning' clearly and bend from the waist up while keeping the neck and spine straight."

Even people in their 40s and 50s go through this exercise until the ever-watchful teachers are satisfied.

The school offers various

other courses such as the "freshmen's course" and a program for upper managerial staff. More than 130,000 persons have studied there, including the 42,766 who took the "hell training."

A 31-year-old section chief at a camera wholesale company who studied at the school in his mid-20s recalls there was a lot of memorizing to do and the physical training was tough, too, with pairs forced to walk 20 km at night.

This person says everything is forced on you at the school, so you don't ask yourself why you are doing what you are told to do. Just do as they tell you, and you'll get good marks.

The weekly also quotes Mitsuyuki Tominaga, president of the shoe wholesaler Marutomi as saying: "We have sent our middle management staff to the school from the very start, about 10 people each time, twice a year, with results; they come back with the ability to think like managers. That school is right-wingish, like an army. Army-like discipline is necessary in a company."

Yet Tominaga says one does not learn flexibility of thinking at the school, so the company provides that part of the education for its middle management. —Aquarius

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