

Short report [001]

Emergent symposium, Think how the Japanese get along with ASCOs
~Obligated regulation system and Correspondence~

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Summary

Date: November 3rd, 2019

Time: 13:00-15:30

Place: University of Tokyo, Tokyo

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the meaning of this symposium”

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On Oct 1st, 2019, the Asian Otter Conservation Society of Japan (AOCSJ) was established by researchers to boost conservation activities of otters in Japan. Pet ASCO problem is one of the most serious tasks for us and new regulation system on captive individuals will be started from November 26th based on the domestic law (**the Law for the Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, LCES**) because of the changes on the CITES rank in August.

Therefore, our society has held a symposium on November 3rd to discuss about new regulation system and share this information with the public.

Totally, 55 people including some media journalists have joined this symposium.

Details of each presentation and panel discussions are below;

1. **New regulations on captive ASCOs in Japan**

Hiroki Sato, Ministry of Environment

First of all, new regulations by the Law for the Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (LCES) on captive Asian small-clawed otter (ASCO)s in Japan, which is the main theme at this symposium, was introduced by Hiroki Sato from Ministry of Environment. He explained what kind of regulations are going to be applied on living ASCOs and Smooth-coated otters after the quick introduction of CITES. Important points are; several behaviors including **Renting, Borrowing, Giving and Receiving will be regulated based on LCES, not only Buying and Selling.** Therefore, people will need to register its own otter before putting it on the pet hotel in addition to advertise / exhibit otters to sell. However, it should be reminded that no registration is necessary if people just keep otters

privately without any trades before starting this regulation. Also, Mr. Sato explained what is needed to register an otter; the otter with a microchip should be registered **every 5 years.** Therefore, the Number / Date / Expired date are needed to sell otters based on LCES. Lastly, punishment for illegal trades was introduced.

2. **Otter trade situation and management system in Japan**

Tomomi Kitade, TRAFFIC JAPAN

Secondly, Tomomi Kitade shared the otter trade situation and management system in Japan. First, she showed the number that **47 otters were confiscated on the smuggling incidents happened from 2016-2018 and 6 Japanese were arrested.** The argent report published on October 2018 says 90% of the otters for commercial business are ASCOs and 25 otters were imported from 2016-2017. Also, 19 individuals were imported into zoos/aquariums might be because of its population. Also, it was revealed; people normally sell otters online for 800,000 – 1,620,000 yen, increasing the number of otter cafes and some

incidents that a couple of zoos have sold individuals to animal dealers. This huge otter popularity in Japanese society occurred mainly because of the social media. Lastly, she pointed several problems of this new legal regulation on captive otters. For example, more strict rules like **DNA parentage test** are needed to avoid smuggled otters are registered as proper individuals. In conclusion, 1. More strict rules and publicity should be considered on this registration 2. Clear rules are necessary to make sure only legal individuals can be registered in the future.

3. Efforts for improvement on “Act on Welfare and Management of Animals”, and exhibited animals

Sachiko Azuma, PEACE

Thirdly, Sachiko Azuma explained about efforts for improvement on “Act on Welfare and Management of Animals”, and exhibited animals. First of all, some captive ASCOs kept in poor environment were showed. Local governments can urge these owners to improve animal’s environment based on this domestic law that was

changed June, 2019 for the 4th times, which will be applied soon. Also, Act on Welfare and Management of Animal relates to LCES, if a dealer is arrested based on LCES, any business is not allowed for 5 years according to the new rules of Act on Welfare and Management of Animal. In addition to that, more strict rules are applied to First-class animal handling business (animal dealer) after this change. However, it is not clear how this rule works to captive animals except dogs and cats. Also, an additional resolution was suggested when this law was changed and it says; captive standard should be considered and some measures are taken to restrict keeping wild animals in captivity. Lastly, Ms. Azuma says that illegal trades have been conducted under the situation strongly against animal welfare in Japan, we need more strict rules to rid of cafes or petting places that increases the demand of private owning of wild animals.

4. Management system and situation of captive ASCOs in JAZA

Sakura Ito, Yokohama Zoological

Gardens “Zoorasia”

Next, Sakura Ito from Yokohama Zoological Gardens “Zoorasia” gave the presentation about the management system and situation of captive ASCOs in JAZA (Japanese Association of Zoos and Aquariums). First, ASCO is designated as a managed species among otters kept in zoos and aquariums that belong to JAZA. Therefore, pedigree registration and managed breeding are being conducted for this species by the person in charge that also makes domestic guideline, keeping instruction or researches. Then, Ms. Ito showed the number of captive ASCOs currently kept in JAZA, which was about 250 individuals in 50 facilities in addition to the process to transfer species designated as CITES I. Among these 250 individuals, 85% were born in Japan in captive environment. In the future, JAZA keeps making efforts for these goals; 1. To make stable population with genetic diversity 2. Researches on reproductive physiology 3. To build a supporting system with facilities in

South East Asia.

Panel Discussion by all presentators

At last, panel discussion was done to conclude and activate the discussion. In this time, more detailed explanations were provided by presentators based on questions of audience. For example; 1 Permission by the prime minister is necessary for the transfer of an otter regardless of JAZA. 2 About the additional resolution introduced in the third presentation, there is no guarantee this suggestion will be applied because it has no legal power. 3 To the question that what kind of things can be used for the DNA parentage test, Mr. Waku, a director of our society, replied and said bloods or hair roots can be used for this test. This time, the main theme was very specialized, but we could discuss about the law changes in the broad view because of variety of topics on each presentation. Hope this symposium can give the effect on the improvement of captive ASCO situation in Japan.