

人と動物の絆

Ties Between People and Animals

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第2回神戸アニマルケア国際会議2012の開催おめでとうございます。開催に際し投稿させていただきます。

さて、神戸市は、1995阪神・淡路大震災によって壊滅的な被害を受けました。都市部に起こった直下型の大震災としては、関東大震災以来の被害の大きさを持ったものでした。神戸のみで考えれば、500年ぶりの未曾有の災害でありました。以来神戸での被災者は「一日も早い復興」そして「安心して安全なまちづくり」を合言葉に復興への様々な事業に取り組んできました。当時わが国では「ボランティア元年」といわれ、「絆」「希望の灯り」などなど被災者やボランティア活動に携わった方々の心に深く刻まれた言葉がありました。

そして、2011年3月11日に発生した「東日本大震災」その後発生した「福島原子力発電所の事故」は、これまたその規模・被害の大きさにおいて、世界で4番目の震度に象徴されるように未曾有の災害でありました。加えて、第2次世界大戦時に投下された原子爆弾によって放射能汚染等の被害を受けたわが国は、また放射能被害に苦しむこととなりました。

しかしながら、大きな悲しみと恐れに支配された私たちは被災地から遠く離れているものの、この度のような広域大規

模自然災害に対して何らかの支援をしなければならないと感じ、阪神・淡路大震災当時全国の皆様からいただいた、大きな支援にお応えするものとして、私自身も微力ではあるものの4月に入り仙台空港が臨時に開港した時期被災地に入り、被災者の皆様、とりわけ動物に関する支援体制の調査、要望の聞き取りを行い「災害時動物救援対策本部」等関係機関に要望してまいりました。

その際に、被災地での「動物救護対策支援センター」を作るに際して、地元自治体の対応は、やはり被災者優先で対策が実施されるため、動物に関するものまではなかなかといった対応も見られました。が、阪神・淡路大震災を経験した私たちにしてみると、動物の一時預かりや里親探しといった、被災動物にのみ関係する支援活動ではあっても、被災者の自立した復興に向けて、被災者自らが悲しみから復興への立ち上がりへと「被災者意識」の転換を図ることができる重要な事柄のひとつであると確信しています。

「絆」は2011年の言葉に選ばれました。まさにこの「絆」こそが、追い込まれがちな被災者意識を救える唯一のものであると考えます。「人と動物の絆」は「人と人との絆」に通じる極めて重要なものであると考えます。

I offer my congratulations for the holding of the 2nd Live Love Animals International Conference on Animal Care in Kobe 2012. To mark this occasion, I would like to contribute the following message.

As we are all aware, Kobe City suffered catastrophic damage as a result of the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. Furthermore, because the epicenter of the quake was very close to a central urban area, the scale of the resulting damage was the largest of any earthquake in Japan since the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. And if we consider Kobe alone, the disaster was unprecedented in the previous 500 years. In the years since 1995, the people in Kobe who were affected by the disaster have undertaken a wide variety of reconstruction projects under catchphrases such as “reconstruct as soon as possible”, “safe and sound urban development”. Following the earthquake, the Japanese government declared 1995 “the Year of the Volunteer” and several previously unremarkable words, such as “kizuna” (bonds or ties), “light of hope”, etc., became deeply engraved in the hearts of both disaster victims and people working as volunteers.

The Great East Japan Earthquake, which struck on March 11, 2011, registering as the fourth largest earthquake ever recorded worldwide, and the consequent Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident have added up to an unprecedented disaster for Japan in terms of both the extent and the scale of the destruction. In addition this country, which suffered radioactive contamination from the atomic bombs of the Second World War, is now once again contaminated by radioactive fallout due to the nuclear accident.

Although in Kobe we are geographically distant from the present disaster area, we are swayed by a deep sorrow and concern for the

victims. Naturally we acutely feel obligated to extend any kind of support we can to the extensive area affected by this large-scale natural disaster. After the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, Kobe received a huge amount of support from people across the nation. As a small gesture of reciprocation for that support, I myself visited the disaster area in April, after Sendai Airport was tentatively reopened. While there, I carried out an investigation by talking to victims of the disaster. In particular, I researched the support system for animals, and sent requests to the relevant authorities such as the Emergency Animal Rescue Headquarters.

On that occasion, the response from local governments to our requests to set up an Animal Rescue Support Center was not very enthusiastic. Every priority was being given to measures to help the human victims of the disaster. However, from our viewpoint as having experienced the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, we knew that carrying out support activities for animals affected by the disaster, (such as temporarily keeping them or looking for foster owners), would serve to aid many disaster victims in their own efforts to recover. As such, these activities are important for helping those affected by the disaster to shed their “disaster victim mentality” and move from a state of being mired in sorrow to one of rising toward recovery.

“Kizuna” was chosen as a defining word of 2011. I believe that this “kizuna” is something that can rescue people from the “disaster victim mentality” that naturally afflicts so many of those who survive through the disaster itself. In this context, I consider ties between people and animals to be an extremely important thing that has much in common with ties between people and people.