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Article : The Day Cats Live to Be Thirty

Directions: Read the following article aloud.

With donations of cat lovers pushing him forward, Dr. Toru Miyazaki is working to fulfill the hopes of healing the kidney disease felines commonly suffer.

According to veterinarian Okio Suda, the average life expectancy of dogs in the late 1970s and early 1980s was 3 to 4 years. A decade later that figure stood at around 10 years, reaching 14 years in 1998.

The main reason for this change is believed to be the ability to eradicate filaria, a parasite that lives in the hearts of dogs, commonly referred to as “heartworms”. This longer life span is attributed to Ivermectin, a drug that went on the market in 1987.

Ivermectin was later found to be effective against onchocerciasis, often called “river blindness”, a tropical disease that affects humans mainly in Africa.

A total of 300 million people are reportedly saved by this drug every year. Surely many still clearly remember the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine to Ivermectin’s developer, Satoshi Omura, seven years ago in 2015.

Aiming to Help Cats, Too

In fact, cats can also get heartworms. The bigger threat to cats, however, is kidney disease, which affects nearly 30% of cats around age 10 and is the leading cause of death in older cats.

Toru Miyazaki, a specialist in immunology at the University of Tokyo, has been working to develop a treatment. Miyazaki’s treatment utilizes AIM, a protein he discovered himself that is present in the blood of many animals.

AIM is purported to protect the kidneys by cleaning dead cells and other debris from the body. However, just before the treatment was to be commercialized, the COVID-19 pandemic rendered the company that had promised to cooperate with Miyazaki unable to provide funding.

Last summer, after Miyazaki spoke of his plight in an interview with Jiji Press, he was inundated with inquiries from cat owners.

Donations totaling ¥ 300 million JPY (\$ 2.34 million USD) came rolling in as the story attracted considerable attention. According to an article in the May 1, 2022 paper, Miyazaki has resigned from the University of Tokyo to devote himself to developing the drug.

From Humans to Pets

Originally an internist, Miyazaki has worked to cure kidney disease and Alzheimer’s in humans.

For the time being, however, his first priority will be to fulfill the earnest wish of cat lovers. Clinical trials on the drug for cats are due to begin at the end of 2022.

Anticipating the time he could move forward with his research, in August 2021 Miyazaki published a book entitled, *The Day When Cats Can Live to 30* (Jiji Press).

Source: The Day Cats Live to Be Thirty

<https://japan-forward.com/the-day-cats-live-to-be-thirty/>

2 Key phrases and vocabulary

Directions: First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. life expectancy 寿命

- Japanese have the highest **life expectancy** in the world.

2. commonly 一般に、通常

- Maple is one of the five woods most **commonly** used in furniture production.

3. commercialized 商品化された、市販の、商業化された、商業的な

- Cacao was **commercialized** in Spain over 300 years ago.

4. priority 優先事項、重要度が高いもの、優先されること、先行していること、優先権、優先度

- We seriously have to talk about how we can make safety a **priority** in this workplace.

3 Questions

Directions: Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. How long did dogs live on average in the late 1970s and early 1980s?
2. What drug made life expectancy of dogs longer and also saved 300 million people from onchocerciasis?
3. Do you know any dogs or cats that has/had lived for very long time?
4. What do you think is good things about having pets?

4 日本語関連記事：猫が30歳まで生きる日

獣医師の須田沖夫さんによると、昭和50年代半ばの犬の平均寿命は3～4歳だった。
10年後には10歳前後となり、平成10年には14歳に達した。
犬の心臓に住みつく寄生虫フィラリアを駆除できるようになったのが、主たる理由とされる。

昭和62年に発売が始まった治療薬「イベルメクチン」のおかげである。
やがてアフリカを中心に広がる人間の熱帯病「河川盲目症」にも効くことがわかった。
この薬の服用で救われた人は年間3億人にも達したといわれる。
開発した大村智さんが7年前にノーベル医学・生理学賞を受賞したのは、記憶に新しい。

猫もフィラリア症にかかる。ただそれより恐ろしいのが腎臓病である。
10歳前後の猫の3割近くにみられ、高齢の猫の死因の1位を占めてきた。
東京大で治療薬の開発に当たってきたのが、免疫学を専門とする宮崎徹さんである。

自身が発見した、多くの動物の血液中に存在するタンパク質「AIM」を活用する。
死んだ細胞など体の中のゴミを掃除して、腎臓を保護する働きがあるという。
ところが実用化を目前にして、コロナ禍によって協力を約束していた企業が資金を提供できなくなった。

昨年夏に時事通信のインタビューで窮状を訴えると、猫の飼い主から問い合わせが殺到した。
3億円もの寄付が集まり、大きな話題になったものだ。
その宮崎さんが東大を辞めて、薬の開発に専念していることを昨日の小紙の記事で知った。

もともと内科医だった宮崎さんは、ヒトの腎臓病やアルツハイマー型認知症の治癒をめざしてきた。
ただ当面は、愛猫家の悲願をかなえるのが先決だ。今年の終わりには、猫薬の治験に入る。
昨年出した著書の題名は、『猫が30歳まで生きる日』だった。