

Dear Editor,

Most visitors to Kyoto wander through its temples and gardens impressed by its cultural and historical aura; they seldom see beyond the tourist facade. In one shopping arcade just off Teramachi where hundreds of tourists pass everyday, there exists a pet shop which doesn't on first sight look any different from other pet shops. It is only when you enter this shop that you can witness what I can best describe as an animal concentration camp. The interior is strangely silent because most of the animals and birds are too weak or too miserable to cry. They lie prone, piled in cages too crowded to move, diseased, foodless, waterless and suffocating in their own excrement. The stench itself should tell people something is wrong, but families with children go in and look at the cute animals; they are blind to their conditions.

Why is this shop permitted to exist and do business? About five years ago JAWS tried to get the place shut down, but the laws are weak and Kyoto city authorities apathetic. I feel that a campaign by foreigners might embarrass the authorities into doing something because Kyoto has its tourist image at stake. Therefore I am appealing to KTO readers for help. I want to bombard the city office with postcards asking them to act. Every signature will help. The postcards are printed, stamped and addressed, all you have to do is to sign and post them. I will send the post-cards for you to distribute to your friends if you let me have your address by phone (0727-37-0712). Those in or visiting Kyoto might like to see this shop for themselves. It is located in Kyogoku Arcade (which runs south from Oike-dori, parallel with Teramachi) where Rokkaku-dori crosses it. The shop called 'Kyogoku Pet Shop' is on the left side if you are walking south.

Yours sincerely
Elizabeth Oliver

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