

ARK is located in the countryside to the north of Osaka Prefecture. Here the animals, about 60 dogs and puppies plus 20 cats and kittens are housed in happy spacious surroundings until new homes can be found for them. Many arrive in poor physical condition. They may be starved or mutilated. Worse still many are stressed and scarred psychologically by their experiences. With love and good treatment they can be rehabilitated to become loving pets.

Two people work full time looking after the animals and other volunteers come regularly. ARK publishes a quarterly newsletter and has an ARK supporters club with about 250 members. A new office building has just been opened with facilities for boarding of animals plus a place for volunteers to stay.

In spite of many people's contributions and support and the help of volunteers the reality we face is that no solution can be found unless the fundamental causes of the problem can be tackled and solved.

These are :

1. Too many unwanted animals.

Over the last decade there has been a huge pet boom in Japan, encouraged by breeders, pet shops, pet food

companies and stimulated by the mass media, all of which encourage people to keep pets without explaining the responsibility, time, space and money involved. Pets have become a kind of fashion or accessory. When they are out of fashion they get discarded like other commodities. They are often bought as toys for children then thrown away when the children lose interest in them. Many people let their pets breed uncontrollably, the resulting offspring dumped in parks or river banks in mountains or taken to the Hokensho. There is little government encouragement to make people neuter their pets and almost no subsidies to help them pay the high cost of neutering. Veterinarians are only interested in making money, not in promoting neutering. One unneutered female dog produces 60,000 off-spring in 6 years. One un-neutered female cat produces 450,000 in 7 years. People who think neutering is cruel should consider these statistics.

2. Too many thrown away animals.

Why do people throw away pets which they have often bought at great expense? One reason is that they buy on impulse, seldom considering whether they have facilities for

keeping them or indeed how big they will become. Take a case where a family are attracted by a cuddly St. Bernard pup they see in a pet shop. They decide to buy it although it's expensive. Within six months it grows into a huge 60 kg. dog. It becomes too strong for the children to take for walks and because it isn't given enough exercise starts to destroy their house and garden. Being long-haired it sheds hair and needs a lot of grooming, it also has to be kept in an air-conditioned room in summer. Food bills and veterinary costs mount up. It's not only troublesome but also costs a fortune to keep. If this family had given the matter some thought

before they bought it they wouldn't be faced with what to do with such a huge unwanted dog later.

In other cases the family situation changes and the animal becomes inconvenient or unwanted in their lives.

There are many other trivial reasons for throwing away pets but more than any other, housing is a key factor in pet abandonment. Most apartment buildings forbid the keeping of pets so people keep them secretly. It may be easy to hide a small puppy but when it becomes an adult dog they are found out. People need pets in their lives. They make wonderful companions for elderly people and for children, they are not only

