

introspective, lint-picking Canadians are among the world's great cat-owners.

—Right. They don't count either, especially the Canadians, whose police in most provinces until recently still pledged allegiance to the Queen.

But who is next in the pet-owning hit parade? Not New Zealanders or Scandinavians. They have about as many dogs and cats as we have. Nor the Dutch or the Germans. The Poles are continental Europe's greatest dog-owners.

Poor backward Poland. Veterinary care is primitive. Pet vaccines and food were non-existent during communist rule, but Poles remained inveterate pet-keepers.

Like the French, they keep twice as many pets as we do. But they are eliminated, too, because the root stock of their culture is similar to ours. Ask Ciapek or Minouche's owner: "What is your Christian name?" and they'll certainly know what information you want.

Japan. Now here's a radically different culture. You should see the quizzical expressions on my Japanese clients' faces when a nurse asks for their Christian names.

Pet-ownership is increasing more quickly in Japan than anywhere else. Already they have more pets per capita than the Germans.

The Japanese are the animal welfare movement's bad guys. They have no sensitivity to animal suffering. They cruelly kill dolphins in their quest for tuna. They harpoon whales. They eat dogs. I know, because so many people tell me. But what is true and what is caricature? Is there a radically different attitude to animals?

Let's clear up one fallacy first. Historically, the Japanese never ate dog. That gastronomic activity was and is restricted to Korea and China. (When I was in Seoul I asked a taxi driver to take me to a restaurant serving dog but, patriotic Korean that he was, he refused.)

Let's also forget about my Japanese clients' attitude to