

When I'm overwhelmed with puppies and run out of space I have to make a decision and take some of them to the JAWS (Japan Animal Welfare Society) 'Rescue' Centre, where I know they'll be put to sleep. (Out of 10,000 animals that pass through there annually, only about 50 find homes) and that is the ONLY humane centre of its kind in the whole of Japan. The rest? Well Japan efficiently mops up surplus animals as garbage (see enclosed article on Morinomiya, I have pictures too which I'll send if you have use for them). In contrast to the public dog pounds in Japan, rescue centres in the US are paradises.

You ask how Japan is addressing the problem of companion animal over population. There is no answer because as yet animals are not regarded as other than rubbish by the authorities. You can see (by other enclosed letters and articles) the overall attitude to pets. I think that answers your question.

Veterinary surgeons are animals worst enemies. Most are people who wanted to become doctors but failed to reach the required level, hence they became vets. They are often frightened of animals, unqualified and charge exorbitantly (people never question their judgement). Some recommend abortions in preference to spaying (so they can earn more) - almost none will euthanise an animal however critically it is injured or in severe pain (again a monetary objection) and many actually create worse damage through mismanagement. I could give countless examples.

The local governments seldom give spaying subsidies (although certain areas are more enlightened than others). Osaka is at the bottom of the league despite being a rich prefecture and city. So people bring their surplus puppies and kittens to the public pounds where they are heaped in boxes and vinyl bags (literally) and left to die. Nonsense to waste public money even killing them. No advice whatsoever about spaying. So naturally with spaying costs so high (average ¥30,000) people prefer to use the convenience of the pounds for off-loading.

So you see I'm battling against overwhelming odds. I'm not struggling entirely alone because there are some like-minded Japanese - many who've been fighting for years longer than I have. But the majority are elderly women who do the best they can but who can't see the wood for the trees. To them money for education or PR means less food for the precious few animals they rescue.

I'm preparing to build an office (on land adjoining mine) having got a bit saved by. My aim is to concentrate on the educational side, to collect data (miserably lacking now) side by side with the rescue/rehoming. It's a drop in the ocean but I'll try. Most welfare people here are on the other side - 'It's-all-so-sad-but-what-can-we-do'. Your article has given me tremendous inspiration because it's what I believed in all along. Let's keep in touch and
THANK YOU.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Oliver