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#Radioactive Japan: One of the Most Contaminated Villages and Towns in #Fukushima Lures Children Back with \$100 Book Coupons

Meanwhile in one of the most contaminated towns and villages in Fukushima after the nuclear accident more than two years ago, officials have just launched a new program to encourage children to receive annual health checkups.

If a child undergoes one annual health checkup, he/she will receive 10,000 yen (these days it's close to US\$100) worth of book coupons (gift certificates for books).

If a child happens to have evacuated from the village and does not go to the village schools (temporarily re-located to Fukushima City and Kawamata-machi, both contaminated to lesser degrees than this particular village), oh well that's too bad, his/her coupon value will be only 5,000 yen.

The officials openly admit the scheme is to incentivize people with children to come back to the village.

What's the name of the village?

Iitate-mura, with **extremely high levels of iodine-131** and **several thousand becquerels/kg of neptunium** right after the March 2011 accident, and which, thanks to the very politically savvy mayor, has managed to keep the businesses and factories inside the village operating despite the village having been designated as "planned evacuation zone".

From [Fukushima Minpo](#) reporting as if it's a good thing (4/18/2013; part):

スタンプで受診率向上へ 飯館村 内部被ばく、甲状腺検査 中学生以下図書カードに交換

Collect the stamps: Iitate-mura to give book coupons to children in middle schools and younger to boost the participation rate for internal radiation exposure [WBC] tests and thyroid tests

東京電力福島第一原発事故で全村避難した飯館村は17日、村の幼稚園児から中学生までの子ども全員に毎年、内部被ばく検査と甲状腺検査を受けることを促す「全まていっ子内部被ばく・甲状腺検査事業」を開始した。受診するとスタンプがたまり、図書カードと交換できる。受診率の低下が背景にあり、園児や児童・生徒に受診を習慣化させたい考えた。

Iitate-mura, whose residents have evacuated from the village because of the Fukushima I Nuclear Power Plant accident, started a new program on April 17 to urge children in the village from kindergarteners to middle schoolers to get tested for internal radiation exposure and thyroid every year. If children get tested, they will be given a stamp, which will be exchanged with book coupons. The project is in response to the lower participation rate, and [the village officials] want these children to make it a habit to be tested.

村が打ち出した内部被ばく・甲状腺検査事業は、福島市のあづま脳神経外科病院で年1回、両検査を受けるとスタンプが1個もらえる。スタンプは1個1万円分の図書カードに交換でき、卒園・卒業時にスタンプ数に応じた図書カードが交付される。幼稚園や学校が病院での検査を学校行事として計画する。

The program will give one stamp to a child if the child receives both internal radiation check and thyroid test once a year at Azuma Neurosurgical Hospital in Fukushima City. One stamp can be exchanged for book coupons worth 10,000 yen, and at graduation from kindergartens and schools children will be given the book coupons depending on the number of stamps they will have accumulated. [The village] kindergarten and schools will plan the tests at the hospital as school events.

避難のため村の幼稚園や学校から転校した子どもも対象だが、1スタンプで交換できるのは5千円分の図書カード。福島市飯野町にある村の幼稚園と中学校、川俣町にある村の小学校に戻ってもらう狙いもある。

The program also covers children who have transferred to other schools after they evacuated from the village. However, for them, one stamp is exchangeable for book coupons worth 5,000 yen. One of the program's aims is to have them come back to the village kindergarten and middle school in Iino-machi in Fukushima City, and the village elementary school in Kawamata-machi.

村は子どもの健康管理のため、年1回の内部被ばくと甲状腺の検査受診を求めているが、一度受診するとその後は受診しない子どもが増えている。受診者のほとんどが問題のない数値だったため、定期的な受診に結び付いていない、と村は分析している。

The village officials want children to undergo annual internal radiation testing and thyroid testing, but an increasing number of children have stopped taking these tests after the initial tests. The officials believe that since the initial test results for most children were not in the range that would cause alarm they haven't led to regular checkups.

Testing at a neurosurgical hospital? I checked the [website of Azuma Neurosurgical Hospital](#). They do have pediatrics as one of their specialties but [the doctor in charge of the pediatrics section](#) is a surgeon specialized in cardiology. There is no thyroid specialist, or for that matter, radiation specialist.

The hospital has [Fastscan by Camberra](#).

From [Camberra's website about Fastscan](#):

The Fastscan whole body counter is designed to quickly and accurately monitor people for internal contamination of radionuclides with energies between 300 keV to 1.8 MeV. The FASTSCAN system uses large area sodium iodide detectors and CANBERRA's Apex-InVivo™ and Genie™ software to achieve low minimum detectable activities with count times as fast as one minute. **It is intended for use in power plants and other facilities where the possible contamination spectra are well known and uncomplicated.**

That doesn't seem to fit the situation in Fukushima and Tohoku/Kanto regions affected by the nuclear accident.

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POSTED BY AREVAMIRPAL::LAPRIMAVERA AT 1:00 AM 

LABELS: [IITATE-MURA](#), [INTERNAL RADIATION EXPOSURE](#), [THYROID](#), [WHOLE-BODY COUNTER](#)

6 COMMENTS:

Anonymous said...

Hopefully kids will do better than the horses of the Hosokawa farm in Iitate. The farmer argues he lost 100 horses on 130 while taking care of them with water and grass) (<http://welovesoma.blogspot.jp/>). He thinks they are dying from both internal and external exposure.

Anonymous said...

It looks this is being a bit (wrongly) alarmist:

The I-131 has disappeared - the damage it may have caused to exposed children is done, so they absolutely need regular thyroid testing, but you won't get contaminated again, even if you go to Iitate.

1000 Bq/kg of Np-239 might seem impressive, but when decayed to Pu-239, becomes 1000 Bq/kg / (24000 years / 2.4 days) \approx 0.0003 Bq/kg, i.e. far less than the global fallout from surface weapons testing.

Expected contamination spectra aren't "complicated": a typical measurement will yield the usual natural radionuclides, and maybe an insignificantly low level of cesium (compared to natural internal radioactivity \sim 100 Bq/kg, which itself is only part of natural exposure).

As long as they don't include crazy things like putting the examination place in the middle of the high-dose areas in Iitate itself, the scheme seems sound...

Anonymous said...

Horses did not evacuate like kids did and animals have always been fed on the farm with water and local grass. Nevertheless, daily life is improper for kids in these areas and I doubt that anonymous (4:16 Am) would gladly live with his kids and family over there. Dying horses are not a good omen for people living there even if they take care of their daily external exposure and are careful with what they eat. Beyond cancers there will be chronic diseases like in Bielorrussia or Ukraine. Propaganda does not prevent them. Local farmers seem nowadays to be pissed enough like Hosokawa-san to allow outsiders coming and filming on their iphone/camera what is going on in the farm. That is a change from 2012.

Anonymous said...

@ Anonymous 4.16am

Np-239 would take how long to decay to Pu-239 ?

Pu-239 is still a very very dangerous product to have in the environment.

How long to go from 1000Bq/Kg to 0.0003Bq/Kg ?

Are we going to re-write science to back it up ?

Anonymous said...

@Anon 10:22

The sequence is as follows:

- 1) In a reactor, U-238 captures a neutron -> U-239.
- 2) U-239 decays with a very short half-life (<30 min) to Np-239.
- 3) Np-239 in turn decays to Pu-239 with a half-life of 2.4 days.
- 4) Pu-239 in turn decays to U-235 with a half-life of 24'000 years.

So the ratio between Np-239 and Pu-239 activity is ca:

$24'000 \text{ years} / 2.4 \text{ days} \approx 10'000 * 365 \approx 3'650'000$

Hence the shift to very low activity once Np becomes Pu. So 1000 Bq/kg Pu would be worrying for food due to the radiotoxicity, but not 0.0003...

How long does it take to go from 1000 to 0.0003 Bq/kg?

Ca. 22 half-lives of Np ($2^{22} \approx 4'200'000 > 3'650'000$), so 53 days.

So 2 months after the accident, Np has essentially disappeared, leaving an increase of Pu activity of 0.0003 Bq/kg (small compared with global fallout from atomic tests, order of magnitude 1 Bq/kg).

On the other hand, the rain that deposited this stuff certainly also carried a lot of cesium, so the area would be quite "hot" before decontamination.

Anonymous said...

Based on your translation, it doesn't seem like the program is trying to make them go back to Iitate-mura:

"One of the program's aims is to have them come back to the village kindergarten and middle school in Iino-machi in Fukushima City, and the

village elementary school in Kawamata-machi."

Iitatemura was evacuated and it's still evacuated for the most part. The whole municipality was classified in three zones according to the 20-50 mSv/year limits: http://www.meti.go.jp/english/earthquake/nuclear/roadmap/pdf/20130307_01.pdf

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