

Readers in Council

Animal Experimentation

To the Editor:

Worldwide, between 100-225 million animals are blinded, burned, shocked, irradiated and tortured annually, supposedly to benefit human beings. In Japan alone, around 20 million animals are exploited annually. The situation for animals in labs here in Japan may be even more critical than it is in other countries for the following reasons:

1. There is no significant and well-organized anti-vivisection movement in this country. In Europe and the United States, some movements have existed for over 100 years.
2. The general public knows next to nothing about what is going on in laboratories here.
3. Japanese laws concerning laboratory animals are characteristically vague; lack essential safeguards to prevent cruelty, needless experimentation, duplication of experiments; etc.; and lack viable punishment or enforcement provisions.

At a recent conference in Tokyo which I attended on "Pain in Experimental Animals," I was very disappointed to find a fundamental lack of concern for animals in labs here. The main themes for discussion were ideal cage sizes and "what is pain?" The fact that these matters have yet to

be resolved indicates how far behind Japan is in comparison with other industrialized societies.

Bigger cages will not relieve the suffering of these animals; neither will attending hundreds of meetings of this type at which nothing is resolved. At this same conference, no one mentioned reducing experimentation, prohibiting unnecessary experiments or other ways of reducing animal suffering. The only way to stop animal suffering and ultimately abolish vivisection is to press the government of Japan to do the following:

1. Sponsor research on alternatives to animal experiments such as in vitro cultures

(the use of human cells to study human disease), etc. Such alternatives are not only cheaper, they are also more accurate since the use of animal models for the study of human disease is very unsatisfactory as human disease is extremely complex involving genetic, psychological and environmental factors.

2. Prohibit all duplicate experimentation and experimentation whose purpose has no connection with human disease (for example, cosmetic testing, warfare experiments, industrial chemical testing, etc.)
3. Spend money on programs to promote the prevention of illness by acting on the causes of human disease.

Cormorant-Fishing

To the Editor:

I was a bit surprised to see bird-lover Mark Brazil writing Wild Watch, (Aug. 15) a paean to cormorant-fishing, in which the famished bird — ring tight about its neck — is forced to disgorge fish after delicious fish that he has captured with great effort, just to amuse spectators.

As the writer must surely know, this "sport" is hardly fun to the poor cormorant and likely ranks with bull, dog and cock fighting — and the forced feeding of geese for paté de foies gras — as activities which bla-

tantly disregard the "rights" of the animals involved.

As the perceptive poet Basho wrote three centuries ago,

*At first fascinating,
in the end, depressing:
That's cormorant-fishing!*

While not about to mount a "Save the Cormorants" campaign, this article did cause me to wonder if there may be a distinction between bird watchers (which I am not) and bird-lovers (which I am).

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4. Prohibit all experiments done by minors.
5. Require that research facilities, including private companies, get permission for experiments and allow regular inspections by disinterested observers (such as members of animal welfare groups).
6. Prohibit repeated use of animals.

7. Prohibit all experiments on animals if a humane alternative exists.
8. Require anesthesia in all painful procedures and allow animal welfare groups to determine what "painful" means.

9. Institute strong punishments against researchers guilty of cruelty to animals.

Internationally, Japan is getting a very bad reputation for the way it treats animals in general. It is time, therefore, for people here to wake up and realize that, contrary to the *kawaii*, smiling, happy images of animals which surround us, animals are suffering a great deal in this country and that we, the general public, are in no way benefiting from this situation. Quite the contrary, we are becoming morally impoverished.

Furthermore, if we are any healthier than those before us, it is primarily due to improvements in hygiene, sanitation and diet, and not due to animal experiments.

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