

Maki Eguchi

University of Tsukuba

Japan

**The Story of a Cowherd at Ranch of Hope:
From Student Activism to the Anti-Nuclear Protest in Fukushima**

This presentation analyzes the story of a cowherd in Fukushima from an ecocritical perspective and examines the social and economic relationship between student activism and anti-nuclear protest.

The earthquake, tsunami, and subsequent nuclear disaster of 2011 damaged a wide area of eastern Japan, and many humans and non-human animals became victims of the catastrophe. Many farm animals near the nuclear power plant either starved or were killed due to high radiation levels. However, Masami Yoshizawa, the owner of Ranch of Hope, decided to continue to keep his beef cattle until they died. As of 2021, more than 200 cattle are still alive there.

The story of this ranch and its cattle are frequently depicted in literary works, films, and media reports of the incident. For example, the fictional works *In the Zone* (2013) by Randy Taguchi and *Sacred Cesium Ground* (2014) by Yusuke Kimura were both based on the authors' own experiences at the ranch. A documentary film *Disaster of the Animals* (2013) shows volunteers from animal conservation groups taking care of the cattle. These works show powerful images of dying cattle and the farmer's moral struggle to keep them alive as farm animals. Ranch of Hope functions as a place for the anti-nuclear movement in Fukushima. At the entrance of the ranch, tractors and trucks can be found with handmade placards opposing nuclear power and the killing of animals. Yoshizawa was the first townspeople to protest at the headquarters of Tokyo Electric Power Company in Tokyo. In the 1970s, he led student demonstrations at the Tokyo University of Agriculture. The literary works I discuss reveal that his student activism and the anti-nuclear movement are organically connected in protecting the lives of living beings.