

cent), factories' and construction matter, the poll said.

Why A Dog's Life Is Better Than A Cat's

Some pets are now being treated as one of the family, with health insurance and funeral services becoming an increasingly common luxury for the beloved Rover and Kitty.

But the trend also has a tragic side. Just last month a teenage girl in Osaka jumped to her death with a stray kitten in her arms when she was told by her mother that she could not keep the stray.

And while the lucky ones get plenty of tender loving care, their unwanted litter are often heartlessly disposed of at local animal centers.

According to a report issued by the Prime Minister's Office, the number of cats that were killed after being taken into animal centers in 1986 was 270,000.

The figure marks an dramatic increase of 70,000 over 1981. The number of dogs destroyed in the same period, conversely,

have decreased from 470,000 to 440,000.

The trend can be seen nationwide. At the municipal animal center in Suminoe-ku, Osaka, the number of cats taken in to be put down rose from 3,800 in 1981 to 5,500 five years later. The number of dogs, on the other hand, decreased from 3,600 to 2,600.

In Kobe, 6,400 cats were destroyed in 1983, compared with 7,200 in 1986, and 8,200 last year.

"Most of the cats that are brought into us are cross-breeds," said a vet at the animal center. "On some days, we put down over 44 cats in one day. And almost all are newborn kittens."

A pet shop in Hirano-ku, Osaka, began a service last year to house unwanted pets for 500 yen a day until a new owner was found. On busy days the store is asked to keep 14 cats or dogs.

Nine-tenths are cross-breed kittens, according to the pet shop

owner, and "Over half of the pet owners live in apartments and don't have the space to raise the whole litter."

But why so many cats, and not dogs?

When people live in apartments, it's hard to raise a dog," says Minoru Nakahama, the chairman of Nyan (meow) Yukai, a group of cat lovers based in Minami-ku, Osaka. "And so I think this is a reflection of the change in how people live."

"In the past, people just left their unwanted litter outside, hoping someone would take the kittens home. But people nowadays seem less attached to the kittens, and want to get rid of the problem more permanently."

"What to do with unwanted kittens is admittedly a serious dilemma," Nakahama added, "but they are living animals, and I wish people would invest a little more love and care into

them."

Novelist and noted animal lover Yukio Togawa faults rising land prices for the phenomenon.

"One of the major factors in the increase in euthanasia of cats is that people can't afford to live in single homes anymore. But if you're going to let your cat out—side, there's always the possibility that the owners are going to wind up with an unwanted litter on their hands. And it's the owner's responsibility to get their pets spayed," Togawa said.

"The number of people who regard pets only as objects of temporary affection are increasing," he said. "And I think the number of cats being destroyed are going to increase even more in the near future."