

Have you ever heard of “A Dream Box”? Do you think it’s a present? Or a Jack-in-the Box? Maybe a lottery box? The answer is none of those. In fact, it’s a type of box used for culling dogs and cats at animal slaughterhouses. It was given that name in the hope that the animals in these boxes would pass away while dreaming. In reality, lots of scratches can be seen inside the boxes ... 10 years ago in Japan, about 200,000 dogs and cats were culled annually. Last year, it dropped to 2000 thanks to efforts made by animal rights groups and local governments. And yet, we also need to find another way to save animals being slaughtered.

Today, I would like to share a little bit about animal intelligence. My pet cats cleverly discerned each family member’s role. Mom was ranked in the first place because she fed them. I was in second place as I played with them. So, who do you think was in the last place? You might have guessed. Yes, it was my dad. They approached him only when he was reading the newspaper to get his attention. I realized that the ability of animals to observe the people around them helps foster strong emotional connections between pets and their owners. In the Book of Genesis, we can read about the Great Flood, when Noah sent out a raven and a dove from the ark. Because Noah already knew the habits of these creatures, he could check whether the surface of the ground was dry or not by using their animal intelligence. In ancient times, humans coexisted and worked with animals, and still nowadays, we can see some creatures working in a similar way. Assistant animals, rescue dogs, police and the military dogs are all examples of animals which work with people. By bringing the best out of them, they live in peace and happiness without the fear of being slaughtered.

Do you have any ideas to make our society animal friendly? I would like to share my ideas with you. How about creating sanctuaries, where researchers can study animals and put animal intelligence into practice. My idea is that rescued animals could be kept in the sanctuary which would be run by the national government in different parts of Japan. If we create such places for animals, we could take care of them and give them training so that they build their confidence to get along with people. Also, through studying animal intelligence, if we provide them with suitable direction along with their ability, animals would show their best working. For example, trained dogs have ability identifying certain scent can inform a patient before his attack starts. Amazing! Cats’ abilities to bond with human and understand their moods can provide emotional support and companionship at nursing homes or orphanages. How sweet! Of course, we’d welcome new owners to adopt them and provide their new owners with good directions. All we can do is to prepare places, jobs and give opportunities to animals in order to let them be a part of society. Animal intelligence can broaden our horizons. Yuriko Koike, the Tokyo governor, is working on a policy called “Zero Slaughter”. That’s amazing but I’d like to change that concept from “not killing” to “living in harmony with animal intelligence”. In the end it is important to respect animal rights and help them sleep and have sweet dreams. That encourages me to be a part of this mission as a trainer of a sniffer dog. I’m sure to make them happy and a positive difference. We don’t need dreamless boxes any more. Instead, why don’t we get on board our “A Dream Ark”?

玉田 倫渚

筑陽学園中学校

Animal Intelligence