

No house rule will deter a pet lover

Inside the Weeklies

Rental "mansion" (apartment) dwellers can keep goldfish in bowls, tropical fish in small tanks and birds in cages as pets, but not dogs and cats.

Apartment owners can keep dogs or cats if the maintenance association made up of themselves say it's OK to do so.

Shukan Yomiuri (July 26 issue) says that more than 60 percent of the Japanese people wish to keep and raise animals, according to a public opinion survey conducted by the Prime Minister's Office. Yet not many can do so, a big reason being the ban on pets in high-rise housing complexes.

There is a growing movement among "mansion" residents for a lifting of the ban.

Some are clandestinely defying the ban.

The weekly gives the example of Noriko, a 38-year-old housewife living in an apartment in the suburbs of Tokyo. She keeps the windows closed even on the hottest and sweatiest nights because she does not want the other residents to know that she is keeping a cat in defiance of the rule.

The building caretaker once found out four years ago. At that time Noriko gave her pet to an acquaintance with an independent home. But the cat apparently did not like her new home. Noriko took it back.

She temporarily "evacuates" the cat to her parents' or a friend's home in the dead of night when a utility man or a repairman is to come to her apartment for work the following day. She fears that these people may tell the caretaker when they see the cat.

Why do "mansions" ban the keeping of dogs and cats?

This is the explanation given by the Housing and Urban Servicing Public Corporation which has some 700,000 rental "mansion" apartments under its care nationwide.

"We ban the keeping of all animals, except small birds and fish. There are people who like animals and others

who don't. At one time we permitted cats, but complaints about the smell and meowing poured in. We do not deny the significance of keeping pets. Still we have to ban dogs and cats if we are to have a smooth communal life. However, the ban applies to rental apartments only."

Owner apartment dwellers have their own associations most of which ban pets just like the rental apartments. The approval of more than three-fourths of the residents is necessary to change the rules.

"Sun City" in Itabashi Ward, Tokyo, says the residents must not keep animals that "cause harm or trouble" to the other residents. Many residents were permitted to keep their pets when they promised their pets would not cause trouble.

"City Co-op Yashiohama" in Shinagawa Ward, Tokyo, banned pets when it opened in 1983. Yet a survey conducted three years later revealed that about 20 households kept dogs or cats. After talks among the residents, it was agreed that these pet owners would be allowed to keep them for "one generation."

Late last year, the Yokohama District Court ruled that

the regulation banning dogs and cats as pets in "mansion" apartments has "social rationality." This dealt a blow to dog and cat lovers.

The weekly quotes Fumio Kogure, director of the Tokyo Metropolitan Animal Protection and Control Association as saying that restricting the keeping of animals to independently standing homes is unreasonable, given the realities in Japan.

People who dislike dogs and cats say that once pets are permitted at the "mansion" housing complexes, there will be no way to restrain the practice. To this argument Kogure says that pet owners will clandestinely defy the ban. Fearing exposure, these people often do not raise their pets in the correct way. For example, they will not take their dogs to the veterinarian for anti-rabies shots. Kogure says it's better to lift the ban on pets after clearly establishing the rules to avoid causing trouble.

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The same Shukan Yomiuri issue says "Ark Eigo-ryo" is a somewhat unique dormitory. Located in a quiet residential area near the Keio Line's Chitose Karasuyama Station in Tokyo's Setagaya Ward,

the three-story structure opened in April. There Japanese studying English and native speakers live under the same roof for a period of three weeks. The men live on the second floor and the women on the third. Classes are conducted at night as all the students hold jobs. The roommates are students in Japan from the United States, Canada and Australia.

Here is the nightly schedule at the Ark Eigo-ryo:

7 p.m., free talking; 7:30 Lesson 1, listening and reading under a commuting instructor; 9:10 recess; 9:20 Lesson 2, role playing, discussion, presentation; 10:00 recess; 10:10 Lesson 3, one-to-three lesson with roommate; 11 p.m. end of lesson; 00:30 a.m., lights out.

The expenses of the American, Canadian and Australian roommates are paid by Ark. They study Japanese and methods of teaching English to Japanese while their Japanese students are working during the day.

The cost of entering Ark Eigo-ryo is approximately ¥230,000 for the three-week course. The students return home and study there on Saturday and Sunday.

— Aquarius

