

Readers' Forum

To the Editor:

I fully concur with Ms. Oliver's excellent response to Ms. Onose's letter about animals. However, part of the reason for the on-going pet animal crisis is surely the almost total lack of compassion in this country — particularly where animals are concerned. I realize the concept of "awaremi," — compassion — does not have the same connotations that it does in European languages, but it is represented here by the often heard, "kawaii" (cute) or "kawauso" (pitiful) — mere expressions of sentimentality. Perhaps this explains why people can say "Waa... kawaii..." as they pass pet shops with their merchandise stacked in cages on

the pavement — in icy winds or scorching heat; animals and birds, thin, sick, sad-eyed and filthy in days of excrement. Perhaps, too, this is why people can so easily trade in their dogs at Dog Exchange Days, knowing they'll be killed, or abandon dogs, cats, birds and rabbits all over the countryside, without a thought to the ghastly death awaiting them.

There are even societies of so-called animal lovers who rescue abandoned cats, neuter them, then abandon them again to convalesce from major surgery by the

Total lack of compassion
roadside, seaside, or in parks — exposed to the elements, to predatory dogs, or crows, which swarm on sick, injured or weak animals. Not only is this against the law, but it is a heartless and inhumane attempt to remedy the current crisis. There are undoubtedly well-

meaning grannies who'll feed such animals — like those at a Nada-ku graveyard of 20-plus perpetually diseased cats. "We feed them every day — except when it rains," they told me. It rains a good deal in Japan and domestic animals and humans alike prefer to eat daily, regardless of the weather.

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to Ms. Onose and Ms. Oliver about the animal situation in Japan. I, too, have spent time abroad, recently in Austria — and as an animal lover, it was a wonderful surprise to see how animals are treated there. Of course dogs and cats may accompany their owners onto buses and trains, into shops and at roadside cafes. Dogs can run free in parks, enjoying the company of other dogs. I asked several people why I saw no abandoned or stray dogs or cats. Two people seemed to understand my English, but not my question; a third laughed and said, "Of course there aren't any." Japan seems like a Third World country beside Austria.

Coming from the Kyushu countryside to Hyogo Prefecture several years ago was a great shock. I cannot seem to travel anywhere without seeing an abandoned or neglected animal. Two weeks ago, a friend visited from Kyushu and I planned a happy outing to the famous Kobe

Meeting the test of impartiality

To the Editor:

This is in reference to Alex Shishin's letter (Nov. 11, 12 in some areas). In the letter it is asserted that NHK's 7 o'clock News "ignores" some major news.

I would like to point out that NHK usually airs some fifteen regular news shows on weekdays on GTV (General TV). Among them the 7 o'clock News usually enjoys the highest ratings, but News at 6 a.m., 7 a.m., 6 p.m., 9 p.m., News at noon and our other news reports also are watched by many people and receive high ratings.

The examples he cited as "proof" that NHK News ignores certain stories because of political prejudice are not true. Kajima Corporation's alleged bribery of ex-Prime Minister Takeshita

Noboru was reported in NHK News at noon on Friday, Oct. 29, the day NHK DBS 1 covered it. The Japan Rail strike in Kansai last December was repeatedly reported in Kansai and was reported nationwide by NHK News at 6 a.m., 7 a.m., and 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 8 when the strike began. The Osaka foreign teachers' strike was first reported in Kansai on Friday, Aug. 19, then reported nationwide on News at 7 a.m. on Monday, Aug. 22.

Maybe Shishin-san missed these reports. But please note that NHK did cover those stories, and is committed to complete and impartial news coverage to meet all our viewers' needs.

KOICHIRO SHODA
Deputy Director,
Public Relations, NHK

Neglected animals

Ijinkan. The moment we reached Kitano-cho, we saw nine cats and kittens by the roadside. At least three were very sick. A resident told me there were more than 50 around, and many were diseased. While some people feed them and encourage them to proliferate, others (and I saw an example of this) hate them and throw stones at them. Near a shrine, another 10 cats were waiting. Some of these, too, were sick and thin. No one was responsible for them and no one was giving them veterinary attention. We rescued some

of the weaker sick cats and stayed with them until my husband came by car. Of course our outing was spoiled — we didn't even see the Ijinkan. My friend was disappointed to find Kobe such a backward place.

I have since called the Kobe city office to complain. They did not seem particularly interested. I didn't expect them to be concerned about the welfare of the animals, but I wonder why they are not interested in upholding the image of Kobe city? Truly, I am ashamed of my country.

HIROKO HAMAGUCHI
Nishi-ku, Kobe

Letters Welcome

Readers are invited to write to this forum on subjects of public interest. Letters must be signed and include full addresses (no post office boxes), although requests for anonymity will be honored. Visitors writing from hotels should provide home address.

Letters should be kept within 500 words, typed and double-spaced. Handwritten letters cannot be accepted. Do not send letters identical to those sent to other publications or copies made on office copiers. Only originals will be considered for publication. Avoid writing letters in poetry form. Send your letter directly to "Readers' Forum," MDN Tokyo office, at 1-1, Hitotsubashi 1-chome, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo (postal zone code number 100-51).

The editor retains the right to abridge letters and edit language deemed offensive, and is under no obligation to acknowledge receipt of a letter, return it to the sender or give reasons for not printing it. Under no conditions will letters be discussed over the telephone. — Editor

All these sentimentally motivated activities show an extreme lack of compassion and are contributing to the current crisis, rather than to the welfare of the animals. Compassion must be taught and regardless of whether, or when it is, Japan desperately needs an animal welfare law similar to those in other advanced countries of the world, similarly enforced and with similarly stiff penalties.

ASHLEA HASELGROVE
Education for Kindness to Animals
Mino, Hyogo