

# Guidelines for Preventing Animal Hoarding and Excessive Animal Ownership

Taking Humans, Animals and Communities into Consideration.

Toward Multi-Organizational Cooperation among Social Welfare and Animal Welfare Administrations



Ministry of the Environment

Guidelines for Preventing Animal Hoarding and Excessive Animal Ownership—Taking Humans, Animals and Communities into Consideration.

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## The Background and Purpose of Establishing the Guidelines

With the increase in the number of elderly people and nuclear families (and the decrease in the number of children), an increasing number of families have and consider companion animals as family members. However, various problems have arisen regarding such animals. In particular, the problem of “animal hoarding” or “excessive animal ownership” is having a severe impact. This problem has been hindering the efforts of local governments to reduce the numbers of abandoned animals that are euthanized. The problem of animal hoarding is one in which animal owners, animals and the surrounding environment are adversely affected by inappropriate care for an excessive number of animals. Recently, this problem has attracted the attention of many people as a social issue through the mass media or social media, since it affects not only many animals but also the living situations of animal owners and the living environment of their neighborhoods.

Behind this problem are intricately intertwined causes on the part of animal owners, such as economic difficulties, social isolation, etc. Therefore, to solve this problem, we have to act from the viewpoint of both “social welfare” and “animal welfare.” In other words, it would be difficult to resolve the problem by only taking punitive measures against such animal owners under the Act on the Welfare and Management of Animals, since most of these people need some sort of assistance. It is necessary for agency officials in the fields of social welfare as well as animal welfare to cooperate to take the proper measures. In addition, the problem of excessive animal ownership encompasses a broad range of jurisdictions, including the police and public health administrations as well as animal welfare and social welfare administrations. The personnel concerned in the various fields need to cooperate with each other in order to deal with the problem.

Against such a background, the Ministry of the Environment, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, established “the Investigative Commission for Preventing the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership in Collaboration with Social Welfare Measures” (hereinafter, “the Commission”) in fiscal 2018. The Commission has investigated the problem from professional viewpoints such as animal welfare administration, veterinary science, public health nursing, social welfare, and psychiatric medicine. The Commission published the Guidelines for Solving the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership through Multi-Organizational Cooperation (hereinafter, “the Guidelines”). The Guidelines are intended mainly for local government officials, but the content is also useful for various stakeholders concerned with animal owners that have too many animals.

The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare has endeavored to realize an “inclusive community.” “An inclusive community” means one in which all its people are respected and accepted and live decent lives, achieved by nurturing relationships among the people in the community. Meanwhile, the Ministry of the Environment has endeavored to realize a society in which humans and animals live in harmony with each other. Communities that are considerate of both humans and animals are regarded as providing all living things with comfortable living environments.

We hope that these Guidelines will be widely utilized in the animal welfare and social welfare departments of local governments as well as by stakeholders concerned with the problem of excess animal ownership, and that better communities will be established all around the country, contributing to the welfare of both humans and animals.

## Chapter 1 What is the Problem of “Animal Hoarding” or “Excessive Animal Ownership”?

### 1. “Animal hoarding” or “Excessive Animal Ownership”

In these Guidelines, “animal hoarding” or “excessive animal ownership” is defined as “the state in which animal owners cannot provide proper care for animals because they have an excessive number of animals,” which results in either or all of the following three situations: (1) the living situations of the animal owners are deteriorating, (2) the care conditions for the animals are getting worse, (3) the surrounding living environment is adversely affected.

#### (1) Deterioration of the Living Situations of Animal Owners

When the number of animals is too high for the animal owner to provide proper care, he/she cannot adequately clean up excreta and/or leftover feed. As a result, it becomes difficult for the animal owner to maintain proper and clean living situations because of odors and/or vermin infestation. Sometimes animals suffer from infectious diseases after being housed in such unsanitary living environments, and the health of animal owners and their family members might be impaired.

The cost of caring for animals, e.g., feed, sanitary materials, etc., might increase and the economic situation of the animal owners might become difficult. Eventually, the clothing, food and housing conditions of the animal owners might deteriorate. For example, there is a possibility that the animal owners may leave their body and clothes in a dirty state, their nutritional status may be compromised, they may not repair damage to their home, and they might be obliged to move out of the residence for not paying the rent.

Furthermore, the deterioration of the living environment of animal owners may affect the surrounding environment, resulting in friction between the animal owners and their neighbors. The animal owners might be socially isolated and lose faith in humanity. Once the animal owners lose their faith in humanity, they cannot communicate smoothly nor build trustful relationship with others. As a result, the animal owners become unable to ask for or receive the necessary assistance. The living environment of animal owners might then further deteriorate.

## (2) Deterioration of the Care Conditions for Animals

Unsanitary living environments affect the health of animals. If animals are being housed in extremely bad environments, the animal owner may face a potential penalty for animal abuse (diseases, malnutrition and/or death due to animal neglect and so forth) as stipulated in Article 44 of the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals.

When the sanitary conditions of an owner's home is not properly maintained, there is a possibility that the animal owner does not pay proper attention to the health of the animals, either. The animals might be left alone without receiving necessary veterinary care, and infectious diseases might be prevalent among the animals.

Behavioral restriction caused by overcrowded housing due to an increased number of animals, inappropriate containment, not taking dogs for a walk, animals not being able to lie down on the floor because of a short leash, etc., leads to increased physical and mental stress on the animals. Animals may vocalize this increased stress and produce noise.

Furthermore, an increase in the number of animals makes it difficult to have animals undergo timely sterilization surgeries. If the number increases further, the risk of bearing congenitally abnormal offspring will increase due to inbreeding. When animals are not provided with sufficient feed because of overpopulation, starved animals might cannibalize each other.

Some animal owners cannot accurately ascertain the number of animals. In many cases, the animal owners can identify only some of the animals they have. It is often the case that these animals have not built good relationships with humans as companion animals.

Dogs and cats with increased physical and mental stress are not only in poor health but also are not tame and lack sociability with humans. If the daily lives of the animal owners fall apart, it will be difficult to find new owners for the abandoned animals. Although local government officials, in collaboration with volunteers such as animal rescue groups try to find new owners, they cannot always find new owners for the abandoned animals. Sometimes, officials have no other choice but to euthanize some of the abandoned animals that suffer from incurable diseases, or that are aggressive and/or not tame.



### (3) Deterioration of Surrounding Living Environment

The deterioration of the living conditions of animal owners and the health of animals, such as odors or noise, vermin infestation and spread of infectious diseases, might affect adversely the surrounding environment, such as the health of neighbors.

When proper measures are not fully taken for preventing animals from escaping, escaped animals may go into neighboring homes and/or bite neighborhood residents.

Thus, the problem of excessive animal ownership affects not only animals and animal owners but also the family members of the animal owners and the living environment of their neighbors. Therefore, there is a need to detect and understand the deterioration of the living environment of the animal owners, animals, and neighborhood as early as possible, and to take necessary measures to remedy or resolve the problem before it worsens.

## 2. The Scope of these Guidelines—Three Measures to be Taken

In establishing these Guidelines, we have focused on the necessity of the following measures: (1) support for the animal owners' lives, (2) improvement of the care conditions for animals, and (3) improvement of the surrounding living environment.

### (1) Support for the Animal Owners' Lives

Animal owners who have the problem of excessive animal ownership also tend to have mental, physical and/or economic problems. According to a questionnaire, (see "The Results of Questionnaires Released by the Investigative Commission for Preventing the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership in Collaboration with Social Welfare Measures in Fiscal 2019") some of them are or might be suffering from dementia, intellectual disability, mental disorders and/or aging. Therefore, those animal owners cannot properly take care of the animals because of their impaired judgment and/or decreased physical strength. In the case of animal owners with economic difficulties, it was shown that some of them borrowed money to purchase animal feed, and some of them were obliged to move out of their residences because of non-payment of rent. It is extremely difficult for them to resolve the problem on their own. Some sort of support for them from the community is necessary.

## (2) Improvement of the Care Conditions of Animals

In accordance with Article 2 of the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals, all animals should be treated properly as “living beings,” taking their natural habits into consideration. For domesticated animals, it is almost impossible to live without proper care from animal owners. In accordance with Article 7 of the Act, animal owners are required to take care of their animals throughout their lives (lifelong care), to provide the animals with proper feed and drinking water, to manage their health as appropriate, and to maintain the proper living environment (taking animal species and habits into consideration).

In order to improve the care conditions for animals, it is necessary to keep the number of animals within a range that the animal owners can manage. Animal owners are required to take proper measures to prevent an increase in the number of animals or to decrease the number of animals housed.

## (3) Improvement of the Surrounding Living Environment

To deal with this problem, we have to discuss measures for reducing adverse effects on neighboring areas, such as preventing animals from escaping, repairing the damaged parts of a residence, building fences, etc.

Animal owners who have the problem of excessive animal ownership often have trouble with their neighbors. The animal owners tend to be more and more socially isolated because of the adverse effects on the surrounding living environment such as accumulation of filth, odors, noise, and vermin infestation due to a large number of animals. As a result, it becomes difficult for them to receive support from the neighborhood.

It is difficult to find an ultimate solution for the problem of excessive animal ownership, and the problem often recurs. Therefore, it is important to provide continued support for removing the underlying causes as well as short-term supportive care. It is recommended that we should consider this problem to be a community problem. It is desirable to support the animal owners with excessive animal ownership so that they can go about their everyday life without difficulty, keep the number of animals within a range whereby they can improve the care conditions for the animals, and minimize the adverse effects on the surrounding living environment.

### 3. The Present Situation of the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership in Japan

#### (1) Complaints Raised against the Problems of Excessive Animal Ownership

The Ministry of the Environment and the Commission investigated the complaints raised against the problem of excessive animal ownership at animal welfare departments in 125 local governments (which have the responsibility of administering the Act on the Welfare and Management of Animals). The details are given in “The Results of Questionnaires Released by the Investigative Commission for Preventing the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership in Collaboration with Social Welfare Measures in Fiscal 2019” (hereinafter, “the Result of Questionnaires”).

First, we asked the local governments about the number of families against which more than one person brought complaints regarding animal owners that have two or more animals in fiscal 2018. It was shown that there were 2,149 families across Japan that drew complaints that year, with the average number of families per local government being 20.5.

Among the families that have drawn complaints, the numbers of animals housed were as follows: 2-9 animals: 1,095 families (51.0%), just over half of the total family numbers; 10-29 animals: 561 families (26.1%), about a quarter of the total family numbers; 30 or more animals: 137 families (6.4%). These results indicate that even if the number of animals is less than 10, the surrounding living environment deteriorates when the animal owners do not take proper care of the animals, e.g., negligence of sterilization surgeries and/or of feeding, watering and hygiene management, and these situations lead to complaints from neighbors.

Furthermore, we also requested the local governments to report the cases of excessive animal ownership (up to 5 cases per local government) that occurred or was occurring between April 2015 and the end of October 2019. There were 385 cases reported. Among them, the animal species that caused the problems were mainly cats (61.6%) and dogs (45.2%); other than cats and dogs, the species were rabbits (1.8%), hens (1.0%) and birds other than hens (1.0%).

It was shown that animals whose owners had excessive numbers of animals were not properly cared for and were housed in an unsanitary environment, e.g., excreta were not cleaned up properly. Such an unsanitary environment is not good for the health of the animals, and sometimes leads to animal neglect and/or animal abuse.

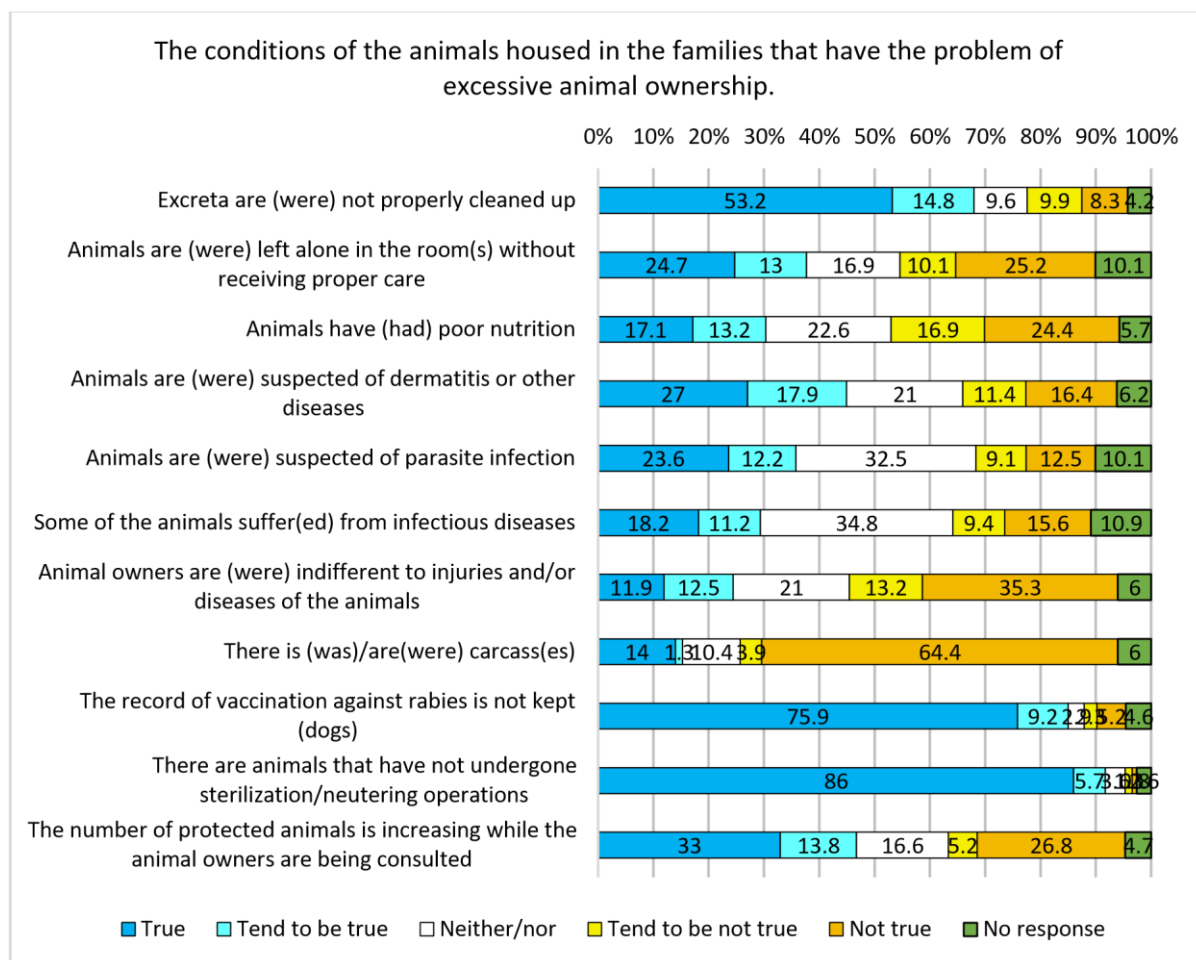


Figure 1. The conditions of the animals housed in the families that have the problem of excessive animal ownership.

## (2) Factors or Obstacles that Make Resolution of the Problem Difficult

Some of the challenges concerning the problem of excess animal ownership with which animal welfare departments are confronted have come into clear view. Among the top five issues shown in Figure #, three are caused by the attitudes on the part of animal owners: i.e., “the animal owner is unable to pay for the administrative custody of animals and/or for sterilization surgeries because of his/her economic difficulties”; “the animal owner won’t relinquish the ownership rights for the animals”; and “it is difficult to communicate with the animal owner.” Other issues include administrative problems such as a lack of resources for support, and a lack of information sharing and/or cooperation mechanisms among different divisions or organizations, etc. These issues are intricately intertwined with each other, making the problem of excess animal ownership difficult to resolve.

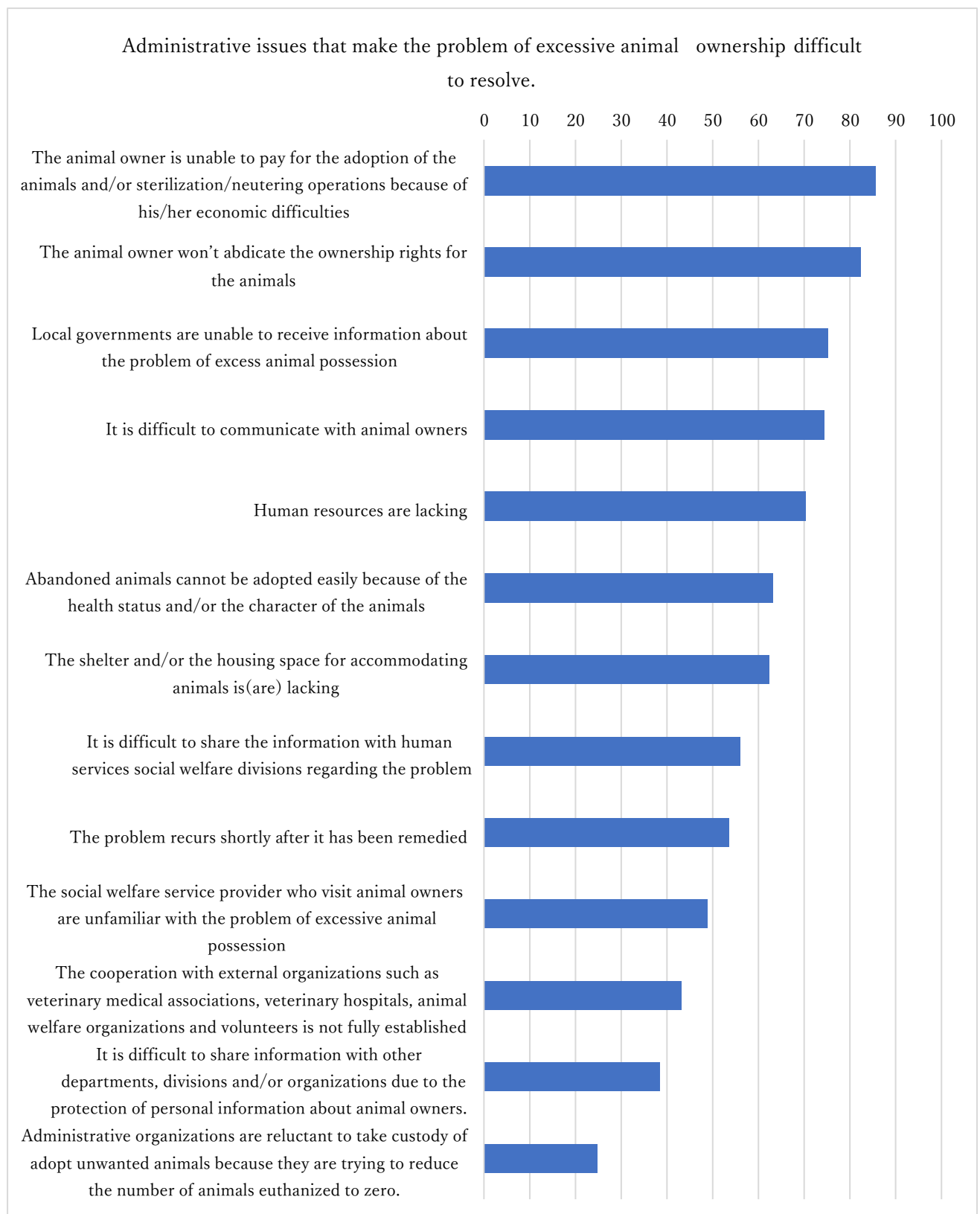


Figure 2. Administrative issues that make the problem of excess animal ownership difficult to resolve.

## 1) Issues on the part of the animal owners

One of the factors or obstacles that makes the problem of excessive animal ownership difficult to resolve is issues on the part of the animal owners. Specifically, these include economic difficulties, health problems, and animal owners' relationships with others. These problems are not always found in all owners with excessive animal ownership but are relatively common among them.

Regarding economic difficulties of the animal owners, over half (53.5%) of the responses were either "True" or "Tend to be true." That is to say, the proportion of the animal owners who have economic difficulties is high.

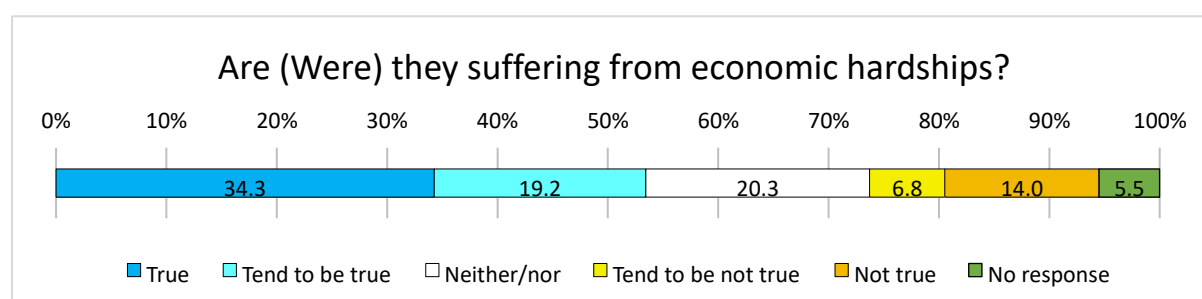


Figure 3. The living conditions of the animal owners:

Some of the owners with excessive animal ownership have disorders such as health problems and/or some disabilities. In response to a question regarding whether "the animal owner has physical disorders and/or muscle weakness and impaired ability to walk," the percentage of "True" or "Tend to be true" answers was 29.9% of the total. The percentage of animal owners who "do not seem to have sufficient meals or are clearly underweight" is 18.7% of the total, and who "are hospitalized on and off" is 8.6% of the total. In fact, there are many cases in which the animal owners have a hearing deficiency, or suffer from dementia, intellectual disability and/or mental disorders. In addition, there are not a few cases in which the animal owners have some sort of health problem or lack adequate capacity for judgement, although the precise diagnoses are unknown. It is important to discuss the necessary measures to be taken and to provide proper support for these animal owners.

Incidentally, with regard to the gender, age and residential environment of the animal owners who present the problem of excessive animal ownership, there was a tendency for the proportion of women to be higher (about 60%) than that of men and for the proportion of elderly people (60 years or older) to form the majority. However, there were also young or male animal owners. Thus, it was shown that there are various kinds of owners with

the problem of excessive animal ownership. With regard to the residential environment of the animal owners, the problem of excessive animal ownership occurred irrespective of the residential environment, i.e., the problem was found in various residential environments: detached houses and apartment complexes; owned homes and rented homes; small residences and large residences; overcrowded areas and underpopulated areas.

In order to break down the animal owners into patterns, factor analyses were carried out. The results indicated seven patterns: “unsanitary conditions,” “difficulty in becoming self-supporting,” “poverty,” “violence,” “attachment to animals,” “rejection of services,” and “dependence.” To solve the problems of “unsanitary conditions,” “difficulty in becoming self-supporting,” “poverty” and “rejection of services,” which are related to hygiene, health and economic aspects, it would be necessary to provide support for the animal owners from the standpoint of social welfare. Some of the animal owners depend on animals too much and reject advice that they should relinquish the ownership rights for the animals and that the animals should undergo sterilization surgeries, which makes it difficult for the officials of animal welfare departments to intervene in the problem (“attachment to animals”). Other animal owners cannot smoothly communicate with the neighborhood or the officials of the local government because of the “difficulty in becoming self-supporting” and/or “violence” factors. Although animal owners with excessive animal ownership did not always exhibit all the seven factors above, it was shown that they had one or more than one factor in many cases.

Factors found in animal owners with excessive animal ownership and their characteristics.

(Seven factors obtained through factor analyses)

Factors	Main characteristics
Unsanitary conditions	A large amount of animal excreta, skeletonized carcasses and garbage are left in and/or outside the housing areas, leading to odors and vermin infestation on the premises. The animal owner is indifferent to such environments. Sometimes the odors and/or smell of animals emanate from the animal owner because he/she does not wash his/her body or clothes. Bites by vermin (fleas, ticks, etc.) are seen all over the body among some of the animal owners.

Factors	Main characteristics
Difficulty in being self-supporting	The cognitive capacity of some of the animal owners is reduced. For example, the animal owners “cannot recognize the face of the official in charge,” “cannot deal with more than one problem simultaneously,” “do not seem to understand what other people say,” “cannot identify animals in their ownership,” etc. Some of the animal owners have difficulty in being self-supporting, e.g., they have reduced physical ability such as difficulty in walking due to aging or disease. As a result, they cannot take proper care of the animals. (In some cases, home helpers and/or nursing services are involved in providing support for the animal owners.)
Poverty	Some of the animal owners are unable to pay for the rent and/or utility charges as well as for the administrative custody of animals because of their economic difficulties. Although they gain a certain level of income such as from daily employment and/or pension and financial support from their acquaintances, etc., it is usually difficult for them to manage money properly.
Violence	Some of the animal owners shout abuse and demonstrate threatening behavior against the neighborhood residents and the local government officials who visit their homes. In other cases, animal owners respond in a peaceable manner only to the local government officials (sometimes the opposite is also true), and their attitudes might change abruptly when the topic of conversation moves on to talking about their animals. Some of them adopt an attitude of aggressiveness only to certain people or topics.
Attachment to animals	Some of the animal owners will not relinquish the ownership rights for the animals, and they tend to express strong resistance to euthanasia of animals or to sterilization surgeries for animals. In other cases, animal owners keep animals at another place outside of their residences.



Factors	Main characteristics
Rejection of services	Animal owners tend to reject health and medical services and/or social welfare services. Some of the animal owners are reluctant to visit hospitals even if they suffer from illness, so their medical conditions might worsen. As a result, the living conditions of both animal owners and animals might deteriorate.
Dependence	Some of the animal owners suffer from alcohol dependence and/or a gambling addiction, and they are often drunken when the local government officials visit their homes to give advice. Other animal owners have an extremely peculiar dependence on their animals, e.g., animal owners demonstrate strong affection for a particular animal or reduce their sleeping time to take care of animals, etc.

(Source: An analysis based on “The Results of Questionnaires Released by the Investigative Commission for Preventing the Problem of Excess Animal Ownership in Collaboration with Social Welfare Measures in Fiscal 2019”)

Complaints against the problem of excessive animal ownership are usually raised by the neighborhood residents. In many cases, the relationship between the animal owners and the neighborhood residents had already been aggravated when the complaints were raised. It is often the case that animal owners tend to be socially isolated from the community because they fail to build good relations with the neighborhood residents. These aggravated relations are also seen between animal owners and the local government officials. There are many cases in which the officials have difficulty in communicating with animal owners, e.g., the animal owners reject visits by the local government officials, are not amenable to persuasion, shout abuse, etc.

Therefore, it is necessary to work on the problem on a case-by-case basis. We have to consider economic difficulties and the health problems of animal owners. If the animal owner is socially isolated, we have to consider his/her characteristics, people whom he/she trusts, matters about which he/she has anxiety, what kind of support he/she needs, which divisions and/or organizations he/she should consult with, etc. It is difficult to resolve the problem of excessive animal ownership only through one division or organization, and, therefore, cooperation among different divisions and/or organizations is needed. In order to prevent the aggravation of the problem, it is necessary to take preventive measures such as livelihood support for animal owners before the problem gets worse. In other words,

we should take necessary measures before the problem of excessive animal ownership occurs as well as after the problem has occurred.

## 2) Other Issues

There are other issues with regard to the problem of excessive animal ownership, including, for example, a vicious cycle of animal reproduction, the lack of various resources for supporting the animals, the lack of systems for information sharing and cooperation among different departments or organizations, problems concerning administrative procedures, a tendency for recurrence, and difficulty in discovering the problem, etc.

“A vicious cycle of animal reproduction” refers to the fact that animal owners do not have their animals undergo proper sterilization surgeries. When male and female animals are housed together, they start breeding and the number of animals keeps increasing. It is necessary to carry out sterilization surgeries in order to prevent further increases in the number of animals housed, and to try to find new owners for animals through public administration and/or volunteers of animal rescue groups.

“The lack of various resources for support” means a state in which the stakeholders are unable to bear all the heavy burden and cost. For example, sterilization surgeries, administrative custody of animals, finding new owners for animals and euthanasia of animals entails a heavy burden for the stakeholders from the standpoints of finance, time, human resources and/or the space available. The space available at public shelters for animals is limited. The higher the number of animals, the heavier the burden is, e.g., space for housing animals, care for animals, finding new owners, euthanizing animals, etc. It is also true that, even with the help of volunteers of animal rescue groups, the budget and human resources are limited, and it is therefore difficult to capture and transport animals, to care for protected animals, and to find new owners for the animals.

“The lack of systems for information sharing and cooperation among different departments or organizations” means a state in which the mechanisms for information sharing and/or cooperation among different divisions or organizations are not well maintained in many local governments. Even if some of the officials recognize the problem of excessive animal ownership and cooperate with each other temporarily at the individual and partial levels, it is difficult to continue such collaborative activities in the absence of the recognition of the necessity of concerted support from the organization as a whole.

“The problem concerning administrative procedures” is as follows. According to the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals (Article 25, Paragraph 5), prefectural governors (officials of the local government) are allowed to conduct on-site inspections for the purpose of preserving the surrounding living environment and of preventing animal abuse. But it is difficult for the local government officials to enter the animal owner’s home (including gardens) without the owner’s consent, even if they receive information concerning the problem of excessive animal ownership. Therefore, it is often the case that they can neither figure out the exact number of animals nor check the care conditions for the animals. Furthermore, it is not allowed for the local government to force animal owners to relinquish the ownership rights for the animals. The local government officials have to persuade animal owners to relinquish the ownership rights for the animals voluntarily. Sometimes it is difficult to share information with other divisions and/or organizations due to the protection of personal information. There are cases in which the public animal welfare and management centers or the public health centers are reluctant to take custody of animals since they are trying to reduce the number of animals that are euthanized.

The problem of excessive animal ownership “tends to recur even after it has been settled.” In the questionnaires, not a few cases were reported in which animal owners began to house an excessive number of animals again after the problem had been fixed, and, consequently, the problem of excessive animal ownership ended up recurring.

There is a “difficulty in discovering the problem of excessive animal ownership.” This is probably due to lifestyle changes in recent years, which make it difficult to discover the problems that arise in each family. For example, we have few interactions with neighborhood residents because of urbanization, and it is difficult for relatives and/or neighborhood residents to discover the problems and take prompt measures for resolving them. This is due to the increasing number of nuclear families and single-person households.

#### 4. The Social Background for the Occurrence of the Problems of Excessive Animal Ownership—Concerns for Economic Difficulties and Vicious Cycle

Today, the number of single-person households and nuclear families is increasing. And the possibility that people suffer from great economic difficulties and social isolation is also increasing. For example, when someone leaves a job or faces unemployment and suffers an income-cut; experiences mental and/or physical health declines due to diseases,

physical disorders or a decline in cognitive function; or experiences life stage changes such as divorce and/or bereavement, or children becoming independent and leaving home; he/she might suffer from economic difficulties and social isolation.

When someone's economic difficulties and social isolation overlap with each other, he/she would be socially isolated in the community and various social issues could arise, e.g., abusive treatment, domestic violence, homelessness, trash hoarding, etc. The problem of excessive animal ownership can be considered a social issue in the community. In some cases, the problem of excessive animal ownership is accompanied with other problems such as physical and/or psychological child abuse and neglect. Furthermore, excessive animal ownership may incur economic difficulties for the animal owner due to increased spending from taking care of too many animals, and may lead to increased friction between the animal owner and other neighborhood residents. Thus, the animal owner would become more and more isolated in the community, and his/her living conditions would be further exacerbated, falling into a vicious cycle.

## **5. Causes of the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership——Failure to Carry Out Proper Sterilization surgeries**

The problem of excessive animal ownership usually arises from the following reasons: the animal owner obtains animals by picking up abandoned animals, feeding community cats, adoption, purchase, etc. The animal owner does not carry out proper sterilization surgeries, and the number of animals increases. Although the animal owner starts to keep only a few animals at the beginning, the number of animals with high reproductive activity rapidly increases in a short period of time if females and males are housed together. The number of animals also increases if the animals are unconfined or the animal owner feeds community cats living outside his/her residence. In the questionnaires regarding care conditions for the animals, the percentage of households in which “There are (were) animals that have (had) not undergone sterilization surgeries” is 91.7%; “The animals are kept unconfined in the home and premises” is 88.1%. This means that nearly 90% of animal owners house the animals in such a way that would lead to the number of animals increasing.

When the number of animals is too high for the animal owner to take care of them, it becomes difficult for him/her to reduce the number of animals. As a result, the living conditions of the animal owner deteriorates, the number of animals increases further, and the problem of excessive animal ownership becomes more serious. Therefore, when there

is a high risk of animal owners developing the problem of excessive animal ownership, e.g., they have animals (even a single animal) that have not undergone sterilization surgeries (which may lead to unplanned breeding), or the number of animals is on the increase, etc., it is important to take measures for the animal owners to properly house animals, at an early stage while the number of animals is not high.

Animals such as dogs, cats, and rabbits have high fecundity. The number of animals may increase rapidly due to irresponsible feeding of animals in the surrounding community areas, free-range keeping, unrepaired homes (which will result in infestation by and breeding of animals), and failure to carry out proper sterilization surgeries, etc.

When animal owners keep more than one animal, it is necessary for them to figure out the proper number of animals that they can manage and to carry out proper sterilization surgeries. Even if they have only one animal, it is important for them to have the animal undergo sterilization surgeries in order to prevent uncontrolled breeding and/or diseases in the genital organs. It is necessary for animal owners who have excessive numbers of animals to carry out proper sterilization surgeries. Keeping males and females separately is an effective way of preventing animal breeding. However, animals such as dogs and cats are, in general, not always kept in cages, and it would be extremely difficult to be certain to do so in the case of owners with excessive animal ownership. In addition, when animals that have not been neutered are kept separately in the same residence, they would suffer from profound distress during estrus. Therefore, animal owners who have excessive numbers of animals should carry out sterilization surgeries on the animals, excluding those animals such as rabbits and hamsters that are generally kept separately in cages.

The advantages of sterilization surgeries outweigh their disadvantages. Although some precautions should be taken into account when having animals undergo sterilization surgeries (e.g., animals tend to gain weight after the surgeries), there are several advantages. These include, for example, prevention of diseases in the genital organs, etc. (i.e., the prostate, testis, anus in males; uterus, mammary in females), decreased risks of sexually transmitted diseases, prevention of problematic behaviors caused by distress due to the lack of reproductive behavior, and prevention of genetic disorders such as deformation and stillbirth caused by inbreeding. Therefore, it is recommended that animals should undergo sterilization surgeries from the viewpoint of animal welfare, because animals who do (both males and females) tend to live longer and in good health after the surgeries.

When animal owners carry out sterilization surgeries while the number of animals is small, the economic burden of the surgeries will consequently be reduced. Some local governments financially support sterilization surgeries in dogs and cats to reduce unwanted breeding of animals that might increase the number of animals to be euthanized.

The behaviors of animal owners that lead to an increase in the number of animals include irresponsible feeding of community cats, free-range housing, unrepaired homes (which will result in infestation by and breeding of outside animals), failure to carry out proper sterilization surgeries, etc. These behaviors are probably caused by economic difficulties, impaired judgment, peculiar beliefs and feelings, etc., on the part of animal owners.

Most animal owners who have economic difficulties seem to continue keeping animals without having them undergo sterilization surgeries because they cannot pay for such surgeries. When the animal owner leaves damage to the home unrepaired because he/she cannot manage to cover the cost of the repair, outside animals may enter the home through the damaged part and breed there.

In some cases, animal owners have impaired judgement due to various reasons such as dementia, other diseases and disorders, etc. Sometimes, the animal owner seems to have lost his/her judgement even if definitive diagnoses for any diseases or disorders are not made. These animal owners do not have adequate knowledge of animal reproduction in the first place, and they can figure out neither the proper number of animals that they can manage nor the cost and effort needed to care for the animals throughout the animals' lives. As a result, they fail to carry out sterilization surgeries, bringing about the problem of excessive animal ownership.

Even if the animal owner has a capacity for judgment to a certain degree, he/she sometimes engages in irresponsible feeding of community cats, or houses too many animals for him/her to provide proper care for because of the following reasons: he/she has a strong attachment to animals such that he/she feels obliged to adopt abandoned animals; he/she has a strong belief that it is against the providence of nature to carry out sterilization surgeries; he/she strongly feels that it is cruel to carry out sterilization surgeries, etc.

In addition, some of the animal owners cannot recognize or are indifferent to unsanitary care conditions or problematic behaviors of animals. On the other hand, other animal owners who pretend that they are superficially indifferent to the present situation

gradually come to understand the problem of excessive animal ownership and change their minds and behaviors as a result of repeated and considerate persuasion by local government officials and/or volunteers of animal rescue groups.

When you explain the importance of sterilization surgeries and indoor housing, it is good to show the animal owner specific examples and objective facts, taking his/her way of thinking into consideration, for example, “Why should you do that?”; “What is the advantage for doing that?”; “What is the disadvantage of not doing that?”; etc.

And it might be also effective to explain the reproductive activity of animals, sustaining the safety of community cats, measures for addressing complaints raised by other neighborhood residents, the health and longevity of animals, methods for resolving problematic behaviors of animals, etc.

As an example of the advantage of indoor housing over outdoor housing, you might explain that the number of animals killed in traffic accidents would be lower, the risk of infection would be reduced, and friction between the animal owner and other neighborhood residents would be alleviated. It would be effective for you to show methods for the proper indoor keeping of animals.

## Chapter 2 Dealing with the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership

When working on the problem of excessive animal ownership, it is important to take necessary measures from the following three aspects in order to protect the lives, health, and livelihoods of people and animals: “livelihood support for animal owners,” “improvement of the care conditions for animals,” and “improvement of the surrounding living environment.” There are a variety of ways to approach each aspect. Therefore, necessary measures should be taken, not only by public animal welfare departments, but through cooperation among both local governments and the private sector such as social welfare departments, environmental health departments, the police, animal welfare volunteers, and social welfare service providers.

### 1. Importance of Cooperation among Various Actors and Stakeholders beyond the Boundaries of the Public and Private Sectors: No Cooperation, No Resolution

To find a fundamental solution for the problem of excessive animal ownership, it is important for various stakeholders to cooperate. For instance, the social welfare

department deals with “livelihood support for animal owners,” the animal welfare department deals with “improvement of the care conditions for animals,” and the public health department deals with “improvement of the surrounding living environment.” Efficient and beneficial cooperation may be achieved by understanding who can be stakeholders, and what roles they may play, based on the individual situation of animal owners and stakeholders.

This section summarizes the roles of each actor and is intended to be used as a reference for establishing cooperation. First, it is useful to identify relevant actors, understand thoroughly what each actor should and can do, and decide who takes which measures to resolve problems. In some cases, one of the key elements in solving the problem of excessive animal ownership is to take proper measures beyond the framework of one’s regular work, depending on the situation.

Establishing a well-functioning mechanism is also crucial for cooperation. For actors who would have major roles in dealing with the problem of excessive animal ownership, it is possible to establish a mechanism of early discovery and fast action by sharing information among the stakeholders on a daily basis, clarifying contact points, and deciding possible measures in advance, although relevant actors differ in each case. We hope to prevent problems from escalating by being aware of the early warning signs, and by properly connecting all relevant actors. For that, we must raise the awareness of various institutions, organizations, volunteers, and social welfare service providers toward the problem of excessive animal ownership.

To avoid situations that cannot be handled, it is necessary for relevant actors to do as follows: to present measures that each actor can take, to discuss at an early stage who should deal with a case in which the responsibility is unclear, and to decide which department should deal with a case based mainly on the elements of the case, such as the characteristics of the animal owners, etc.

## (1) Collaborating Actors and their Roles

### 1) Social Welfare Issues

The problem of excessive animal ownership is generally recognized as a problem of animal welfare and public health. However, it sometime involves problems related to social welfare policies, such as aging, mental illness and economic difficulties. The social welfare system is categorized according to the attributes of the service recipients. Related



laws and regulations state that prefectures and municipalities need to establish public offices for social welfare policy depending on the size of the local government. If the animal owners are facing difficulties such as economic difficulties, diseases, disorders and social isolation, etc., we need cooperation among various organizations to deal with them. “Various organizations” means the social welfare offices of the local government and nongovernmental support centers (e.g., local councils on social welfare, community comprehensive support centers, and mental health and welfare centers). Also, cooperation with specialists who are deeply involved in the lives of animal owners is indispensable, e.g., social welfare service providers, case workers, public health nurses, mental health and welfare counselors, and commissioned welfare volunteers, etc.

## 2) Animal Welfare Issues

Based on Article 37-2 of the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals, local governments (all prefectures, and municipalities with a large population and in charge of administering the Act) are in charge of work related to animal welfare. The names of the institutions carrying out this work vary by local government, such as animal welfare departments, environmental health divisions, public animal welfare and management centers, and public health centers, etc. In terms of the improvement of the care conditions for animals, stakeholders such as the public animal welfare and management centers in local governments, animal welfare promoters (who are appointed by prefectural governors or mayors to give necessary advice to animal owners and the community in accordance with Article 38 of the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals), veterinary hospitals and veterinary medical associations in the community, and volunteers such as animal rescue groups, play an important role. They may take part in providing guidance and raising awareness about proper care for animals, discovering the problem of excessive animal ownership, monitoring the problem and preventing it from worsening, and rescuing animals.

## 3) Others

In order to resolve the problem of excessive animal ownership, it is often necessary to cooperate with various actors other than those involved in animal welfare and social welfare. For example, departments in charge of the living environment, residences, disaster management and the police could be considered. Residents in the neighborhood are also important.

Therefore, to resolve the problem of excessive animal ownership, it is necessary to take measures in cooperation with relevant actors around the animal owners.

## (2) Cooperation from Residents in the Neighborhood

While the problem of excessive animal ownership is being detected, discovered, dealt with, and monitored, the people who will be most deeply affected and involved are families, relatives, neighborhood residents, landlords who own and manage the properties, etc.

On the one hand, neighborhood residents and residents' associations are victims of the problem. They suffer from the deterioration of the living environment due to odors, noise, vermin, and so on resulting from the problem of excessive animal ownership. Therefore, they often make strong complaints toward the public administration. Officials in charge are often caught in a dilemma between the animal owner and the neighborhood residents.

Therefore, it is necessary to share information with neighborhood residents, according to each stage of the process. Before taking actual measures, it is important to explain the outline of the measures, and, while they are being implemented, to explain the ongoing situations and future outlook if necessary and to the extent possible. By providing comprehensible explanations to neighborhood residents and landlords through the residents' associations, their anxiety and distrust of the process can be assuaged, and as a result, the person in charge can deal with the problem smoothly. In some cases, officials in charge tried to show the neighborhood residents that they are providing appropriate guidance to the animal owner by parking official vehicles in front of the animal owner's house, talking to the owner outside, etc.

On the other hand, neighborhood residents and residents' associations are people who know the animal owner personally. They have information such as his/her personal history, original way of life, family structure, and life events. In some cases, they may understand and care about the state of social isolation that the animal owner is in. Information and cooperation from the neighborhood residents may become a key element in resolving the problems of self-neglect and social isolation of the animal owner.

Acquiring the understanding of the neighborhood residents may lead to the establishment of a soft and moderate monitoring system, where people promptly contact the local government when they sense something "unusual" and/or "strange" in their daily life or daily work. It may be also possible to get help from the neighborhood residents to find new owners for the rescued animals.

### (3) Cooperation and Advice from Experts

In dealing with the problem of excessive animal ownership, it is also important to gain cooperation and advice from experts and researchers in social welfare and/or animal welfare.

From the perspective of human medical care, the animal owners who have the problem of excessive animal ownership also tend to have mental and/or physical problems that are not adequately cared for. If the animal owners are connected to doctors and other appropriate specialists and receive proper treatment, their health conditions are expected to improve. Especially in the case of mental problems, it is also effective to consult with mental health and welfare counselors at public health centers or the public mental health and social welfare centers, etc., and provide animal owners with appropriate medical care.

From the perspective of animal medical care, the role of veterinarians is essential, especially in performing sterilization surgeries that prevent breeding. The role of veterinarians also includes deworming and vaccinating animals to improve their health conditions, treating injured or sick animals, providing veterinary insights regarding animal abuse, etc. In some prefectures and municipalities, veterinary medical associations are working together with local governments to raise awareness about proper care of animals and to prevent the problem of excessive animal ownership, by providing consultation services about how to properly take care of animals, etc. In some cases, local governments and veterinary medical associations have concluded agreements in advance to cope with natural disasters. It is important to make regular efforts to build a cooperative partnership and information sharing system in advance.

It is advisable to collect information on local experts in the region beforehand and establish a system in which their cooperation and advice can be obtained when necessary.

### (4) Cooperation with Animal Welfare Volunteers

#### 1) Importance of Cooperation with Animal Welfare Volunteers

In the face of the problem of excessive animal ownership, a variety of activities are required to resolve it. These include, for example, advising on proper housing of animals, taking care of animals, capturing and transporting animals for treatment or temporary care and finding new owners for animals, etc. As the human resources of local

governments are generally limited, animal welfare volunteers often play a crucial role in improving the situation of animals.

Firstly, animal welfare promoters, who are commissioned by prefectural governors, etc., have an intermediation role between the animal welfare public administration and the local residents. They carry out a variety of activities for local residents to promote understanding of animals, such as providing consultation as accessible local counselors, giving advice on proper care of animals upon request and so on.

There are also “second-class animal handling business operators” (see Article 24-2-2 of the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals) who handle more than a certain number of animals and operate animal shelters on a non-profit basis.

In addition to the above, a wide variety of individuals and groups are active as animal welfare volunteers, and their objectives and activities vary widely.

However, the activities of animal welfare volunteers and groups may also cause various problems. When they devote their efforts only to rescuing animals, they tend to disregard sufficient coordination with the animal owners and/or other stakeholders, and not to follow the proper procedures. This may cause adverse effects on future activities.

While rescuing animals from poor conditions is important, we must also address the problematic behaviors of the animal owners. Otherwise, even if the animals are rescued, the problem of excessive animal ownership can easily recur, and new animals will be placed in similar conditions. In addition to rescuing the animals, it is also important to understand the situation of the owners, and to think about how to make both the owners and the animals happy. Only then can we find a fundamental solution to the problem.

## 2) Examples of Activities by Animal Welfare Volunteers

Animal welfare volunteers engage in a wide range of activities, and there are various types of volunteers, including groups and individuals, paid and unpaid. While volunteers are often lacking in human and financial resources, they are not necessarily bound by the principles of fairness and cost bearing by beneficiaries like governmental organizations, which may make it possible to deal with the problem flexibly.

The following are some examples of their activities.

#### #Monitoring

Volunteers visit the homes of animal owners to provide advice to help them take care of their animals properly, and also support through a monitoring process. More detailed examples include giving advice on animal health and correct animal care knowledge, persuading owners to spay or neuter their animals, and acting as a bridge between owners and animals to relieve or to rescue animals.

#### #Rescue and transportation

In order to rescue and relieve animals from poor conditions, volunteers visit owners' homes, etc., to capture animals and help transport them to places such as the public animal welfare and management centers, public health centers, veterinary hospitals, new owner's homes, and places for temporary care.

#### #Temporary care

When animal owners have difficulty caring for their animals and if owners request temporary care outside of their homes, animal welfare volunteers take care of animals temporarily at a shelter or members' homes until new owners are found. This also happens in cases when it is difficult for the public animal welfare and management centers to accept all the animals due to the large number of them, etc. The period varies depending on the action policy of the volunteer group, from a short period of one month or less to a long period of one year or more. Volunteers are expected to have sufficient knowledge and experience to take daily care of the animals.

#### #Finding new owners

Volunteers often provide matching support between rescued animals and general households that wish to receive them (adoption service). This activity includes cooperating with adoption meetings organized by the public animal welfare and management centers and helping with the publicity campaigns to find prospective adopters, etc. Some volunteers are active across a wide area and usually have their own networks and media (adoption fairs, websites, social media, etc.) for finding new owners.

#### #Veterinary care and nursing by professional specialists

Veterinarians, veterinary nurses, etc. can perform sterilization surgeries, treat and care for animals. Animal trainers can provide advice on properly training and handling animals. Animals living under overcrowded conditions are vulnerable to parasites and infectious diseases, and also not used to people. For these reasons, it may be difficult to

find new homes for them smoothly. With the cooperation of specialists, it is hoped that the health of animals will be improved and they will be trained properly. Then, their adoption can be sought.

### 3) Points to Note on Cooperation

To achieve smooth cooperation between local governments and animal welfare volunteers, they need to understand each other's roles. But the number and scale of animal welfare volunteers vary according to region. Some local governments are facing a shortage of groups and volunteers in their area. In such cases, one option for the local governments is to enhance the community to develop human resources. It is also important to develop leaders and coordinators.

It is also important to build a good relationship between local governments and volunteer groups by organizing workshop meetings and cooperating on activities at the public animal welfare and management centers. If a regular cooperative relationship is established, these groups will become reliable partners not only in dealing with problems of excessive animal ownership, but also in rescue activities at times of disaster.

To prepare for injuries and accidents during animal rescue activities, it is advisable for the animal volunteers to consider purchasing volunteer insurance and establishing rules for volunteer activities.

When a problem of large-scale excessive animal ownership occurs, it may happen that animal rescue groups from all over Japan come together and deploy their own activities separately from those of the relevant local actors. Thus, rules for voluntary activities are important to prevent this kind of confusion. If confusion arises, go back to the initial policy (i.e., what were we trying to do to resolve the problem?) and sort out the situation.

There are also other risks such as that animal rescue groups and volunteers become unable to properly take care of animals, by placing too much priority on animal rescue and accepting animals beyond their own capacities. These risks lead to a secondary problem of excessive animal ownership by animal volunteers. To prevent such situations, on the one hand, animal rescue groups need to realize their own capacities for accepting animals and be careful not to exceed them. On the other hand, local governments must have a general picture of the situation so that animal welfare volunteers can handle the animals within their capacities and are not overburdened. It is important for the stakeholders to share information with each other when forming a policy to deal with the

problem. With regard to animal welfare volunteers who are active across different administrative districts, it is sometimes difficult for a single local government to grasp the full extent of their activities. Sufficient communication is needed between local governments and animal welfare volunteers to avoid overburdening volunteers.

## 2. Related Laws and Regulations

This section shows the list of laws and regulations that are relevant when addressing the problem of excessive animal ownership. These laws and regulations are further divided into four categories: “Laws and regulations to support the livelihood of animal owners,” “Laws and regulations about procedures to provide administrative regulation and guidance,” “Laws and regulations to bear in mind before providing administrative regulation and guidance,” and “Laws and regulations to bear in mind throughout the entire process.” (Details are omitted.)

## 3. Dealing with the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership—Relevant Actors should Work Together to Solve the Problem.

### (1) Procedure for Dealing with the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership

Practical actions to deal with the problem of excessive animal ownership can be broadly divided into four parts: Prevention, Discovery, Intervention or Support after Discovery, and Prevention of Recurrence.

“Prevention” is the stage at which local governments raise people’s awareness on the risks of and preventive measures for excessive animal ownerships, and then inform them who to contact if they detect such a problem. The target at this stage is a wide range of people including animal owners as well as other residents.

“Discovery” refers to a situation in which the problem or potential problem of excessive animal ownership becomes apparent to the outside.

“Intervention or Support after Discovery” is the stage at which local governments, relevant institutions, and organizations should work together to address the problem. At this stage, the problem has worsened, and it is difficult to resolve the problem through the efforts and initiatives of the animal owners alone.

“Prevention of Recurrence” is the stage at which preventive measures are taken after the problem of excessive animal ownership is solved. The measures include encouraging

the animal owners to change their behavior voluntarily, preventing the number of animals from increasing by stopping the owners from picking up abandoned animals and/or purchasing new animals, as well as preventing the reproduction of these animals. At this stage, neighborhood residents, local governments, relevant institutions, etc., should monitor the animal owners.

The problem of excessive animal ownership has a negative influence on the lives and/or health of both humans and animals. Therefore, it is extremely important to detect and deal with the problem in the early stages. Early action can minimize the increase in animal population. It can also minimize not only the three impacts (the living situations of animal owners are deteriorating, the housing conditions of animals are getting worse, and the surrounding living environment is adversely affected) but also the labor and costs involved in dealing with the problem.

## (2) Prevention

Raising awareness about proper care of animals will help prevent various problems in communities, including the problems of excessive animal ownership.

There are various reasons why owners let the animal populations grow out of hand, but one of the main factors is that the owners do not fully understand how to properly take care of their animals. Therefore, they are unable to make appropriate considerations and decisions.

To prevent the problem of excessive animal ownership, it is important to inform the public widely about the following topics. For example, correct information on animals (their fecundity, the importance of training, the life span, habits and physiology of animals, etc.), the responsibilities required of animal owners (lifelong care, sterilization surgeries, consideration for neighborhood residents, etc.), consultation services related to care of animals (where to go for advice when having problems with care of animals, the importance of early consultation, etc.), local government systems and initiatives (reduction or exemption of the administrative animal custody fees, subsidies for sterilization surgeries, etc.), the three impacts and risks caused by the problem of excessive animal ownerships, etc.

This approach of reaching out to a wide range of residents is called the “population approach” and is to help the entire community reduce or prevent risks. Many animal welfare departments are working well already to raise awareness through various



booklets, pamphlets, and seminars, etc. However, further efforts are needed to ensure that information reaches people who are not interested in animals. More effective awareness-raising efforts can be made with the cooperation of related departments in charge of the living environment, residences, and social welfare, etc. It is also important to provide opportunities for people to learn about proper care for animals through school education and workshops held at the public animal welfare and management centers.

Animal owners must learn correct knowledge about the proper way to take care of animals. They must think about what is necessary to take care of animals properly and act accordingly. There are many things to be done in order to care for animals properly, such as feeding, watering, disposal of feces and urine, control of temperature and humidity, maintenance of cleanliness, managing health such as preventive vaccinations, ensuring that animals receive the necessary treatment in the event of injury or illness, providing nursing care for animals when they need it, and evacuating with them in the event of disasters. In addition, animal owners must secure someone to take care of the animals in case of any trouble that the owners are unable to care for the animal due to relocation, childbirth, hospitalization, admission to a nursing home, etc. Animal owners should understand that they must provide such appropriate care for animals throughout the animal's life, which include time, effort, money, space, and necessary materials and equipment.

Furthermore, if the animal owners are keeping multiple animals, additional considerations are needed to manage and care for animals properly. These include preventing excessive fighting between animals, ensuring that all animals are well-fed, monitoring the health of each individual animal, and socializing the animals through interaction with people and each other. Also, raising animals in high-density environments makes it easier for infectious diseases and parasites to spread. In such cases, animal owners must go to a veterinary hospital, get them properly treated, segregate the animals from each other, and care for them individually. The animal owners should therefore not let the number of animals exceed their capacity to provide these measures.

By disseminating such information not only to the animal owners, but also to family members, relatives, and neighborhood residents, it is hoped that people may become aware of the problem before it worsens. Clarifying and disseminating the contact points for consultation when signs of excessive animal ownership are discovered will lead to fast information gathering, which is crucial in preventing the problem of excessive animal ownership from occurring or makes it possible to deal with the problem at an early stage.

### (3) Discovery

It is known that various stakeholders surrounding the animal owners, such as relatives, neighborhood residents, school staff, social welfare staff, and pet-related business employees, all contribute to discovering the problems of excessive animal ownership.

How the problems of excessive animal ownership are discovered (from the “Questionnaire on excessive animal ownership”).

#Consultations from commissioned welfare volunteers, community comprehensive support centers, councils on social welfare, etc.
#Information provided by public health nurses at public health centers, who discovered the problem during their visit to check the newborn babies at the animal owner's home.
#Information provided by welfare caseworkers, who detected the problem during their visits to the owner's home.
#Information provided by social welfare staff, who visited the owner's home after the owner was discharged from the hospital.
#Reports filed by school staff and/or child welfare workers, who suspected neglect due to the odor of the owner's child.
#Consultations from the animal owners to the public animal welfare and management centers about taking some animals, whose numbers increased, into custody.
#Consultations from the relatives of the animal owner about the owner being ill and having to be hospitalized.
#Reports filed by neighborhood residents about keeping animals in public housing where it is prohibited, and/or trouble arising from odors and noise.
#Reports filed by animal funeral services, who suspected neglect because the owner frequently brought in animal carcasses.
#Reports filed by pet stores who were suspicious because the owner made repeated purchases.
#Consultations from housing management companies who were coordinating with the owner regarding eviction.
#Information provided by organization staff who manage the public housing where the owner lives.

Sometimes the problems of excess animal ownership are discovered by the staff of welfare offices, councils on social welfare, community comprehensive support centers, and social welfare offices, as well as home care workers and other social welfare personnel, i.e., people who are closely related to the animal owner's life. One local government surveyed

welfare caseworkers regarding the conditions of any animals in the home of the welfare recipients. The result showed that some recipients tended to house a large number of cats. It is also known that social welfare workers are troubled by this because they do not know how to deal with the problems of excessive animal ownership even if they discover them.

On the other hand, when animal welfare departments receive any consultations or reports, there are often cases where the animal owners are believed to be in need of livelihood support such as nursing care, medical treatment or financial assistance. In such cases, it is very important for the animal welfare departments to promptly share this information with the social welfare departments to ensure a smooth response. In addition, if the owner is already using social welfare services, it is desirable to share information appropriately in order to ensure a coordinated response.

“Discovery” refers to the fact that the problem or potential problems of excessive animal ownership becomes apparent to the outside. It can be further divided into the following three stages according to the degree of deterioration.

#Detecting the potential problem of excessive animal ownership in its high-risk stage.

This is the stage at which local governments, etc., can still prevent the problem of excessive animal ownership from occurring. Prevention can be done by detecting the animal owners with a high risk of developing the problem at an early stage and conducting appropriate measures such as guidance, etc.

#Detecting and discovering the problem of excessive animal ownership in its early stage.

This is the stage at which local governments, etc., have detected/discovered an existing problem of excessive animal ownership in its early stage, and can still prevent the problem from worsening.

#Discovering the problem of excessive animal ownership in its full stage.

This is the stage at which local governments, etc., have discovered an existing problem of excessive animal ownership already in a serious condition (i.e., animal hoarding).

## 1) Detecting the Potential Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership in Its High-risk Stage

This is the stage at which local governments, etc., can still prevent the problem of excessive animal ownership from occurring by detecting the animal owners with a high risk of developing the problem at an early stage.

It is important for stakeholders in local communities, who are in a relatively close position to the animal owners, to realize the impact of the problem of excessive animal ownership as well as the importance of an early response. These people include neighborhood residents, commissioned welfare volunteers, relevant divisions of the public administrations, social welfare service providers, and community supporters (volunteers who monitor and talk to elderly people in their daily lives). In some cases, efforts have been made to detect high-risk animal owners by conducting questionnaires among stakeholders in communities. In other cases, efforts have been made to detect the problems by creating a flowchart that makes it easier to assess the situation regarding excessive animal ownerships and to outline what measures should be taken.

Pet-related businesses, such as pet stores and animal funeral services, can also become relevant actors that contribute to the early discovery of the problem of excessive animal ownership. Some local governments have informed these pet-related businesses of the problem of excessive animal ownership and asked for their cooperation. Some local governments have asked pet-related businesses to provide information to the animal owners on the proper care of their animals, and also asked them to inform the local government of the owners with a high risk so that early discovery is possible.

This approach of encouraging animal owners with high risk to reduce the risk is called the “high-risk approach.” Officials from animal welfare departments and officials from social welfare departments who have daily contact with the owner should cooperate with each other and provide the following information, advice, and guidance to the owners.

#Without proper sterilization surgeries, animal populations will increase in a short period of time.

#Many other problems will arise from the problem of excessive animal ownership.

#Relevant measures will be needed according to the factors that caused the number of animals to increase, such as breeding, acquisition, adoption, and purchase, etc.

## 2) Detecting and Discovering the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership in Its Early Stage

This is where detection/discovery has been made in the problem's early stage. The animal owners are housing animals beyond or almost beyond their capacities, but feed and feces are cleaned up to some extent, and the owners themselves are still able to maintain a certain level of social life.

At this stage, in addition to the high-risk approach, the following measures should be taken by the owners, or advice and guidance should be given to them. In this case, the relevant actors are not only the officials in charge as in the case of 1) above, but also animal welfare volunteers if necessary.

#Specify the animals that need to undergo sterilization surgeries. Consult with the owner to determine the date, place (veterinary hospital), and cost of the operation.

#Check if the inside and outside of the home are kept clean enough for an animal living environment. If not, ask the owner to make improvements and inform the owner that there will be periodic monitoring visits.

#If the owner is unable to take care of the animals adequately due to his/her health condition, etc., ask the owner to decide to give up the animals to adoption organizations, even if in the early stage.

## 3) Discovering the Problem of Excess Animal Ownership in Its Full Stage (Animal Hoarding)

This is the stage at which the problem has been discovered in its full stage (what is called "animal hoarding"). The condition is worsening, and the neighborhood is exposed to the problem, leading to complaints by neighborhood residents. Neighborhood residents are affected by problems such as animal excreta left in and/or outside the housing areas, odors and vermin infestation on the premises, noises from animals, and unconfined animals. In such a situation, the relationship between the owner and the other neighborhood residents may have already deteriorated considerably.

In some cases, the problem of excessive animal ownership may be discovered from trouble between the animal owners and housing management companies over eviction requests/orders. If the problem can be discovered at an earlier stage, it may be possible to reduce the risk of the animal owner being forced to move out.

In any of the above stages 1) to 3), if the consultation or reporting from stakeholders suggests that there is a need to provide livelihood support to owners or to deal with inappropriate excessive animal ownership, the information should be shared among social welfare departments and animal welfare departments as soon as possible.

By organizing the information gathered, it will be easier to determine the priority of the measures that need to be taken. To organize the information, use the “detection check sheet” (details are omitted) and fill it in with the information gathered through interviews from the first information provider and initial on-site investigations, etc. The sheet will be useful for examining on-site investigations after discovering the problem and for sharing the information with relevant stakeholders other than social welfare departments.

A certain level of information-sharing among collaborating actors is essential for dealing with the problem effectively. However, adequate care must be taken in the handling of personal information. The handling of personal information is regulated by the personal information protection ordinances of each local government, and there are various ways to deal with this matter. In some cases, it may be necessary to ensure the anonymity of information providers and/or inquirers. In order to determine what items should be included in the “detection check sheet” and to what extent they should be filled in, we need to understand the regulations of the local government regarding personal information protection, and then make flexible decisions based on the region and individual case.

#### (4) Intervention or Support after Discovery

##### 1) Assessing the Situation and Identifying Relevant Actors that Should Cooperate

After discovering a problem of excessive animal ownership, assess the situation, analyze the problem, and identify the actors that should cooperate with each other, based on the information collected through on-sight investigations. The “situation assessment check list” (details are omitted) is an example of a tool for this purpose.

##### 2) Action

Gather necessary information from collaborating actors and stakeholders. Then, decide on the action policy based on a comprehensive judgment as well as the following three perspectives: (1) livelihood support for animal owners, (2) improvement of the care conditions for animals, and (3) improvement of the surrounding living environment.

When taking response measures, visits and on-site investigations are carried out together with collaborating actors as necessary. On the one hand, it is difficult for the animal welfare department to determine whether the animal owner has any health problems. In particular, the lack of knowledge and skills for dealing with people with various diseases, dementia, mental illness, developmental disabilities, etc., will lead to communication difficulties. On the other hand, it is difficult for the social welfare department alone to determine whether or not the owner's animal is being properly cared for, in good health, etc. Further, if the animal is infected with a zoonotic disease, there is a risk it will infect both the owner and the officials in charge, if they interact with the animal without knowing about the infection. It is necessary for the officials from social welfare and animal welfare departments to accompany each other when conducting onsite investigations, so that they can complement each other's expertise and ensure smoother solutions to the problem of excessive animal ownership.

In principle, the owner's consent is needed for sharing personal information. However, it is often difficult to obtain such consent from the owners themselves. Therefore, when asking for the involvement of relevant actors, information is shared only to the extent that it does not violate the personal information protection ordinance. In some cases, relevant stakeholders go together as a party to the owners, so that they can get personal information directly from the owners at the same time.

Furthermore, if the problem of excessive animal ownership is having an adverse effect on the surrounding living environment, or if the owner is under financial pressure and has failed to pay rent, it is necessary to cooperate with the living environment department, housing department, and/or housing management company. In addition, if severe animal cruelty is suspected or any trouble is foreseen, it is necessary to cooperate with the police.

Keeping records of the process while working on the problem of excessive animal ownership will be helpful for understanding the course of events. The records will make it smoother to hand over roles and duties between staff members and is also useful for reviewing the process after resolving the problem.

Developing a list of the animals and animal medical records will help identify individual animals. It is advisable that the list and records contain information such as the type of animal, its sex, age, coat color, sterilization status, vaccination status, etc., as well as photos of each animal. This will also serve as a useful document for conducting subsequent treatment, examining the policies for administrative custody or transferring animals to

private animal welfare organizations, and checking on progress. It can also be a good opportunity for owners to reflect on the status of their animals.

### 3) Measures to Take Based on the Three Perspectives

#### a. livelihood support for animal owners

To do:

#Connect owners in need of support to social welfare support appropriate to their circumstances and factors.

#Guide the animal owners to make consultation, application, etc., necessary to receive support or assist them in doing so.

#Determine whether it is the owners themselves or their families who need support.

#Categories of support include “conditions of poverty and economic difficulties,” “care and livelihood support for the elderly,” “support for people with mental or physical disabilities,” and “ensuring the safety of children and support for single-mother and single-father families.”

#Build a trusting relationship with the animal owner. Do not seek immediate results. (It is important to involve key persons such as relatives, neighborhood residents, and social workers who have a relationship of trust with the owner.)

For animal owners in need of support, it is necessary to connect them to appropriate social welfare support according to the factors involved. Such support includes health care in cooperation with public health nurses, doctors, psychiatrists, etc., and/or various social welfare services based on various laws: the Act on Self-reliance Support for Needy Persons, the Act on Social Welfare for the Elderly, the Long-Term Care Insurance Act, the Services and Support for Persons with Disabilities Act, etc.

Some of the animal owners with the problem of excessive animal ownerships may not be aware of the need for support or may refuse to receive it. In order to receive public assistance or support, owners themselves or their relatives must first recognize the need for support, and then consult or apply to the appropriate authorities. Some owners feel isolated and alienated because their relatives and other neighborhood residents blame them for the trouble arising from excessive animal ownership. For these owners, animals are something they can rely on. With these owners, it is necessary to build a relationship of trust, and determine appropriate support to improve their lives.

There are cases where not only the animal owners themselves but also their family members need support. Therefore, it is also important to know about the owner’s cohabiting family members.



It should be noted that, public social welfare support and insurance such as nursing care is only applicable to people, and does not cover the care of animals, such as walking (dogs), feeding, toileting, and/or taking them to veterinary clinics on behalf of their owners. If the home care office's workers were to take care of animals as their own services beyond the range of public insurance, it would be necessary for the home care office to register with the local government as a first-class animal handling business operator, in addition to registering as a home care office.

b. Improvement of the care conditions for animals

To do:

#To prevent a further increase in the number of animals, have owners get their animals sterilized/neutered, prevent animals from escaping, and repair their homes, etc., or assist them in doing so.

#If the owner is in a financial situation where he/she cannot afford the cost of sterilization surgeries, or the fee for taking custody of the animals by the local government, stakeholders could consider making use of any subsidies provided by the local governments or support provided by private animal welfare organizations.

#If the owner with the problem of excessive animal ownership is unable to provide proper care to the animals, especially due to financial reasons, consequently leading to the animals being sick, injured, poorly nourished, etc., persuade the owner to relinquish ownership of the animals. Then, either the local governments or animal welfare volunteers are to take over custody of the animals and find new homes for them.

#If it is difficult to deal with the situation through administrative agencies alone, seek cooperation from animal welfare volunteers, veterinary medical associations, etc.

#In such cases, make arrangements and agreements in advance on the number of staff and cost sharing.

#The cost of housing animals should be borne by the owners, and the public expenditure should be minimized. That said, consideration should be given to provide subsidies for sterilization surgeries, exemptions of fees for administrative custody, etc., as well as preparing in advance the necessary fund-raising methods such as the creation of a fund, hometown tax donations, crowdfunding, etc.

If necessary, take strict measures based on laws and regulations.

# If the animals are at risk of being abused, recommendations or orders should be given to the owner to take necessary measures to improve the situation in accordance with Article 25 of the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals.

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li># If the situation does not improve, or in an urgent case where the abuse must be stopped immediately, the case shall be handled as a criminal case based on the penal provisions of Article 44 of the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals.</li><li># If the animal has not been registered or vaccinated in accordance with the Rabies Prevention Act, the case will be handled as a violation of the law.</li></ul> |
|--|

It is necessary to ensure that the number of animals does not increase any further when the problem is discovered. Efforts must be made to reduce the number of animals that has already increased. These are important for the livelihood support of animal owners, improvement of the care conditions for animals, and improvement of the surrounding living environment.

Proper measures such as sterilization surgeries are essential in order not to increase the number of animals. To reduce the number of animals, the public administration must take custody of animals and/or transfer them to the animal welfare volunteers or new owners. However, depending on the physical and mental condition of the owner, the lifestyle change resulting from a sudden reduction of animals may have an adverse effect on the owner. In such cases, the animals must be taken away deliberately in coordination with social welfare departments, etc.

In addition, there are many cases in which the owners do not have the financial ability to pay for sterilization surgeries, or do not agree to relinquish ownership of the animals.

If the owners wish to continue keeping their animals, only the animals which have undergone sterilization surgeries should be allowed to remain at their homes. Also, measures must be taken to prevent the animals from escaping or entering from the outside. If the home is damaged, it should be repaired. If the owner keeps the animal outdoors, the owner should be advised to keep the animal indoors or on a leash to prevent it from escaping.

If the owner is unable to have the animal undergo sterilization surgeries due to financial problems, subsidies from local governments or private animal welfare organizations may be available.

Animals kept under excessive animal ownership situations often have parasites, skin diseases or infections, or are injured, due to their lack of opportunities to receive proper veterinary care. In not a few cases, owners are unable to bear the cost of treatment due to economic difficulties or other reasons. In the case of animals whose owners are unable to care for them properly, if owners consent to relinquish ownership of the animals, the local government or animal welfare volunteers are to take custody of the animals and provide

the animals with appropriate treatment and socialization training before finding new homes for them. Some major private animal welfare organizations support animal welfare volunteers by covering a part of the medical cost and other expenses required for animals rescued from owners with the problem of excessive animal ownership.

Some local governments have set up a system to reduce or exempt the fee for taking animals into custody when the owners have economic difficulties. Although taking animals into custody without much consideration can be problematic, in the case of a problem of excessive animal ownership, it is easy to imagine the number of animals increasing as time goes by, resulting in more and more animals needing to be taken into custody. In some cases, dogs have been taken into custody in accordance with the Rabies Prevention Act. As reducing the number of animals is essential in solving the problem of excessive animal ownership, it is important to consider and build in advance a system for receiving animals at the public animal welfare and management centers, etc., to prevent a situation in which animals cannot be taken in when a case occurs. In addition, it is desirable to determine the adoption suitability of the animal and to find new homes for them as much as possible. However, animals that suffer from incurable diseases or that are aggressive are not suitable for adoption and may have to be euthanized. Leaving the animals with owners with excessive animal ownership to avoid euthanasia will only lead to a more serious situation. Therefore, fast decisions and responses are needed in some cases.

In principle, the cost of housing animals should be borne by the owners, and the public expenditure should be minimized. However, if the owner shows the will to solve the problem of excessive animal ownership by agreeing to have the animals undergo sterilization surgeries or to give away some of his/her animals to custody, and if the people around are also supportive of the owner, then the local government may decide to provide subsidies to the owner. There are also private animal welfare organizations that provide subsidies for sterilization surgeries. Presently, most local governments only provide subsidies specifically for sterilization surgeries on community cats, so it is necessary to check in advance what kind of subsidy programs exist in the prefectures and municipalities of your jurisdiction. Since sterilization surgeries and custodies of animals are costly, securing financial resources is an issue for both local governments and animal welfare volunteer groups. There are some examples of fundraising methods such as the creation of funds, and, in recent years, hometown tax donations and crowdfunding, etc.

In cases where animals are at risk of being abused, such as suffering debilitation, due to inappropriate care by the owner, the prefectural governor, etc., has the authority to

recommend or order the owner to take necessary measures to improve the situation, based on Article 25 of the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals. Furthermore, in cases that clearly fall under the category of abuse and are malicious, whereby the owner has no intention of improving the care conditions for the animals, or in urgent cases where the abuse must be stopped as soon as possible, it may be necessary to deal with the situation as a criminal case based on the penal provisions of Article 44 of the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals. Other cases such as keeping animals in facilities with extremely inappropriate densities and leading to their debilitation, not giving proper treatment to sick or injured animals, keeping the animals in a facility where excrement is deposited or where the carcass of other animals are left, also constitute abuse.

If the owner has not registered or vaccinated the animals in accordance with the Rabies Prevention Act, it may need to be handled as a violation of the law.

c. Improvement of the surrounding living environment.

To do:

#As well as improving the care conditions for animals, have the owner or a cleaning company take care/dispose of the garbage, filth, and animal carcasses that are causing odors and attracting vermin, or provide advice and guidance to encourage the owners to do so.

#This will put the owners' own living environment and the animals living environment into an appropriate state and reduce the negative impact on the surrounding living environment.

#In cases where the animal owners cannot take the above measure themselves or afford cleaning services, it is assumed that officials in charge will have to deal with the situation. However, if it is difficult for officials to deal with the situation alone, cooperation from the local community, such as "silver resources centers" (retired persons human resources centers established under the Act on Stabilization of Employment of Elderly Persons) and volunteers, should be sought.

#In such cases, make arrangements and agreements in advance on the number of staff and cost sharing.

If necessary, take strict measures in accordance with laws and regulations.

# If the surrounding living environment has been damaged, recommendations or orders should be given to the owner to take necessary measures to improve the situation in accordance with Article 25 of the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals.

#. If the situation does not improve, requested or forcible eviction will be considered in cooperation with the property manager.

#. In order to improve the living environment, local governments that have “trash hoarding site ordinances” or a support system for trash removal should make use of these.

In many cases, a home with the problem of excessive animal ownership is also in a so-called “trash hoarding site” state. A “trash hoarding site” is a home where garbage is piled up both inside and outside, causing odor, vermin, building collapses, fires, and other dangers.

In these situations, the odor and a large number of vermin such as rats, flies, mosquitoes, cockroaches, fleas, etc., are occurring due to the inadequate disposal and neglect of leftover feed and animal excreta. Sometimes even animal carcasses are left unattended. Leaving animal excrement, animal carcasses, etc., unattended adversely affects not only the health and lives of the owners, but also the surrounding living environment. Also, stress associated with the estrus and sexual urges of the animals due to overcrowding or lack of sterilization surgeries can lead to noise problems such as excessive barking and whining.

If the owners refuse to improve the situation even when the surrounding living environment is adversely affected, the prefectural governors, etc., may issue guidance, advice, recommendations, orders, as well as collect reports, and/or conduct on-site inspections, in accordance with the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals or local government’s ordinances based on the Act. In addition, if an order is violated, the owners may be subjected to a penalty. When the animal owners refuse to improve the situation, there have been cases in which property managers have evicted them by requested or forcible eviction.

To improve the situation, the first priority is to reduce the number of animals, which is the cause of the problem, to a manageable number.

From the perspective of public health, some local governments have enacted so-called “trash hoarding site ordinances” to support the disposal of trash in order to eliminate and prevent the occurrence of a poor living environment. Also, some local governments have set up a support system for the removal of trash for those who face economic difficulties. The removal of trash may be done with the cooperation of relevant institutions and local communities such as silver resources centers and volunteers. There have been cases where local governments have ultimately removed part of the trash through substitute execution by public administration based on the trash hoarding site ordinance because the condition has not improved for many years.

## (5) Prevention of Recurrence

“Prevention of recurrence” is the stage at which preventive measures are taken after the problem of excessive animal ownership is solved. The measures include encouraging the animal owners to change their behavior voluntarily, preventing the number of animals from increasing by stopping the owners from picking up abandoned animals and/or purchasing new animals, as well as preventing the reproduction of these animals. At this stage, neighborhood residents, local governments, relevant institutions, etc., should monitor the animal owners. The prevention of recurrence is inextricably linked to the prevention of the problem of excessive animal ownership itself.

While some owners with the problem of excessive animal ownership are troubled by and anxious about the situation, other owners are not even aware of the fact that the care conditions for their animals are bad and that the surrounding living environment has deteriorated. These owners believe that they are loving and protecting the animals. Therefore, even if the officials in charge and animal welfare volunteers make dedicated efforts to solve the problem of excessive animal ownership, the owners’ lack of awareness of the problem can lead them to feel victimized since their animals have been forcibly taken away from them. They also feel dissatisfied or repulsed by local government officials or feel the urge to start keeping animals again.

The results of “Questionnaire surveys on excessive animal ownership” indicate that even after a problem of excessive animal ownership has been resolved, it often recurs. The reasons for its recurrence include: the owners picking up or adopting new animals, the small number of animals left in their ownership started breeding again because the owner did not have them undergo sterilization surgeries and/or failed to segregate male and female animals.

For some animal owners, animals have become something they rely on heavily, because they cannot establish good relationships with other people. In this case, the following measures may be effective in preventing the problem's recurrence: leaving a manageable number of animals for the owners to care for, after having the animals undergo sterilization surgeries; local governments and neighborhood residents taking care to ensure that the owners are not isolated from the local community; maintaining places and people that serve as points of contact between the owners and the local community.

Another effective measure for preventing the problem's recurrence is to have local communities and officials in charge continue monitoring whether the owner is properly housing the animals as well as whether the number of animals is increasing.

By providing multiple follow-ups, discovery and action at an early stage will be possible when the sign of excessive animal ownership reappears. "Multiple follow-ups" means, for example, flexible monitoring by the neighborhood residents, monitoring by commissioned welfare volunteers and/or commissioned child welfare volunteers, monitoring by expert actors such as community comprehensive support centers and/or councils on social welfare, etc.

From the perspective of preventing recurrence, if an animal owner has moved out of the current local government's jurisdiction, it may be necessary to pass on the owners' information to the local government in the owner's new area. However, since the department in charge at the original local government is not necessarily aware of the owner's new address, and since it is extremely difficult to share personal information across different local governments from the perspective of personal information protection, it is currently difficult to continue follow-up services if the owner moves out of the current administrative division.

Some animal owners repeatedly cause the problem of excessive animal ownership while moving from one place to another. Therefore, how to share such information and prevent the problem of excessive animal ownership needs to be considered in future.

#### 4. Points to Note When Taking Measures

##### (1) Handling of Personal Information

When dealing with the problem of excessive animal ownership, it is essential to understand the situation surrounding the life of the animal owners, and to share this information with relevant stakeholders as necessary. By collecting and sharing information and an awareness of the problem among stakeholders, it will be possible to respond more quickly and effectively to the problem.

To facilitate the sharing of information and an awareness of the problem, it is important to build a relationship of mutual trust among the relevant actors on a daily basis. However, attention must be paid to the protection of personal information as well.

The important things to know are that the legal basis for the laws and regulations regarding personal information protection differs depending on the type of institution that holds the information. The protection of personal information in local governments is regulated by the ordinances of each local government, and the content of these ordinances differs from one local government to another.

Regarding restrictions on the use and provision of personal information, there are certain basic rules. In order to share the personal information acquired, it is necessary to give a clear indication of the purpose of use at the time of acquisition, as well as to obtain the personal consent of the individual before sharing. However, regulations vary from one local government to another. For example, when it is difficult to obtain the personal consent of the individual, according to regulations, some local governments are allowed to provide the information within the same administrative body, to national organizations, other local governments, etc., only when it is used within the limits necessary for administrative work and when there is a sufficient reason for its use, in addition to the provisions of other laws and regulations. Other local governments allow the provision of the information only when approved by the Information Disclosure Review Board.

The officials in charge should understand the provisions of the personal information protection ordinance of the local government. It is also important to be aware that all collaborating actors are subject to the regulations, even if the collaborating actor is a private organization. It is advisable to have a common understanding on the handling of personal information among the relevant actors. Keeping close contact with the departments in charge of information disclosure and personal information protection as necessary is advisable in each local government.

## (2) On-site Inspection System

According to the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals (Article 25, Paragraph (5)), before issuing recommendations and orders by the prefectural governors, etc., to preserve the surrounding living environment and prevent animal abuse, officials in charge can request reports from the owners and/or conduct on-site inspections to the extent necessary.

On-site inspections are useful for capturing the full picture of the ongoing problem of excessive animal ownership. However, in order to ensure smooth implementation, it is desirable to clarify in advance the system on which the on-site inspection is based and to obtain the prior approval of the owners.



When entering the owner's house, officials must carry their identification cards and present them to all stakeholders to clarify their status. To prevent trouble, an on-site inspection must be conducted by two or more officials.

It is not always easy to obtain the owner's approval for an on-site inspection. Some owners may pretend to be out, refuse inspection, or use abusive words, violence, threats, etc., against the officials, thus disrupting smooth communication. If problems can be foreseen when conducting an on-site inspection, it is advisable to cooperate with the prefectural police as necessary and ask for their cooperation in vigilance activities, etc., in advance.

During on-site inspections, it is advisable to check the situation from various perspectives, i.e. not only the conditions of the animals and the impact on the surrounding living environment, but also the conditions of the house, the owners, and their families and relatives. Then, it is desirable for various relevant actors, such as animal welfare departments and social welfare departments, to work together to identify issues that can lead to specific guidance and support. However, if a large group of stakeholders visits an animal owner's home all at once, it may cause a heavy psychological burden on the owners. Therefore, consideration should be given, for example, to obtaining prior consent, or to splitting the visit over several days, etc.

### (3) Prevention of Zoonotic Disease

At sites with excessive animal ownership, infectious diseases, including parasitic infections, may be spreading among animals due to the deterioration of the sanitary environment. These infectious diseases include not only those transmitted between animals, but also zoonoses that can be transmitted from animals to humans. Therefore, when conducting an on-site investigation/inspection, preventive measures must be taken against infectious diseases. It is also necessary to inform the owners in advance that the officials will come with infection prevention equipment during the inspection.

When entering the site, it is extremely important to prepare masks, gloves, goggles, etc., as necessary, for all people involved to protect themselves from infection. Also, until the presence or absence of infection is confirmed, contact with animals should be avoided as much as possible.

After the on-site inspection, in order to prevent infection not only among the officials who conducted the inspection but also their colleagues and family members, it is necessary

to take appropriate hygiene measures such as washing hands, disinfecting, changing clothes, etc., depending on the situation at the site.

In addition, acquiring knowledge about zoonoses, sharing information with the collaborating actors, and having a common understanding of infection prevention are also important for taking appropriate infection prevention measures.

If a zoonotic disease is confirmed, it is necessary to promptly share the information with relevant departments, etc., as necessary, and discuss infection prevention measures.

#### (4) Points to Note when Communicating with the Animal Owners

The important points in communicating with the animal owners are to respect their personality, character, situation, and to build a relationship of trust with them.

Some of the animal owners have difficulty supporting themselves, due to a decline in their cognitive capacity. Sometimes they cannot recognize the faces of the officials in charge, do not seem to understand what other people say, cannot identify animals housed, etc. In addition, some owners show an aggressive attitude toward other neighborhood residents and local government officials through abusive language and threatening behavior. Others show strong attachment to their animals, or rejection of the medical services and/or social welfare services needed. Communication with these owners can be difficult. Also, since these owners often face various intricate family problems, economic difficulties, and social welfare issues, a social welfare perspective is often needed to build trust when communicating with them.

In order to provide appropriate support, the first thing to do is to find out the fundamental cause of the problem. If the issue is economic difficulties, support for employment and/or public livelihood assistance is needed. If the issue is illness or disability, the necessary support would be to recommend treatment at an appropriate medical institution, providing various types of consultation support, or utilizing nursing care support, etc. If the problem of excessive animal ownership is caused by excessive love for or attachment to the animals, it is necessary to explain how to provide a better environment for the animals and what social rules are needed for people and animals to live together comfortably, as well as to provide veterinary care as necessary. If the owners' feeling of isolation is leading them to rely on animals as a source of comfort, support for building relationships with the local community is also necessary.

In some cases, it may be helpful to find a key person, such as a relative, neighboring resident, or social welfare staff member, who has already established a relationship of trust with the owner and ask them to act as a bridge to facilitate communication with the owner. In such cases, it is important to respect the relationship of trust that has already been established between the owner and the key person, and to give due consideration to this so as not to impede future support.

Another way to gain the trust of the owners is to keep promises with them. For example, when having the housed animals undergo sterilization surgeries, normally it would be desirable to undergo surgeries for all the animals at once. However, there have been cases in which the officials in charge first took a small number of animals and promised to return them after the operation. By keeping this promise, they were able to gain the trust of the owners who were worried about whether the animals would really be returned or whether the health of animals would be harmed. This kind of trust can lead to the transfer or adoption of an animal.

In addition, during regular and continuous visits, it is also important to convey the message that not only the animal's condition but also the owner's life is valued. The relationship of trust will be built by drawing out the causes of distress and troubles from the owners, presenting several options for support so that the owners themselves can make decisions, and having the owners accept the proposals for support.

In order to improve the problem of excessive animal ownership, it is important to provide concrete suggestions about what the owners can do themselves, for example, setting small step-by-step goals, such as first cleaning the area around the animal's toilet, then tidying up the small area next to the toilet, etc., and then acknowledging each goal as being accomplished. Such practices could foster a sense of self-affirmation in the owners and could lead to a smoother process of resolving the problem.

While it is important for multiple institutions to work together to deal with the problem of excessive animal ownership, the increase in the number of officials in charge may confuse the owners. Limiting the number of officials in charge to a certain extent will not only prevent confusion but also make it easier to build a relationship of trust with the owners. Since local government officials undergo personnel changes regularly, it is important to work as a team to avoid a situation in which the entire staff is replaced. This consideration is important to avoid situations in which the new officials in charge cannot understand the circumstances and have to build a relationship with the owner from scratch again.

Building a relationship of trust takes time. While recognizing this fact and considering a pace that is comfortable for the owner, you should continue to communicate with them patiently. Then you can build a relationship of trust with them, and appropriate support can be provided to solve the problem of excessive animal ownership.

## (5) Relinquishing of Ownership of Animals due to Custody/Adoption

To solve the problem of excessive animal ownership, it is necessary to reduce the number of animals that has already increased as well as to suppress further increases in the number of animals.

When taking animals into custody by public administration or conducting animal adoption, the owners must first relinquish their ownership of the animals. However, they often refuse to do so. In the “Questionnaire survey on excessive animal ownership,” about 80% of local governments cited the refusal of the owners to relinquish ownership of their animals as a problem faced by animal welfare departments. If the owners do not agree to relinquish ownership, it is necessary to persuade the owners.

When persuading the animal owners, it is necessary to understand why the owners are refusing to relinquish ownership, and to respond accordingly.

If the owners are strongly attached to the animals, it should be explained to the owners that the number of animals exceeds their capacity and that this situation harms the living environment and health of the animals that they care about. Then, the owners should be told that reducing the number of animals is in the best interest of the animals, as the reduction of the number of animals improves their care conditions. Also, instead of taking all the animals into custody, leaving a small and manageable number of animals that the owners are particularly attached to in their hands, after the sterilization surgeries, may be a suitable measure too.

If the owners refuse to relinquish ownership of the animals under the misconception that the animals will be euthanized when taken by the local government, it is necessary to explain the efforts made for animal adoption by general households, etc., and gain their understanding.

Once the owner’s consent has been obtained, it is important to prepare a written record of the owner’s manifestation of intention. There were cases where some owners claimed that they were forced to agree to relinquish ownership and that this should be reversed, and others did not remember relinquishing ownership due to a decline in memory or

cognitive ability, even with a written document available. In an effort to avoid such cases, some officials in charge took measures such as video-recording the owners signing the document, in the presence of the police.

## (6) Measures Regarding Animal Handling Business Operators

The main target of this guideline is ordinary animal owners who house animals as pets. However, animal handling business operators who handle a large number of animals, such as breeders and animal shelter management organizations, may also cause the problem of excessive animal ownership if they are unable to properly manage their animals due to the hospitalization or death of the owners, financial collapse, excessive acceptance of rescued animals, etc. In order to maintain the health and safety of the animals and to prevent the deterioration of the surrounding living environment, animal handling business operators are required to comply with the provisions of Article 25 of the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals, which states the measures for the preservation of the surrounding living environment, and Article 44, which states the penalties for animal abuse, etc., as well as the standards for animal handling businesses based on Article 21, etc. Administrative penalties, etc., will be applied based on these systems once an animal handling business operator causes the problem of excessive animal ownership (in particular, deterioration of the animals' conditions and the surrounding living environment such as noise, etc.).

Specifically, pet stores, breeders, and others who handle animals (mammals, birds, and reptiles, excluding experimental and industrial animals) for profit are required to register with the local government as first-class animal handling businesses. Those who handle more than a certain number of animals (e.g., a total of 10 dogs, cats, rabbits, etc.) on a non-profit basis and have animal care facilities that can be separated from human residences, such as animal shelters of animal welfare volunteers, are required to register with the local government as second-class animal handling businesses. These animal handling businesses must comply with standards regarding the size and structure of the housing facility, the environmental management of the facility, and the breeding of the animals, etc. In addition, more specific standards will be applied to dogs and cats from June 2021. For example, the number of dogs and cats that can be kept by one employee engaged in the care and keeping of dogs and cats is limited to 20 and 30, respectively.

Prefectures and municipalities (with a large population and in charge of the Act) are responsible for the supervision of animal handling businesses, and on-site inspections are conducted as necessary. Recommendations and orders are issued to inappropriate

businesses, and penalties are applied to those who violate the orders. In addition, if an order is violated, registration as a first-class animal handling business operator may be revoked. Further, the business operator will be subject to on-site inspections for two years after the revocation.

## 5. Various Check Sheets, Record Sheets, etc. (Omitted)

## Chapter 3 Case Study

In Chapter 3, we introduce examples of efforts to deal with the problem of excessive animal ownership, including a strategy of prevention and discovery on the one hand, and examples of support and action that have brought the situation under control on the other hand. Based on interviews with animal welfare departments of local governments, we have highlighted cases where various actors including animal welfare departments, social welfare departments and so on worked together to deal with the problems. (Details omitted)

The Investigative Commission for Preventing the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership in Collaboration with Social Welfare Measures: List of members

(In the order of the Japanese syllabary, honorifics omitted)

Name	Organization	Position
Ayako UCHIOSHI (Chair of the Commission)	Seijo University, Faculty of Law	Professor
Emiko KISHI	Toho University, Faculty of Nursing	Professor
Jun SAEKI	Teikyo University of Science, Faculty of Life & Environmental Sciences Kuzunoha Veterinary Hospital	Associate Professor Director, veterinary
Naoharu SATO	Nagano Prefectural Council of Social Welfare	Senior Staff
Hiroki YOSHIIWA Yumiko FUJITA	Kawasaki City Health and Welfare Bureau, Health and Hygiene Division	Director
Akimitu YOKOYAMA	Aiwa Clinic	Director, psychiatrist

<Observers> General Policy and Evaluation Office, Director-General for General Policy and Evaluation, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

The Investigative Commission for Preventing the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership in Collaboration with Social Welfare Measures: List of Meetings

#	Date	Main Topic
1st meeting	March 15, 2019	#Background and purpose of the Commission #The problem of excessive animal ownership #Organizing issues for preventing the problem of excessive animal ownership in collaboration with social welfare measures
2nd meeting	August 8, 2019	#Revision of the Act on Welfare and Management of Animals #Questionnaire survey #Case study
3rd meeting	December 19, 2019	#Results of the questionnaire survey #Draft outline of the guidelines
4th meeting	February 27, 2020	#Results of the analysis of the questionnaire survey #Results of the hearing survey #Preparation of the guidelines based on the draft outline
5th meeting	October 15, 2020	#Draft outline of the Guidelines for Preventing the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership in Collaboration with Social Welfare Measures
6th meeting	February 3, 2021	#Draft of the Guidelines for Preventing the Problem of Excessive Animal Ownership in Collaboration with Social Welfare Measures



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