

OVERSEAS NEWS

Japan as we saw it

MY HUSBAND and I recently visited Japan. One of the main reasons for our visit was to find out how dogs are treated there.

Due to traffic problems we were unable to fulfil two planned appointments. One to the Japan Animal Welfare Society office in Tokyo and the other to the Prime Minister.

However we did manage to meet representatives from the Japan Veterinary Medical Association (vice-president and the secretary general), The Small Animal Veterinary Association (executive director), Central Canine Enterprise Association in Japan (president) members from The Japanese Society of Human Care of Animals, the Kennel Club (president) and a representative from the British Embassy.

We also attended, and I judged at, the Asian F.C.I. two day championship show, and met presidents of all the clubs, who were members and affiliated members of the Asian F.C.I. also the Swiss president of the Club.

No four-legged animal was ever eaten in Japan until the end of the nineteenth century. The first laws for the prevention of cruelty to animals were brought into force by the Shogun Tokugawa Tsanoyoshi who was born in the Year of the Dog, so they had special significance for him.

Later, of course, the laws have been altered and we have been issued with translations of the current ones, issued from the Prime Minister's office. They were instigated about 12 years ago, and laws controlling experiments on animals were issued eight to nine years ago. The Prime Minister is greatly concerned about animal welfare and this was why we had initially arranged an interview with him. He wanted to explain the laws personally. The translation shows that they have a very responsible attitude towards animals.

They have a huge educational programme. Books are available in all public places and in veterinary surgeries. Children's books, on how to care for animals, are distributed around the schools with beautifully illustrated amusing pictures. Posters are on display, even on walls in Tokyo, all expressing the need to care for animals. There is a special week put aside in September for "Be-kind to Animals" week and many functions are performed to encourage good ownership of pets, with prizes for pets in best condition etc.

In spite of this legislation and protection cruelty is occasionally found, but, as they said to us: "Does this not sometimes occur in your country?" (All too often, was the answer).

About 15 years ago a company in Tokyo set about exploiting dogs. They bought up pedigree dogs by the hundreds and breed them for profit.

This company scandal gave the Japanese a bad name and because of it many breed clubs in Britain try to stop export of dogs to Japan. This company was prosecuted by the Japanese authorities and the people responsible were put into prison. We were told that the president of that company is still in prison, 15 years later. They asked what more could they do to show their concern for the prevention of cruelty.

I had with me leaflets published by JAWS and their advert from the DOG WORLD Crufts Supplement. The authorities who were speaking with us took the papers and said they would investigate their articles to verify the truth of their statements.

We visited a Dogs' and Cats' Home controlled by the Tokyo Metropolitan Council. It was a purpose-built area with outside kennels for use when it was hot, and a large exercising area. The public were allowed to use this for exercising their own dogs and children were encouraged to play with their dogs on this grassed compound.

The people in charge of the home took us around. In the entrance hall was a large notice board displaying photos of dogs and cats. Our interpreter told us they were notices sent in by people trying to trace their lost and much loved pets. The director said these pictures would be in several places such as veterinary practices and shops to help the owners locate their pets.

There was an excellent well equipped hospital room. The dogs in the main part were housed in a corridor-type building. The service door was locked, but opened up for us to examine the inside. There was a central gangway with doors off to the various kennels. The place was exceptionally clean with no odour.

The dogs were up to four in a kennel except in the case of puppies which could be up to six. The dogs were of mixed sizes and breeds. All were as comfortable as possible. Around the kennel block, on the outside, was the public path. All the kennels were inside and there were large windows in the walls into every kennel for people to view the inmates. This prevents disease being introduced from the outside as no one touches the dogs. If people bred a litter of puppies and could not place them all in good homes, they were encouraged to bring them to this Dogs' Home. There were special facilities for puppies kept in individual pens and people were looking around these, while we were there, choosing their prospective pet.

When a lost dog or cat is brought into the home it is examined by a vet, then kept separately in quarantine for five days. Then, if it is in good health, it was transferred into one of the other kennels.

We only saw one dog that was thin and undernourished and were told it had only been in the home for seven days. It was wearing a collar so must have belonged to someone, and they were searching for the owner. They assumed that it must have been lost for some time because of its condition and in seven days it has not time to fill out.

The animals in this home had five days in quarantine and 15 days in the main kennel. If unclaimed by then, they were transferred to another home in Tokyo where they were kept for a further five days. If unclaimed they were put down using CO2 gas. To try to trace ownership adverts were placed in three daily newspapers.

Dogs which bite humans are not put down as they are in this country. Their owners are held responsible and undergo instruction on how to care for their pet. Only if it happens repeatedly would the dog be taken away. The

dog that bites has to stop a compulsory 14 days in quarantine at the dog pound so that it can undergo tests to make sure it is not a carrier of rabies. At the end of 14 days it is returned to its owners. One such dog (a longhaired GSD) was undergoing this treatment.

Japan is rabies-free, but unlike Britain, it inoculates against it, so there is always a chance that a dog could be a carrier, hence the precaution.

We thought that the "Hino Memorial Park" would be the least interesting of our visits. Actually it turned out to be one of the most enlightening. It showed very well the Japanese attitude towards animals. Not only were they loved and cherished in life but also in death. Animals are the same before Buddha as people, so both deserve similar treatment.

There was a beautiful outside garden with statues of dogs, cats and people. Waterfalls and flowering shrubs, notably flowering cherry trees, created an atmosphere of peace and contentment. Behind this garden was a shrine, specially for the funeral ceremonies of animals. It was a beautiful place with seats for the mourners and filled with the perfume of incense.

We went from there into a more traditional type cemetery.

Other animals were there, and I noted a plot dedicated to three horses. These had actually been interred there, but most animals were cremated.

We saw several rooms lined with shelves which held the cremated ashes of various pets. The beautifully decorated ceramic urns filled the shelves along with photos and toys of those held there. Not only were there dogs and cats, but other pets, including monkeys.

We went into a mausoleum which was of special interest. It was for people who wished to be with their animals in death.

We passed places which were set aside for humans and saw shrines to those. The cremation ovens were the same for both animals and people.

Eventually, after about ten years, all the ashes of the dead, human and animal, were distributed over the mountains, since Buddha says all must return to earth.

The FCI Asian championship show in Tokyo, was a two-day show for all breeds. They held puppy classes on the first day and adult classes on the second. It was unbenched and the dogs had their own crates. Some seemed a bit small, but since visiting two of our championship shows, I realise we also keep dogs in crates I would consider too small.

The show was held inside a huge hall, 34 rings plus a large main ring. The rings were clearly marked and the floor very clean. At the end of two days the floor was just as clean as at the beginning. All excrement is cleaned up by the exhibitors immediately, using their own plastic bags. All grooming hair is collected and none allowed to stay on the floor.

Their dogs were very clean and well presented. The main ring was used, as at Crufts, for entertainment, showing obedience exhibitions and formation demonstrations, until required for the group judging.

There was a big ceremony, when the Prime Minister introduced the president of the Asian FCI, Mrs Hans Muller. St Bernards from his country, Switzerland, were paraded for all to see. All international judges were separately introduced and stood while their national anthems were played. The president of the Japanese KC, Mr T Kariyabue, also gave a speech. Television and news coverage continues throughout.

Trade stalls were similar to our own, with lots of brightly coloured dog kennels and crates. Some of them were of a very intricate design and obviously very expensive. Clothing was available with typical dog motifs. One of the more unusual stalls sold cardboard-type pet coffins. They were beautifully lined and covered in sprays of artificial flowers.

Mrs W Lockyer from the British Embassy came specially to talk to us. This was the first dog show she had attended.

They have a slightly different group system to ours. There are seven groups, judged separately for dogs and bitches, since the sexes do not compete until the very end. The largest is the working group with 17 breeds, toys with 16, sporting, non-sporting and Japanese with 10 each and hounds and terriers with eight each. The best male in show is named The King, and the female, The Queen. These two then compete for BIS which was a splendid Siberian Husky.

This show was Japan's second largest international show after the FCI World Show held in 1982. FCI champion winner was a wonderful Maltese, and from the previous day, best puppy was a smart Doberman (with cropped ears) and a wonderful mature Chow was best baby. Therefore, at the end of the day, there were four winners. The Prime Minister presented a cup, as did the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for one of the two adult winners.

There was a closing ceremony where the four winners were presented with cups and magnificent rosettes, donated by the JKC. The President of the JKC then gave all the judges, and their guests, and all the honorary officers of the Asian FCI a gift.

The president of the Japanese KC gave us a private audience. He explained that the JKC was an international organisation for advising and helping dog lovers, established in 1949. It is the only canine body incorporated in Japan, and is a member of the FCI and the Asian Kennel Union. The JKC have a membership of over 100,000. They issue over 200,000 pedigree certificates per year and the number of registrations ranks second in the world.

The JKC office is in one of the main streets in Tokyo, and the president gave us a tour through this nine-storey building, which was completed in 1982.

They hope soon to incorporate a computer. The president said he had learnt a lesson from the British KC since he knew they had experienced problems with its installation. He said that they would not change their present working arrangement until they were sure that the computer was working correctly.

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