

The Animals of Fukushima: One Year Later



American Humane Association™

The nation's voice for the protection of children & animals™



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need a voice; they need their
stories told ...”*

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Nearly a year ago, the world watched in horror as one of the most powerful earthquakes ever recorded happened off the coast of Japan, causing devastating tsunamis and triggering nuclear meltdowns at the power plant in Fukushima. The result of the disaster was catastrophic: more than 15,000 deaths, hundreds of billions of dollars in damage, and hundreds of thousands of people displaced from their homes, many still unable to return. This also had a dramatic impact on the pets of these families and other animals living in the area. Many were exposed to radiation, relinquished to a shelter, or perished in the actual disaster.

3/11: The date invokes tremendous emotions for the people of Japan as memories of loss and multiple tragedies come to mind. One year after the devastating earthquake, tsunami, fire, and nuclear disaster, the air of uncertainty lingers, tinged with despair and anger. The resiliency of the Japanese people has never been called into question, and their ability to coalesce and persevere is ever present in the remarkable recovery efforts witnessed to date. But as the rest of the world moves on to other news and America focuses on political and economic matters, the people and animals of Japan have been forgotten – many families still homeless, many children without their four-legged family members, and all with ongoing questions about their future. What is the real status of the nuclear power plant and the no entry zone? What happened to the companion and the farm animals living in the zone? What are the health and wellbeing implications for humans and animals post-disaster? Why weren't they better prepared? When can they go home? How do they go on from here? The answers are never easy, particularly given the savage series of disasters that impacted this island nation on 3/11. Offering hope and compassion is exactly the reason that American Humane Association came to Japan a year later.

The animals of Fukushima need a voice; they need their stories told; and the power of the human-animal bond needs to be emphasized in times of tragedy and recovery as part of the healing process. Humanity knows no boundaries. My journey to Ground Zero occurred during the week of Valentine's Day as a special mission to Japan representing American Humane Association, the nation's oldest humanitarian organization founded in 1877 and the only one that serves as a voice for children and animals.



Immediately following this disaster on March 11, 2011, American Humane Association sent a shipment of supplies and donations to relief agencies on the ground as they worked to shelter and save the lives of animals in jeopardy. Now, nearly a year to the date since the tragedy that gripped the world, Japan still needs our help. My trip here had two major goals: First, to conduct site visits and to arrange a schedule of financial support to those groups that are caring for and trying to help animals left homeless by the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster. And second, to extend an offer to share the organization's more than 100 years of experience in disaster relief to help Japan's communities prepare for and **protect children and animals against future disasters**. Our own famous Red Star™ program is now known as **Red Star™ Rescue for Children and Animals**, building on our century old institutional expertise to protect our communities' most vulnerable in times of disasters.

Since 1916, American Humane Association has operated the internationally renowned Red Star™ Animal Emergency Services program. Red Star™ rescue services have been involved not only in nearly every major relief in the United States over the past century, but major international relief efforts including rescuing horses on the battlefields of Europe during World War I and the efforts to save and shelter animals following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. American Humane Association's Red Star™ program is an acknowledged leader in disaster preparedness and has also compiled a series of prevention tips to protect children, animals, families, and communities from hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and other disasters.

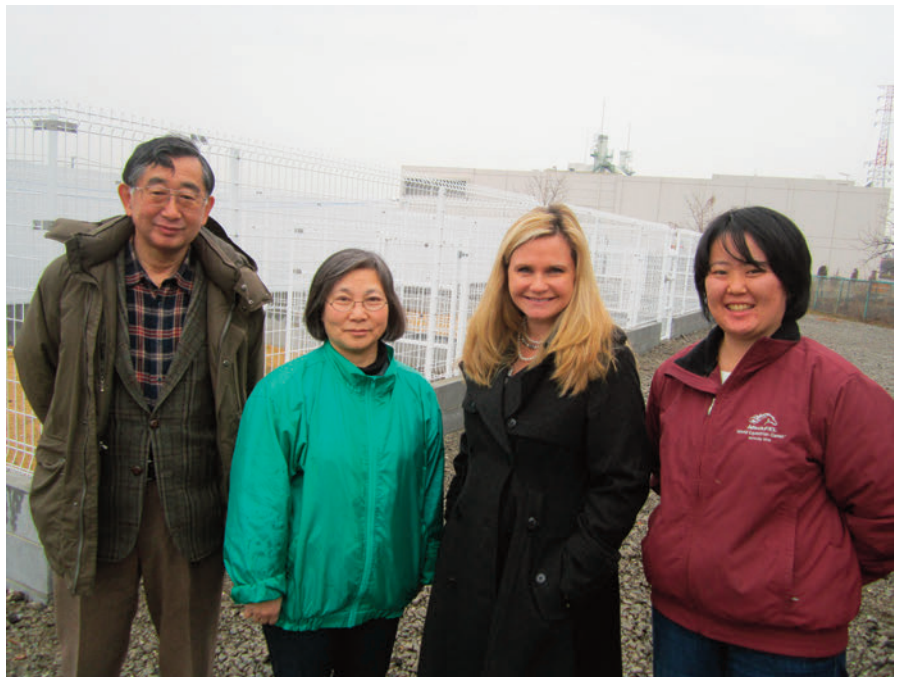
My first stop was the Tokyo Prefecture temporary animal shelter which handles overflow for animals from Fukushima.

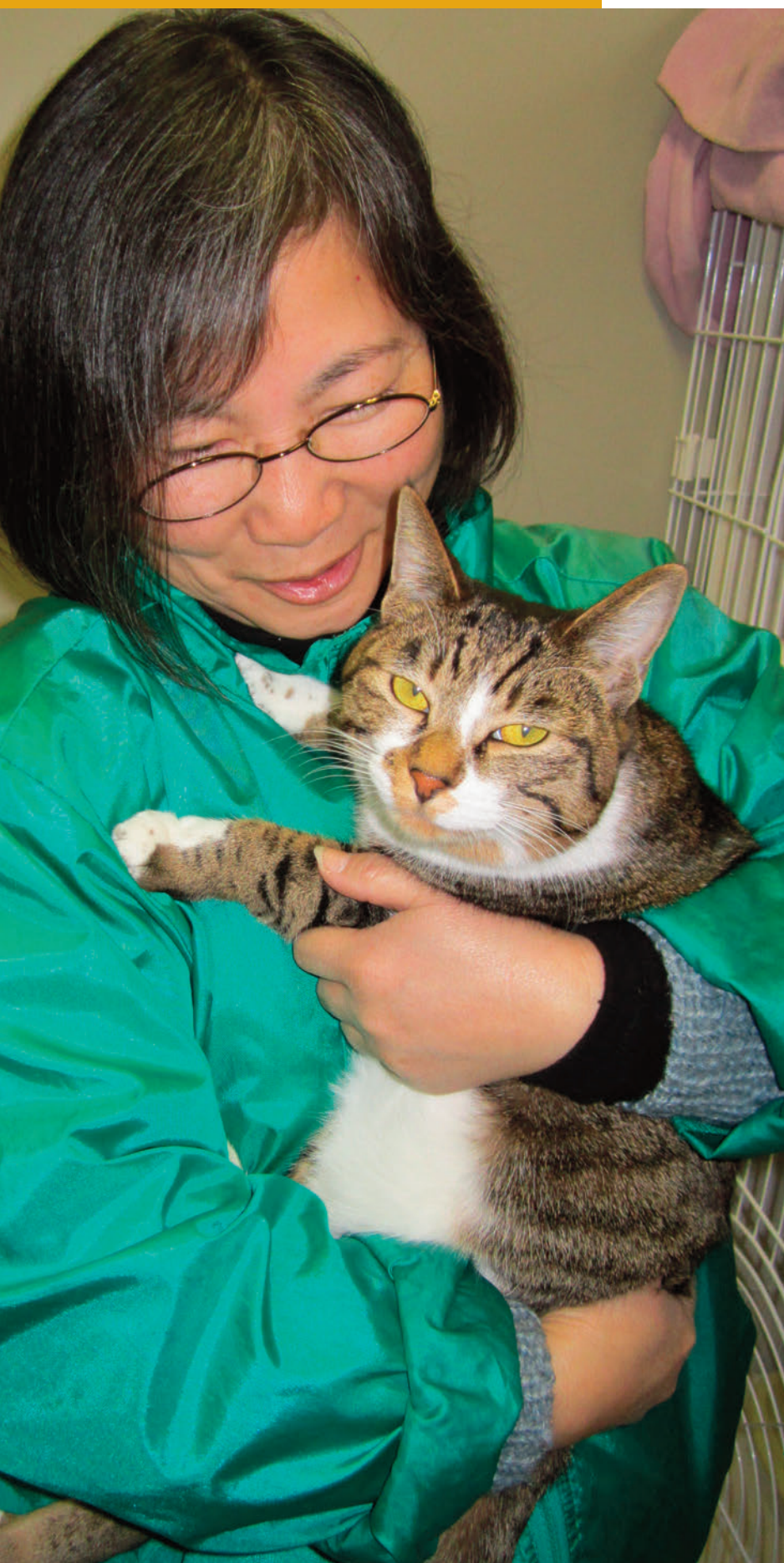
Thoughts from a Tokyo Shelter



Today, countless animals have been helped – some even rehabilitated – and reunited with their families, but 300 cats and dogs are still being sheltered from the Fukushima area, Ground Zero for the disaster. Many more animals are still being fostered by rescue groups, and getting an accurate count for the animals impacted by Fukushima is difficult. While the majority of the 30 animals in the Tokyo temporary overflow shelter currently are owned by families in hopes of being reunited soon, others are waiting for a new home. Several of the human shelters allowed pet owners to bring their animals with them, while many other shelters did not. Further still, there are a number of “wild” dogs in the Fukushima area still unaccounted for due to the terrain; given the scope of the situation, recordkeeping remains a significant challenge. We’ll probably never know the numbers of animals impacted by the series of disasters.

The excellent state of the temporary shelter I visited in Tokyo cannot be understated: the facility is absolutely spotless, well-maintained, and has a very dedicated staff committed to making the dogs’ and cats’ lives as perfect as possible under the circumstances. Each dog has its own volunteer with them for playtime, receiving lots of attention and love. Their owners were allowed to bring in special blankets or dog houses, while the shelter provided each dog with its own room. With all of the toys, love, and comfort received by the dogs each and every day, they feel like they’ve won the puppy lottery! And after surviving the devastation in Fukushima, they really are the lucky ones.





Similarly, the cats are living a good life at this shelter given the circumstances. The cats were well cared for, in what are by far the cleanest cat rooms I have ever seen at a shelter. The volunteers lovingly clean the cat rooms several times a day.

Recordkeeping of health indicators is a priority, as the staff take daily measurements of weight to monitor stress and eating habits. Like the dogs, these cats are clearly getting plenty of love and attention which they so richly deserve. Regardless of how well they are treated in the shelters, nothing can match the experience they would have if living in a home with a loving family.

This temporary shelter has four dogs from Fukushima up for adoption, while the remainder are visited by their families whenever possible, though for some, that might only be once a month. The shelter dogs were lacking vaccinations and were not neutered for the most part; because they were housed in the shelter, they received the care they so dearly needed.

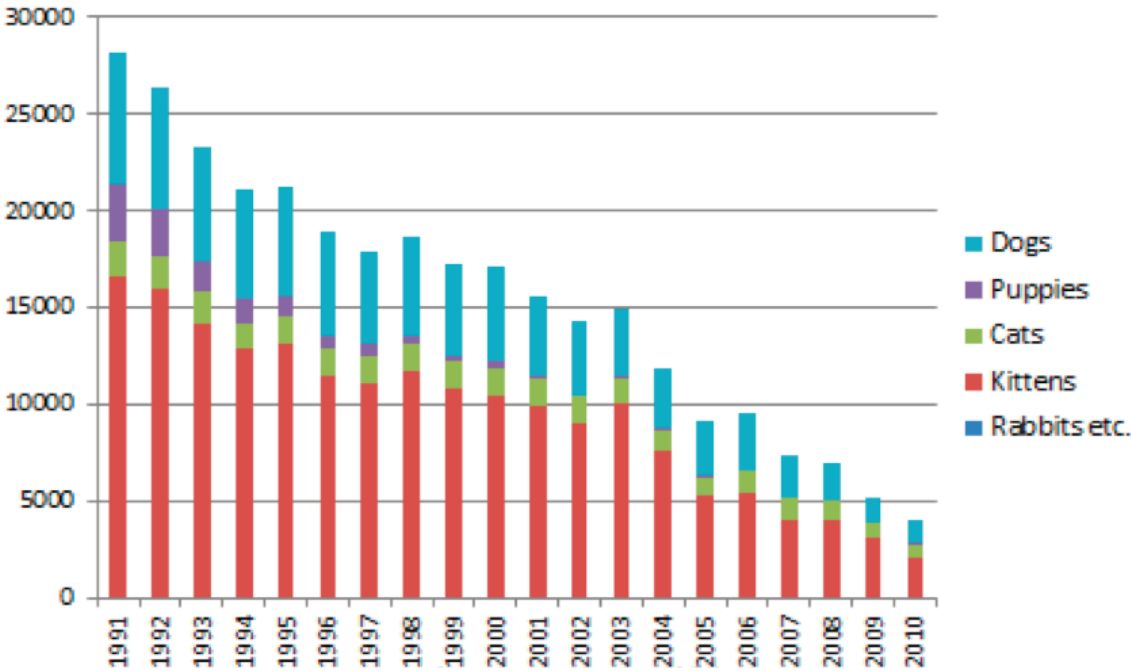
State of Animals in Tokyo Prefecture

Overall, however, the state of sheltered animals in the Tokyo Prefecture is quite optimistic – giving the animal welfare leaders in Japan something to celebrate. Over the past 20 years shelters have been able to reduce the numbers of dogs and adult cats passing through the facilities. A whopping 85 percent of dogs are adopted, with the remaining animals euthanized due to aggressive behavior or serious medical conditions; kittens still present a problem, with more than 90 percent euthanized. Though, like it has been observed in Sweden, the overall numbers of animals in shelters are declining. The permanent shelter I visited in Tokyo only had nine dogs in residence at the time of my visit.

The veterinarians managing the Tokyo Prefecture shelter provided the following data showing significant advances in protecting animals in this region:

Animals Handled in the Last 20 Years

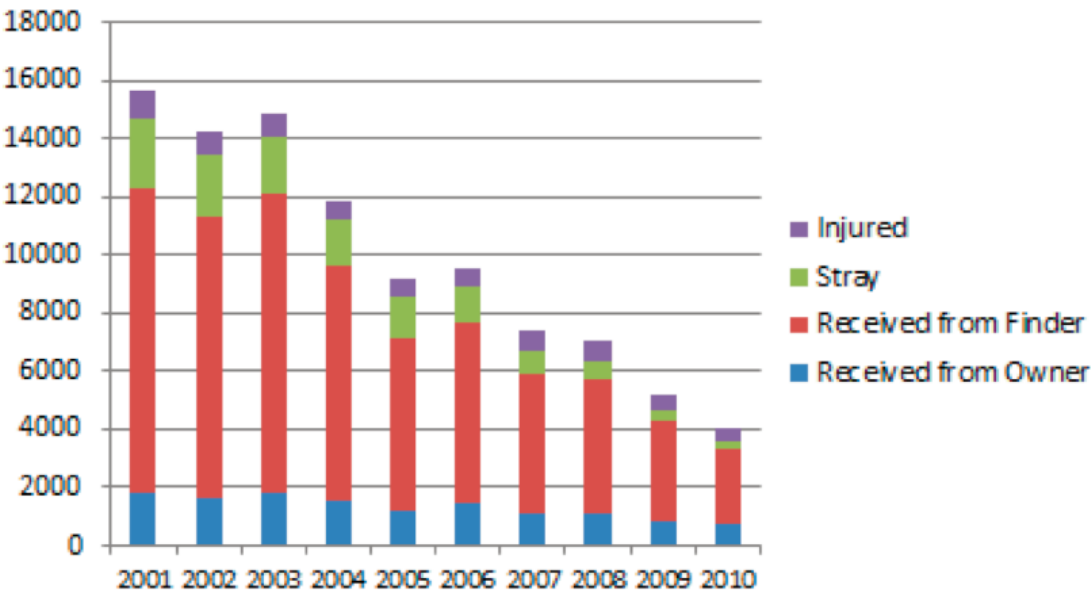
(Tokyo Metropolitan Animal Welfare Support Center)



Starting from 2005, excludes Hachipji City
Numbers include all 3 Tokyo Metropolitan Facilities

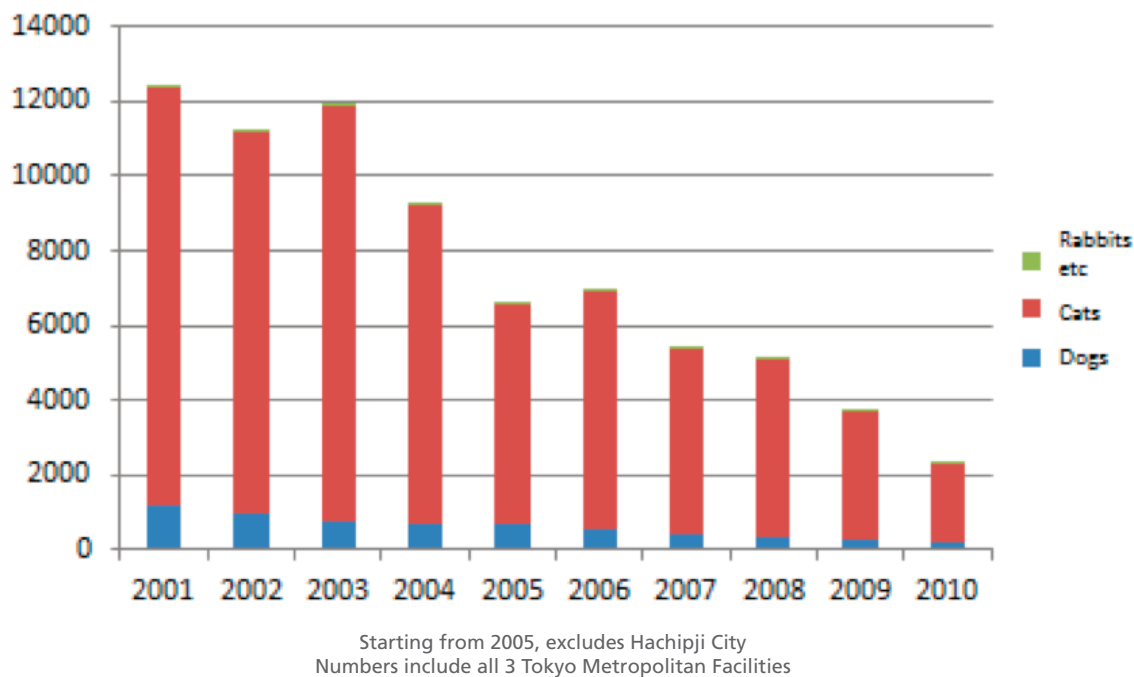
How Animals Came to the Tokyo Facilities

(Number of Animals)



Starting from 2005, excludes Hachipji City
Numbers include all 3 Tokyo Metropolitan Facilities

Animals Euthanized at the Tokyo Facilities



These advances are attributed to the efforts of the animal welfare societies, the health and prevention medical strategies provided by the veterinarians, and a cultural shift that embraces animals now living indoors rather than outside. Pet ownership is considered a responsibility rather than a right, which has helped to contribute to the declining shelter numbers. Prospective pet owners must undergo a minimum half-day formal seminar, formal interview, and matching process before they are allowed to adopt a dog from the shelter.

Sadly, dog fighting is still legal and very prevalent around the country, and even supported by a number of celebrities in the entertainment industry. Many consider it to be part of the Japanese traditional culture. Dr. Chizuko Yamaguchi of the Japan Animal Welfare Society said that her organization is working hard to combat this issue, though it is admittedly an uphill battle.

I applaud the hard work the Japan Animal Welfare Society and other rescue organizations are doing. Their efforts in Tokyo at the temporary shelter for the animals of Fukushima, and the permanent shelter demonstrate their laudable commitment to protecting animals and to the need for vital animal welfare policies.

Message of Compassion to the People of Japan: Ceremony

“... American Humane Association is committed to developing a schedule of ongoing support for the long-term relief efforts.”

American Humane Association participated in a special ceremony on February 15, 2012 hosted by the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ of the Americas honoring the animal welfare relief efforts. Participants at the luncheon included leading animal welfare organizations in Japan and representatives from the U.S. Ambassador's office. During my remarks to the group, I shared the story of American Humane Association and our renowned Red Star™ Animal Emergency Services with its century-long history of protecting our most vulnerable whenever disaster strikes. Given the timing of my visit, I also brought a Valentine's message of caring, compassion, and hope for humans and animals alike. While the Headquarters for the Relief of Animals in Emergencies – a coalition of organizations overseeing the relief effort – continues to assess the need, American Humane Association is committed to developing a schedule of ongoing support for the long-term relief efforts.

Below are my abbreviated remarks offered to the leaders of animal welfare in Japan, including representatives from the Japan Animal Welfare Society, the Japan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Japan Human-Animal Bond Society.





I am honored to be here with people who value the most vulnerable and the voiceless in our society. I especially want to thank Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ and all our friends there:

- *Masa Tanaka, the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ CEO for the Americas.*
- *Ayako Tanaka, who has worked for months to help us prepare for this trip and make introductions to many of you.*
- *American Humane Association Board Member Liz Lyman, who helped engineer this mission to help Japan's most precious treasures.*
- *Lee Linderman and Yuka Nakamura for spending so many hours making arrangements for hosting this special lunch.*
- *And Mr. Yasuda and Mr. Oyamada, whom you will meet shortly.*



Most of all, I wish to thank the members of the Headquarters for the Relief of Animals in Emergencies – the brave and selfless coalition that has been working to lessen the suffering of thousands of animals affected by the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear incident last year – as well as members of the U.S. Embassy, who were kind enough to come and show their support for your work.

I know something of your work because I have the privilege of serving as the president of one of the oldest humanitarian organizations in the United States, and the only one dedicated to protecting society's children and animals.

For 135 years, we have worked to keep the most vulnerable in our society safe from abuse, harm, and disasters. In the United States we have changed the way children, pets, and all animals are treated, by intervening when necessary, helping to pass laws, engaging the renowned and powerful who have big voices to speak for the voiceless, and by finding science-based solutions to many of the biggest challenges we face in creating a more humane world.



On March 11, 2011, when the earthquake struck Japan, the entire world rushed to help. We at American Humane Association put out an appeal to our nation, and thousands of Americans opened their hearts and responded, allowing us to send a shipment of greatly needed animal shelter supplies and a contribution to the organizations in this room.

Now, nearly a year later, we came back with a giant Valentine from the American people – a message of hope, love, compassion, and caring to the Japanese people and their animals.

We feel very grateful to our friends at Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ of the Americas for arranging this special meeting today. It is very encouraging to find a Bank that is not only a great business power, but one with a heart and a sense of community responsibility.

Like our friends in the Headquarters for Relief of Animals in Emergencies, at American Humane Association we know something about helping communities when they need help. For almost 100 years, our Red Star™ Animal Emergency Services has been responding to disasters in the United States and around the world. We have teams of highly trained responders who have saved nearly 70,000 animals in just the past few years. And even today, we are gearing up to respond to a new “Season of Storm” in the U.S. that will inevitably impact our communities.

So we understand that in Japan nearly a year later there is still work to be done. Because of the devastation, many people and their pets have still not returned to their homes, delaying the healing of many communities. I come bearing the good wishes of many thousands of Americans and we wish to help your good work to continue. On behalf of American Humane Association, we thank you for your vital work, and please know that we stand ready to assist in the long-term recovery efforts.

The day ended with an invitation to visit Fukushima and Ground Zero.

Maps of Japan and Fukushima



The Animals of Fukushima

“The animals there are living in crates and small rooms, with owners who have not relinquished ownership in hopes they will be reunited eventually.”

The story isn't as rosy for the shelters in Fukushima itself, however. Currently, two shelters are still operating, and have been in dire need of funding for nearly a year. The animals there are living in crates and small rooms, with owners who have not relinquished ownership in hopes they will be reunited eventually.

As you can imagine, access to Ground Zero of the nuclear disaster is severely restricted. I was grateful to be afforded a visit to the area to tour one of the two shelters still operating and to learn about the dangerous, courageous, and extremely vital work people have done and are still doing on the ground there every day.

My first stop was to an animal shelter in Fukushima. This facility primarily houses larger dogs and lots of cats, while the smaller canines were mostly transferred to shelters in Tokyo, such as the temporary shelter I visited a few days before. All rescued and captured animals were first scanned with a Geiger counter, thoroughly washed, and then transported to this relatively new shelter, which, as it stands now, will remain in operation for some time to come.



Owners are still awaiting word on when they can return to their homes in the “no entry zone,” but a timetable for that has yet to occur. The government has stated that it will take approximately 30 years to remove the effects of radiation from the environment, which is a fact many pet owners are not able to face. They are retaining the ownership rights to their animals, because for them, the act of holding on to their beloved pets with the goal of one day bringing them home is the last glimmer of hope for a return to normalcy.

The two veterinarians from the government prefecture overseeing the facility, not to mention the staff, were all personally affected by the earthquake. Nevertheless, they remained extremely committed to the task at hand: caring for the animals. Though the earthquake occurred last March, the shelter workers could not rest until August because of all that needed to be done; heeding the nuclear warnings, they would report to work in their protective gear. I asked the veterinarians to share with me what they would tell families to do with pets to prepare for such disasters. And they said two things were critical: 1) make sure the animal knows how to come when called by name, and 2) crate train to make sure the animal feels comfortable if it has to be in a crate during an evacuation or shelter experience. They also asked for American Humane Association’s disaster tips for children and animals, which we are providing.



“... I saw a small wall left from a home. The wall had a rainbow that sparkled – a rainbow of hope that the people in Ground Zero have for the future. A rainbow of compassion.”



Following the visit to the shelter, our party made for the coast where the tsunami devastation is still quite evident. We traveled until we were close to “No Entry Zone,” a mere 20 km away from the heart of it all. The stories we heard are stunning; sadly, they are still more about loss than healing. Many young people are worried about what their future holds and the long-term impact on their health. Livelihoods have been impacted since fishing is off limits due to radiation exposure. There is a planned national study on the impact of radiation on the animals, but to date no samples have been collected. Geiger counters did not reveal alarmingly high levels of radiation on the rescued and captured animals, but these were the animals who were able to escape. Many of the animals living inside the housing units who were left behind likely perished due to a lack of food and water. We still have much to learn about how this series of disasters has affected farm animals, horses, and wildlife. No one could explain to me what happened to the farm animals and horses.

The effects of this catastrophe will be felt for decades. The sad fact is life may never be the same for those close to the disaster zone. American Humane Association remains firmly committed to helping in any way it can. The government prefecture is interested in learning more about our disaster tips for children and animals which we developed in 2011 for the United States.

American Humane Association will be working with the animal welfare agencies and the local shelters on assistance and a sharing of ideas and best practices to help. As the founding principle of our historic Red Star™ program states: everyday, everywhere – we are there to rescue and save animal lives and reunite them with their families.

As we left Ground Zero at twilight, on a desolate street with only concrete floors remaining from where homes once stood, where families once lived – I saw a small wall left from a home. The wall had a rainbow that sparkled – a rainbow of hope that the people in Ground Zero have for the future. A rainbow of compassion.

The mission of American Humane Association is to ensure the welfare, wellness and well-being of children and animals, and to unleash the full potential of the bond between humans and animals to the mutual benefit of both.

We aim to measurably, demonstrably and significantly increase the number of children and animals who are protected from harm – and the number of humans and animals whose lives are enriched – through direct action, thought leadership, policy innovation, and expansion of proven, effective programs.

*To help these animals and others in desperate need,
please donate generously to American Humane Association at
www.americanhumane.org or by calling 1-866-242-1877.
Thank you!*

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