

Attention house - [redacted] letter.

CORRECTION \*

Comments:

While the action of [redacted] and her husband in rescuing abandoned puppies and going to a lot of trouble to find them homes is admirable, I would advise others to be extremely CAUTIOUS when giving animals away to strangers. Cute puppies (and kittens) always attract an audience but the people who take them mostly do so on impulse, which is not the best way to take on a responsibility lasting 15 years or more. When the novelty and/or their cuteness wears off, they become another hokensho statistic. Finding homes for abandoned animals must be part of an education package to ensure that the cycle isn't repeated.

When stray puppies come to ARK we immediately vaccinate them and watch them for 10 days or so to make sure they're healthy before we consider re-homing them. Obviously people wanting a puppy who come here, have already given the matter considerable thought. Before showing them any puppy we assess, by talking to them at length, what kind of owner they are likely to be, what experience with animals they've had and whether they are able to take on the full responsibility of a pet. We try to match the character of the puppy with the circumstance of the family it's going to (i.e. a shy puppy is likely to be stressed in a family with young kids). Japanese tend to choose by outward appearances only. After they have chosen, we advise about health, the best way to look after their pet and of course NEUTERING. (All adult animals are automatically neutered before re-homing.) They receive a written explanation as a reminder of these points. In the case of adult animals we personally check their new home in advance. More than 20% of people coming here are rejected for various reasons, as potentially unsuitable owners.

Another danger in hawking animals on the street or advertising in newspapers or handing them over to pet shops is that one can be unwittingly prey to unscrupulous pet dealers who make easy money selling puppies and kittens to laboratories for experiments. There is one infamous pet shop in Kyoto which takes in animals for a 'small' fee (about ¥2000/3000) promising to find 'good' homes, then sells them onto laboratories for a further ¥ 2000 (if they are still alive after several days without food and water). The pet owner doing nothing makes money both ways.

Rescuing, in the short term certainly saves abandoned animals from starvation or being pecked to death by crows but sometimes their fate in the long term is far worse. The RSPCA have a good slogan we should keep in mind: If you don't want a dog, don't buy (take on) a puppy. Elizabeth Oliver, ARK Animal Refuge Kansai.

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