

Earthquake Animal Crisis

The Great Hanshin Earthquake which reduced thousands of building to rubble in a few seconds on January 17th, and cost over 5400 people their lives, also took its toll on the animal populations in the affected areas. We estimate that nearly 250000 dogs and 500000 cats, as well as other animals have been affected. Many must have been trapped under collapsed buildings to die slowly of their injuries or engulfed by the fires that swept some districts. Others, terrified, pulled loose from their collars and fled through broken walls and gateways towards the mountainsides. The lucky ones rescued by their owners were taken to safety in evacuation centres.

ARK suffered no structural damage though many animals were traumatized by the quake. Our main concern has been how to deal with the crisis, how to cope with the flood of animals invariably made homeless or ownerless by the quake. We owe a great deal of gratitude to IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare), who immediately flew in an emergency expert from the US and who made funds instantly available for our use. They have also provided two specialists including a vet to help us. We started by preparing extra places for animals within the present facilities, next we began to build an emergency facility on land rented nearby. It was difficult to procure prefabricated building or basic building materials as supplies have dried up in the Kansai. We have therefore constructed two simple vinyl houses and built kennels and cat houses inside. We can now accomodate about 80 dogs and 80 cats and/or small animals in addition to the 100 dogs and 50 cats already at ARK.

Support from friends of ARK as well as from well-wishers has flowed in, both in cash and kind. To everyone who has been so generous, we can only say thank you from the bottom of our hearts. From the staff, volunteers, the rescued animals and myself.

Elizabeth Oliver . Director ARK.