

9/8/88

Daily News

yo And Osaka

● For subscript
or (06) 348-

Owners Asking Vets To Cut Vocal Cords Of Pet Dogs

KOBE — An increasing number of dog owners are having their pets' vocal cords severed to prevent them from being evicted from apartment houses, according to an animal hospital here.

Most of the owners are living in rented apartments which have a rule against keeping pets. Dogs, underexercised and obliged to spend their days in cramped quarters, are apt to relieve themselves by barking.

Other forms of keeping the animals quiet include sedating them with tranquilizers for human use, or putting on electric collars that shock the animal when it barks. Sales of the collars have increased by 20 to 30 percent during the past several years.

Up till now, surgery to cut vocal cords had been mostly conducted at university laboratories so that dogs used for research would not disturb nearby residents.

Families, however, have recently been visiting veterinary clinics to have the surgery performed on their dogs, mostly Maltese terriers, poodles and other toy dogs that tend to yap.

The operator of a Kobe animal hospital currently receives about 10 requests for the removal of vocal cords per month, a rate until about four or five years ago equaled number of requests for a whole year. The hospital does its best to refuse, but once in a while it gives in when an owner pleads the only alternate will be to take the animal to a public

health office where it will be put to sleep.

Similarly, the domestic animal hospital attached to the agricultural faculty at the University of Osaka Prefecture, admits to severing vocal cords of canines on six occasions during the past three months, whereas the rate was formerly once or twice a year.

No statistics are available at local veterinary societies, but Shigeo Ueda, vice president of the Hyogo Veterinarian Society, says although its members have agreed to avoid such surgery as much as possible, requests are on the increase.

Besides the anti-barking electric collar reportedly selling well at pet shops, other measures include inducing sleep with opiates and spaying or neutering the animals to prevent them getting excited when in heat.

Such steps, however, have drawn fire from Yasuhiko Aida, secretary-general of the Japan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, who says it is canine nature to bark and it is deplorable that some animals have been altered to suit their owners' convenience.

Also, Masanori Hata, an essayist who writes about animals, declares that dogs possess fine voices and owners should find pleasure in teaching them when and when not to bark.

The growing tendency to exclude dogs from housing indicates that people have become less tolerant compared with the past, he said.

Professor Kazuo Hayakawa, an environmental facility planning expert at Kobe University's engineering faculty, opines that although floor space per person is increasing and housing conditions are said to have improved, operators of housing facilities still persist in barring pets, children and elderly persons when setting up rules for occupancy.



MENTS