



Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. I also appreciate that I could hear various lectures concerning veterinary nursing.

I live and work as a veterinary nurse in Aomori City. I would like to speak about the future of the veterinary nursing profession by taking examples from our hospitals.

The data for the graph shown here [slide 2] was taken from a survey conducted by the Japan Pet Food Association. According to the graph, in 2008 there were 23.101 million dogs and 10.89 million cats owned in Japan. These numbers are increasing every year. In Aomori, just like everywhere else in Japan, dogs and cats are raised with care in people's houses. So their life spans have been greatly extended and 15-year-old dogs are no longer rare. Thanks to preventive medicine, the aging of pet dogs and cats is rising just like for humans, a situation which creates a growing need for animal hospitals.

This image [slide 3] shows the make-up of our staff. We have one veterinarian and six veterinary nurses. Our hospital is run with only these seven workers. We are always accepting applications for veterinarians, but can only secure one or two due, partly, to our locality. If you know any veterinarian who might be interested in working with us, please let me know. So, the role that our veterinary nurses have to play is very important. They are performing roles which all medical professionals (other than doctors) would play in basic medicine, namely they are nurses, pharmacists, radiological technologists, clinical laboratory technologists, and nutritionists, as well as carrying out the duties of receptionists and janitors.

These images [slide 4] show part of our employee

registration form. I went to a public job placement office 18 years ago when I was asked what position we were hiring for. I wasn't sure what job title I should use, but after consideration, I answered "veterinarian's assistant." That's why our employee registration from 18 years ago has the entry of such job title. Today, we use the title "veterinary nurse." The six veterinary nurses at our hospital are no longer just veterinarian's assistants waiting for instructions from the veterinarian. They are each required to work independently and responsibly. Thus, 18 years after the day I went to that job placement office, the title "veterinary nurse" is now used at our hospital.

What is important at the forefront of veterinary medicine is, I think, that we, the veterinary nurses, gain the trust of pet owners, veterinarians, and our colleagues. We need to make the effort to enlarge and strengthen that trust. To achieve that, veterinary nurses must acquire both nursing skills and communication skills.

Several years ago, our hospital hired three newly graduated veterinary nurses. I thought it would be a good chance to hold a customer service training session at our hospital. So we invited an instructor to come to Aomori because that would cost less than sending all the staff to Tokyo to attend a training session. The lecture included role playing exercises and I felt it very meaningful. But the next day I received a letter of resignation from one of the nurses. The reason given was that she had become a veterinary nurse because she wanted to interact with animals, not with humans. However, I still believe that good communication skills are indispensable for veterinary nursing because a veterinary nurse is there to speak for animals that are unable to speak for themselves and to intermediate between the owner and veterinarian.

These are pictures of the entrance of our hospital [slide 7]. I think that veterinary nursing already begins when the pet owner first opens the door of the hospital, or even the moment they park their car in the parking lot. Indeed, at our hospital, many pet owners wait for their turn in the parking lot. Therefore, we need to pay attention to a space wider than the interior of the hospital. That means that veterinary nursing takes place in various places and situations.

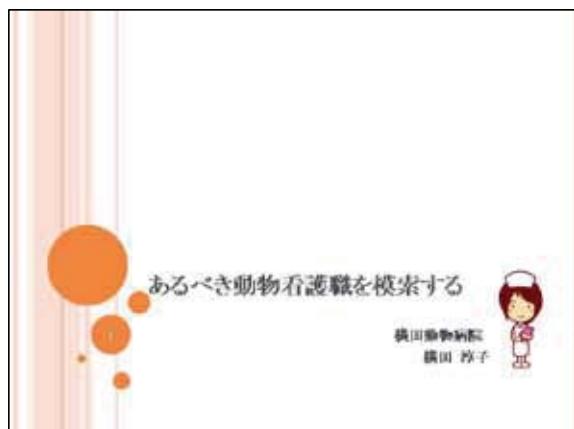
Currently, there are no unified standards in terms of a certification system, the title of the occupation or the scope of work for the veterinary nursing profession. When these standards are established, the veterinary nurses (or whatever the unified title may be) can evolve into the next stage.

Moving to the next stage means becoming professionals committed to animal care [slide 9]. So, we have to study more to improve the quality of our care, offer that care to a higher quality, and seek to fulfill a role in society as professionals. To offer better care for animals is the role that veterinary nurses should play in any society where humans and animals live together. By fulfilling this role, veterinary nurses can facilitate social recognition of our profession.

The Japanese Veterinary Nursing Association (JVNA), the first professional organization for veterinary nurses in Japan, was established this past May [slide 10]. It is a nation-wide organization, and I joined it with a view to offer whatever support is needed to improve the status of veterinary nurses. As I said earlier, it is certainly necessary to improve the quality of animal care as professionals, but there are many issues to be solved such as the lack of a unified certification system, a low credibility level and low recognition in society, poor pay and poor benefits, etc. The JVNA is operated by a few members working without pay and needs more members to tackle these issues. It may take five years, or even 10 years till the organization becomes able to offer its members benefits that match the membership fees. However, we need to join together, hand in hand, and take a step ahead. I think that's the only way to build our future.

So, I would like to invite all the veterinary nurses here and across the country to join together to move forward into the future. To pet owners and other animal-related professionals, I would like to ask for your continued support. [slide 10].

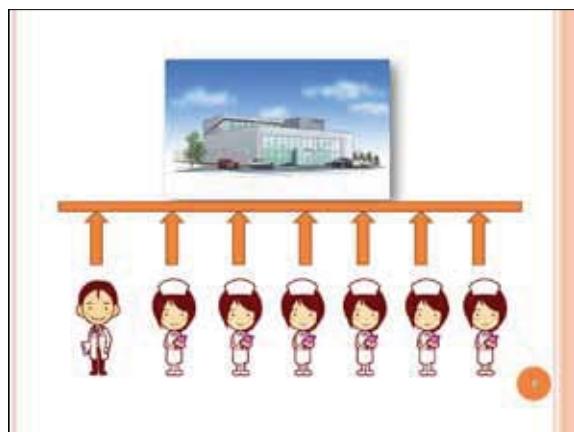
Thank you very much for your kind attention.



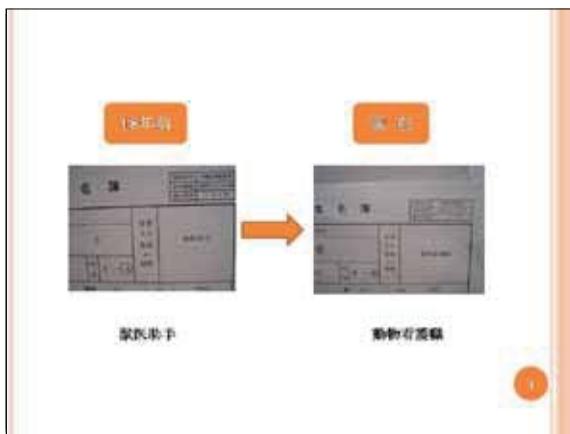
【スライド1】



【スライド2】



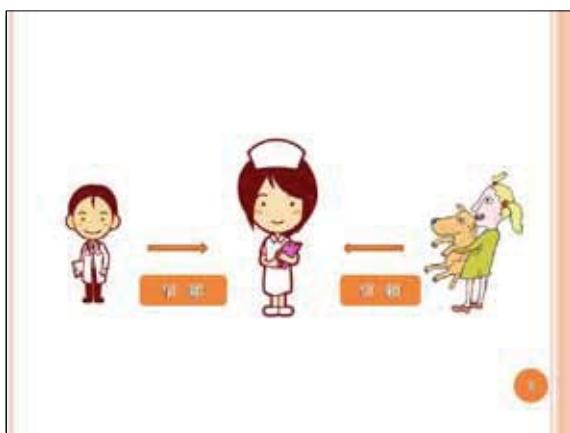
【スライド3】



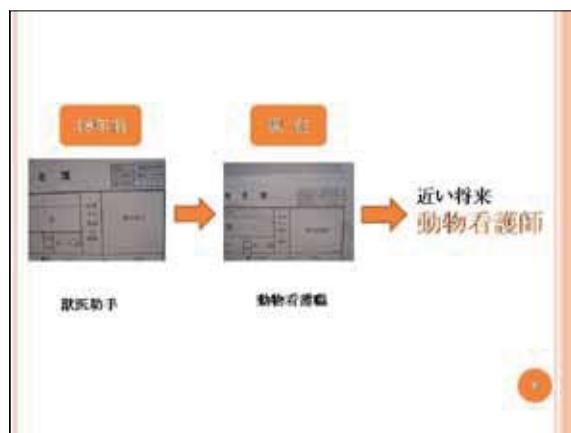
【スライド4】



【スライド7】



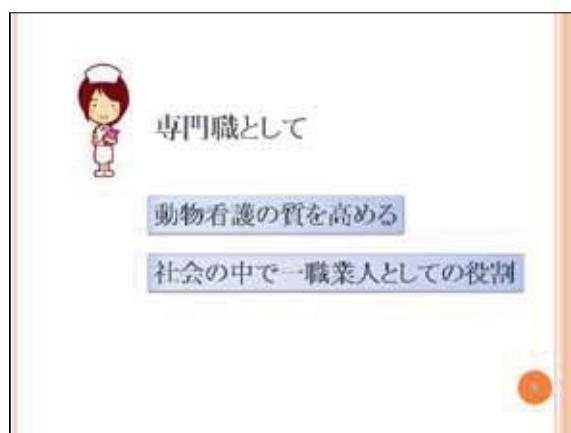
【スライド5】



【スライド8】



【スライド6】



【スライド9】



【スライド10】



【スライド 11】

