

7 Imported Chinese Camels Die In Nara



Sick camels lie on the ground last June.

NARA — Seven China-born camels imported for the "Nara Silk Road Exhibition" two years ago have died of stomach ulcers and rickets, it was learned Sunday.

A team of veterinarians led by Hiroshi Katamoto, a 33-year-old researcher at the University of Osaka Prefecture who performed autopsies on the Bactrian camels, attributed the cause of the deaths to stomach ulcers induced by mounting stress under the unfamiliar Japanese environment, which is completely different from that of their normal Inner Mongolia habitat.

They also said that the camels showed symptoms of the rickets, probably brought on by the lack of such minerals as calcium which they normally obtain from dirt, but could not in Nara as their pens were covered with gravel.

Katamoto, who is planning to report on the deaths at a November meeting of Asian veterinari-

ans in Thailand, said, "People are only concerned about making a show of the camels without having the knowledge to care for them. This is an apparent result of the lack of aftercare. It makes me angry to see them die so miserably in a foreign land."

The nine camels, five males and four females, were originally imported from Sichuan province as one of the main features of the April-September 1988 "Nara Silk Road exhibition."

According to Katamoto, the camels began showing a reluctance to stand in January 1989. Although two recovered, the others grew progressively weaker and died.

Bactrian camels, distinguished by having two humps, are domesticated as a beast of burden and were used on the Silk Road to carry silk, spices and silver. They are found throughout the highlands of Central Asia from Turkistan to Mongolia.

