

**Stray and Feral Cats
in the
State of Pennsylvania**

Presentation
to the
Pennsylvania Game Commission
October 3, 2003

by

**Central Pennsylvania
Animal Alliance**



Opposition to Proposed Game Commission Regulation

Helping animals is helping people

Adams County SPCA

Antietam Humane Society

Carine Rescue of PA

Companion Animal Rescue
Elite Services (CARES)

Castaway Critters

Furry Friends Network

Humane Society of
Harrisburg Area, Inc.

Helen O. Krause
Animal Foundation, Inc.

Humane League of
Lancaster County

PAWS

Spay/Neuter Assistance
Program (SNAP)

Stray Cat Alliance

York SPCA

The Central Pennsylvania Animal Alliance and its coalition members strongly oppose the Game Commission's proposed regulation Amend § 137.2.

The Commission has jurisdiction over wildlife--not domestic animals, including dogs and cats--except where individual domestic animals cause actual damage to wildlife populations.

The authority to manage domestic animals lies with: dogs, the Department of Agriculture statute Title 3, Section 459 and has the authority to manage dogs; cats are protected under the animal cruelty statute Title 18, Section 5511. Cats are clearly defined as domestic animals in Title 18, Section 5511 (q). Therefore while we might agree that Pennsylvania Game Commission may have the authority to fine a cat owner if their cat causes actual damage to an actual wildlife species (keeping in mind this will increase Pennsylvania Game Commission's enforcement responsibilities, requiring them to respond to every public complaint of a cat killing birds at a feeder, or a dog killing a turkey or grouse while walking with its owner), it does not appear that Pennsylvania Game Commission has the authority to forbid domestic animals from merely being outdoors on private property, or on public property with the permission of the land manager, in the name of general protection of abundant wildlife species.

The state has a statewide leash law under the Dog Law, Agriculture statute Title 3, Section 459.

In addition, the proposed regulation fails to define "release to the wild". Since the Pennsylvania Game Commission is proposing fines for municipal sterilization programs even when they take place on private property, it appears the Pennsylvania Game Commission is widely defining "release to the wild" beyond its previous understanding as "release to wild lands with the intent that that animal shall live as a wild animal" and have expanded it to mean "anywhere outdoors." In that case, any indoor/outdoor pet cat, or barn cat, or farm dog for that matter, would be "released to the wild" and therefore subject to fine.

The definition of "release to the wild" is the hinging point of the Pennsylvania Game Commission legislation and we respectfully request that it be clearly defined within the legislation itself. We absolutely agree that cats should not be left to fend for themselves, however, this broad use of "release to the wild" appears to prohibit the keeping of any indoor/outdoor, or outdoor domestic animal, entirely. If that is the intent of Pennsylvania Game Commission, it should be clearly proclaimed as such.



Definitions and Overview

Feral Cat:

- ▶ Born in the wild - no human contact.
- ▶ Elusive, nocturnal, fearful of humans.
- ▶ Like most wild animals, will not attack if unprovoked, but will defend themselves if threatened or cornered. Their strongest instinct is to run ⁽¹⁾.
- ▶ The average stray female has 5.25 litters in her life, totaling 22.3 kittens of which 12.9 survive ⁽⁹⁾.
- ▶ Numbers totally unknown ⁽²⁾.

Stray Outdoor Cat:

- ▶ Abandoned indoor/outdoor cat.
- ▶ Needy, begging.
- ▶ May be able to fend for itself.
- ▶ Most likely neutered.

Stray Indoor Cat:

- ▶ Discarded indoor house cat.
- ▶ Needy, unable to fend for itself.
- ▶ Will approach, beg.
- ▶ Most likely neutered and declawed.

Outdoor Urban Cat:

- ▶ "Owned" cat, but living in garage, or other outbuilding.
- ▶ Most likely not neutered.
- ▶ 60% of these cats and their offspring become feral cats within three years ⁽¹⁾.

Indoor/Outdoor Urban Cat:

- ▶ "Owned" cat with access to outdoor life.
- ▶ 80 - 90% neutered. ⁽⁶⁾

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR):

- ▶ A humane and nonlethal approach to feral cat population control. A comprehensive management plan where healthy feral (wild) cats are sterilized and vaccinated, then returned to their habitat and provided with long-term care. Adoptable cats and kittens are placed into homes.
- ▶ TNR addresses cats that are "already" there. TNR does not create more cats nor does it promote abandonment; instead, it effectively manages and controls a population of cats that already exists through the oversight of a human caretaker who sees that each and every cat is spayed or neutered, receives a rabies vaccination, and is ear-tipped for identification.

Caretaker:

- ▶ An individual who has taken on the responsibility for the health and well being of a colony of feral cats. The caretaker feeds and waters the cats, provides shelter, and is responsible for humanely trapping and taking the cats to a veterinarian for vaccination and sterilization.

Eartipping:

- ▶ A technique of painlessly removing a quarter inch off the top of a feral cat's left ear. Ear tipping is performed while the cat is anesthetized for spay/neutering and is the only effective way to clearly identify a feral cat that has been sterilized and vaccinated against rabies.

Managed Colony:

- ▶ A group of cats where all cats have been sterilized, vaccinated, provided food, and provided with shelter from inclement weather. The colony cats are healthier and no longer breeding. The caretaker regularly monitors the colony and individual cats. Feral cats are dependent on a caretaker(s) to enact this plan and provide long-term support. Besides the obvious advantage of population control, the cats are better able to care for themselves since they no longer have to put all of their energy into producing and caring for offspring. A properly managed colony is a healthy and stable colony in which no kittens are born.

TNR Works

Euthanasia rates drop with TNR programs primarily for two reasons - fewer cats being born on the streets means fewer cats entering shelters and being euthanized because they're too wild to be adopted or there aren't enough homes. In addition, lower intake rates mean less competition for cats already in the shelter system for spots in adoptive homes. Fewer cats on the streets serves to propagate and benefit wildlife.

In San Diego County, California, the Feral Cat Coalition trapped, altered and released more than 3,100 cats in two years. In addition, an unknown number of kittens were trapped, socialized and adopted into new homes. During those same two years, the San Diego County Animal Management Information System reported that the number of cats handled by San Diego Animal Control shelters dropped from 19,077 to 12,446, while euthanasia of cats plunged 40%. (Karen Johnson for the National Pet Alliance, 1995, <http://www.feralcat.com/feral-tr.html>)

In Orange County, Florida, a cat sterilization program was implemented for caretakers of outdoor cats. Traps were loaned for humane trapping, and free spay/neuter surgeries were performed at the Orange County Animal Services clinic. A total of 2,228 cats were spayed and neutered from December 1995 to May 1998. During fiscal year 1996-97, the number of impoundments of cats was down 7%. They were down another 3% in the first six months of fiscal year 1997-98. (Alley Cat Allies, www.alleycat.org)

In 1989, Stanford Cat Network was formed at Stanford University in California to trap, alter, release and manage the approximately 500 stray cats on campus. By 1994, only four kittens were found, and the cat population had declined to 300. (Karen Johnson for the National Pet Alliance, 1995, <http://www.feralcat.com/feral-tr.html>)

On a smaller scale, Neighborhood Cats have had a similar experience in New York City where they began implementing TNR on the Upper West Side of Manhattan in 1999. From that time through the first half of 2003, the intake rate for stray cats entering city shelters from this neighborhood has dropped by 73%. The rate dropped 59% in the first year alone. Elsewhere in the city, intake rates were generally stable or rising.

The evidence of TNR's effectiveness does not end there. In Maricopa County, Arizona, eight years of a TNR program has seen the euthanasia rate drop from 23 cats per 1000 county residents to only 8 cats per 1000. In southern Florida, where local TNR programs were introduced in the early 1990's, euthanasia by animal control has dropped by half with most of the decline attributed to fewer cats being killed. For

example, in 2001, all shelters combined in the Fort Lauderdale/Miami corridor euthanized 14.1 cats and dogs per 1000 residents, compared to 33.0 per 1000 in 1997. In Tampa, where TNR has not been implemented, the euthanasia rate in 2001 was 32.4 cats and dogs per 1000 residents, while across the bay in St. Petersburg where TNR has been widely practiced, the rate is only 13.7.

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As you can see, across the United States, TNR programs do work! They effectively and humanely reduce and control outdoor cat populations thus protecting and enhancing wildlife populations.

Academic Support for TNR

Support for TNR also comes from the academic community. Dr. Julie Levy, DVM, recently published an eleven year study of a TNR program conducted at her campus at the University of Florida, Gainesville. (*Evaluation of the effect of a long-term trap-neuter-return and adoption program on a free-roaming cat population*, Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, Vol. 222, No. 1, January 1, 2003.) The program resulted in a 66% decline in the feral population over the course of the study. Dr. Levy concluded that, "A comprehensive long-term program of neutering followed by adoption or return to the resident colony can result in reduction of free-roaming cat populations in urban areas." Dr. Margaret Slater, DVM, of Texas A&M (author of *Community Approaches to Feral Cats: Problems, Alternatives & Recommendations*), has also conducted on-campus studies of TNR and is a strong proponent of the method.

There can no longer be any question TNR is effective when properly implemented on a community-wide scale if the bottom line is lowering feral and stray cat populations. And for most communities, reducing the street cat population is the bottom line because it means less euthanasia, more cost savings and a better public image, protects wildlife by reducing and controlling the populations of homeless animals in Pennsylvania.

Predation: Introduction

Because of TNR's critical role, the utility of the method should not be obscured by the debate over whether cats belong outside or whether ferals reduce wildlife populations. Like it or not, tens of millions of cats live outdoors and saying they shouldn't or passing laws banning them isn't going to change that basic fact. Likewise, if ferals are killing off wildlife, the answer is fewer feral cats and TNR alone has been shown to achieve this. No other method, such as trap and kill, has ever done the same (www.neighborhoodcats.org).

The starting point of any analysis in assessing wildlife predation is a two fold inquiry: 1. does the species exhibit predatory behavior? and, 2. how much? In other words, does the predatory behavior adversely affect the prey populations? "In biological systems it is insufficient merely to have found one animal will eat another, that is what predators do--[the more important question is whether that] is predation within normal limits." (Tabor, *The Wild Life of the Domestic Cat*, Arrow Books, 1983.) In short, is there evidence that cats actually negatively impact the prey populations?

The Studies

Why are bird populations in decline? Studies have found that the decline is due to drought, habitat loss, over-trapping, water pollution, and poisons in the environment. Studies do not attribute cats as a source for this decline.

Paul Errington identifies the problem: "Preying upon a species is not necessary synonymous with controlling it or even influencing its numbers to any perceptible degree. Predation which merely removed an exposed prey surplus that is naturally doomed is entirely different from predation the weight of which is instrumental in forcing down prey populations or in holding them at given approximate levels." (See Ellen Berkeley, *Maverick Cats: Encounters with Feral Cats*, New England Press, 1992.)

The studies cited by some wildlife advocates not only utterly fail to address the impact of cat predation, but they are severely flawed in their methodology. Churcher looks at what kind of prey cats were bringing home in an English Village. He then extrapolated from that to come up with how many cats were killing birds across Great Britain. So, for example, if 10 cats bring in 100 birds, then 1,000 cats kill 10,000 birds, and so on. By guessing as to how many cats were in Great Britain, Churcher concluded with an astronomical number of killed birds. But is science really that simple? For one, how did the birds die? Did the cats kill them? Were they roadkill? Were they fledglings who would have died anyway? Was there any indication of disease in the prey? Was the catch freshly killed or were the birds dead for days? Being scavengers more than predators, few cats would pass up injured or dead birds? In fact, Churcher has no qualitative information whatsoever. All of this missing information could have been supplied with little additional effort.

For example, two French researchers Moller & Eritzoe examined birds killed by cats vs. those that met accidental deaths by crashing into windows. They examined the birds for various factors, the most significant of which was the health of the bird. They found that while windows were non-discriminating and killed healthy and sickly birds equally, the birds cats killed were significantly sicker than those who crashed into windows.

But more importantly, Churcher ignores that several hundred birds in his village must die each year to maintain a stable population and that the village's bird density was 9 x higher than the rest of Britain?

So taken together, what does Churcher actually prove? "Taken together, these elements suggest another interpretation: cats are simply weeding out birds from an overcrowded population. Nor are they apparently catching healthy birds at their peak of winged life; wintertime is most stressful on birds that are old or sick, and fledglings tumbling down from nests could account for the high count in early summer. And with only 130 dead sparrows recorded by Churcher, the cats kill--or find--less than half the numbers that must be annually culled to sustain their populations." (J. Elliott, "Of Cats and Birds and Science: A Critique of the Churcher Study," 1994.)

Two years after that original "study," all pretensions of scientific objectivity disappear. In his second paper, he describes cats as "ruthless killers," predation as "the slaughter," while prey is a "luckless mouse," or a "very frightened baby rabbit." Is this science?

In his paper, "Cats and Wildlife: A Conservation Dilemma," Wisconsin researcher Coleman states that "Recent research suggests that rural free-ranging domestic cats in Wisconsin may be killing between 8 and 217 million birds each year," citing footnote 10. And what is footnote 10? An article in Wisconsin Natural Resources written by himself. So let's look at the article. What does it say? "Here are our best guesses at low, intermediate and high estimates of the number of birds killed by rural cats in Wisconsin"

It is not research, rather, it is a guess. Second, there is no basis for the number of cats he guesses live in Wisconsin. Third, is a range from 8 to 217 million a statistically valid range? Absolutely not. Finally to get at his low and high estimates, he assumes cats kill rate is 20% on the low end and 30% on the high end. Is this fair? Studies in nine states had the range as "Few" on the Low end to 3% and 20% on the high end. If you eliminated the Few and the 20% which are off the curve, it would be a 3% range to 14% on the high end for percentage of total prey being birds. A New Zealand study had it pegged at 5% by scat analysis, in Australia it was 5.2%, and another study in New Zealand had it at 4.5% in only 12% of the cats! Coleman's numbers are off the charts and over inflate his "findings." But even then, he is making assumptions that aren't valid: he assumes millions of cats, he assumes they are all allowed outdoors, he assumes they are all young and agile and able to hunt equally, and he assumes each one is regularly killing birds despite the fact that as many as 50% of people do not let their cats outdoors, that American cats are getting fatter and less agile, that American cats are living longer and cannot hunt as well as they get older, and that some cats are just lazy or lousy hunters.

Coleman is an overly inflated guess, not a study. In an interview with a reporter in 1994, even Coleman admitted as much: "The media has had a field day with this since we started. Those figures were from our proposal. They aren't actual data; that was just our projection to show how bad it might be."

There is a large body of scientific literature that contradicts his conclusions. Over 60 studies on feral cats have been written from different continents throughout the world--all showing three very important points:

- 1) Cats are opportunistic feeders, eating what is most easily available. Feral cats are scavengers, and many rely on garbage and handouts from people;
- 2) Cats are rodent specialists. Birds make up a small percentage of their diet when they rely solely on hunting for food;
- 3) And, cats may prey on a population without destroying it. If this were not so, we would no longer have any mice around. (*Understanding Cats and Predation*, Alley Cat Allies, 2003).

Biologist Roger Tabor found that cats have low success as bird hunters and that the bulk of their diet is garbage, plants, insects, and other scavenger material. In short, cats are not impacting bird populations on continents (*The Wild Life of the Domestic Cat*, London: Arrow Books, 1983). Fitzgerald & Karl found that "cats suppress populations of more dangerous predators such as rats and thus allow denser populations of birds than would exist without them." (Foods of feral house cats (*Felis catus* L.) in forest of the Orongorongo Valley, Wellington. *N Zeal J Zool* 1979;6:107-126).

Robert Berg found that cats were not impacting quail population in San Francisco even though quail nest on the ground. Mead found no evidence that cats are impacting overall bird populations. Coman & Brunner concluded that "The common belief that feral cats are serious predators of birds is apparently without basis." (Coman BJ, Brunner H. Food habits of the feral house cat in Victoria. *J Wildl Mgmt* 1972;36:848-853)

A Worldwatch Institute 1994 Study found that birds are in decline due to drought, habitat loss, over-trapping, and water pollution. Cats are noticeably absent as factors. A 1988 study by the University of Georgia blamed forest fragmentation across Southern U.S. for decimating songbirds. A Colorado Wildlife Dept. study in 1994 blamed drought. National Geographic lined declines to poisons in environment, particularly lawn care products.

Wildlife Decline⁽²⁾

Songbirds. A common complaint against the domestic cat is that she is responsible for the decline in the song-bird population in urban areas. This decline can be attributed largely to human beings with cats contributing on a much smaller scale. All the more reason to implement TNR to effectively reduce and control outdoor cat populations. Urban sprawl, shopping malls, road building, golf courses, poisonous air, pesticides in water and air, deforestation, livestock farming - these are the causes of songbird decline ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Songbirds in general are declining; however, other birds such as blackbirds, green finches, blue jays and brown-headed cowbirds are increasing. More than 250 species of songbirds migrate south of the US. **Here tropical deforestation is occurring at the rate of 200,000 sq km /year.** This is another cause of decline in songbirds.

Collisions with windows on houses and buildings is a significant cause of bird deaths in urban areas.

A San Francisco study documented that the songbird decline which had been blamed on cats was actually attributable to a **park landscaping program** which removed the undergrowth necessary for birds' food and habitat ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Longwood Gardens, PA: **When feral cats were trapped, neutered, released and provided with litter boxes and shelters, the bird population, including ground-nesting species increased.** The cats became a tourist attraction.

A Brooklyn study documented that in 180 hours of observation of stray cats, only one incident of predation was recorded.

In Baltimore, researchers found that when food was readily available, hunting plays a very small role in cat food acquisition.

These results were consistent with similar studies in Rome, Portsmouth Docks, Pennsylvania and Oklahoma.

When the stomach contents of feral cats are examined, invariably **the main diet is found to be human refuse, followed by rodents, and to a small extent, birds.** Urban cats are connoisseurs of restaurant and other human food, rural cats specialize in rodents.

Mice: There was a complaint on the barrier islands off Florida that domestic cats were responsible for the extinction of endangered species of mice. Actual scientific studies however documented that this was caused by the sprawl of human beach front homes and the concomitant competition by domestic mice and birds.

TNR Protects Wildlife

TNR actually helps meet the goals of any state Game Commission, local, state or federal government, and all our communities. The alternative being do nothing, meaning cats are breeding, roaming and foraging for food. Please note that neutering significantly reduces roaming which means less contact with wildlife. Even if a trap-and-kill plan were implemented, equating the killing of the cats, other cats would move in to fill their territorial void left by the recently killed cats. Fewer cats, controlled feeding, means less hunting. Many studies have found that upwards of 75% of birds killed by cats are non-native starlings which compete with native birds for habitat, so that the net effect of cat predation may actually be complementing the goals of native species advocates.

Many people--even animal control directors--mistakenly take as an underlying assumption that the alternative to TNR is "trap and kill." That is not really the case, in the majority of circumstances. The most often default is to "do nothing." Most animal control directors do not have the staffing or funding (and certainly do not prioritize) sending teams of trappers to round up and kill cats, except in specific circumstances brought on by complaint. So without rescue groups doing TNR, the result is most often that unaltered and unvaccinated cats will continue to multiply and forage areas looking for food.

Unless TNR is embraced in your community, the result would be an absence of vaccination programs, intact cats mating and breeding, and a lack of coordinated feeding efforts, and therefore a greater reliance on scavenging and foraging for food (increasing chance encounters with human beings). From a public health and safety standpoint, "do nothing" does little to protect public health and safety. Surprised as many might be, many animal control directors, many rescue groups, many administrators of universities, haven't considered that point of view. Even if they don't embrace TNR, allowing others to do so without interference has to be seen as a positive step in terms of public health and safety in relation to doing nothing.

The other more limited default is trapping, removal, and execution. While attractive to some from a theoretical and short-term perspective, eradication has proven to be an elusive goal. We have been killing feral cats in shelters in this country for over 100 years and the end is nowhere in sight--except in those areas that have embraced TNR. This is true even on a small scale level. Because an eradication program is predicated on minimal community awareness in order to avoid negative publicity and opposition, there are no humane education efforts, and dumping of cats may remain an ongoing problem.

In addition, undirected and uncoordinated feeding by good samaritans (in contrast to a TNR program where cats are fed in centralized locations, often away from population areas) compounds the difficulty, frequently attracting cats to the populated areas where random feeders are likely to leave food. As a result, trapping and killing will not be a one-time effort but must be done continuously. In addition, as food sources are often difficult to eliminate, vacated areas are soon filled by other cats who start the breeding process all over again. The result is that an eradication program, aside from being inhumane, is often ineffective.

One of the primary misconceptions involving colonies is that they perpetuate the problem. It is the ABSENCE of coordinated and managed efforts that results in continuous problems. In 1993, for example, both Sonoma State University in California and Georgetown University in Washington DC decided to trap and remove the feral cats on their campus. One year later, an influx of new unsterilized cats were seen all over the campuses. Due to uncontrolled breeding, both campuses exceeded their

previous number of sterilized and managed cats within a few years. At Stanford University, by contrast, the campus' feral cat population has not only stabilized, but has been declining through natural attrition precisely because the administration embraced TNR.

The trap and kill method cannot be wholly successful for the same reasons in the previous paragraph where the university cat populations rebounded in a large scale with those cats who were not trapped and killed, remaining behind recreating the problem 10-fold. Rabies concerns are easily addressed since all cats going through any TNR program are vaccinated. Regardless of what the public health and safety concern is, TNR reduces it compared to trap and kill or do nothing.

Health and Safety Issues

Injury. Feral cats are naturally disposed to keep away from humans so that the risk of injury (bite) from a cat is remote. In addition, by implementing feeding guidelines that keep cats fed away from certain areas, further contact is minimized. In the absence of directed feeding efforts, the cats may forage populated areas in search of food and individuals tend to feed the cats close to where they either work or live. This is the result of ad hoc feeding by "underground" and uncoordinated good samaritans. In addition, because of fears that the cats will be trapped and killed, individuals are more apt to take matters in their own hand--freeing trapped cats, feeding them, picking them up, and trapping without experience if the cats are injured. Also, good Samaritans will destroy traps in a trap and kill campaign, thus increasing the costs associated with the kill technique; while individuals will openly support a humane TNR program and will not interfere. If an organization or caretaker is in place, concerned individuals would have someone to call should they have questions or problems rather than trying to take care of it themselves. As a result, a designated, experienced trapper could respond if necessary.

Vector Control. Without a coordinated program, clean-up of the active feeding areas is not always assured. In addition, more than one individual may be feeding the same cats, resulting in excess food, unsightly feeding stations, and food waste that attracts pests. This is a problem associated with eradication programs because the feeding of the cats is not coordinated and feeders are pushed underground. Often, to avoid detection, these feeders feed the cats at night which may draw other wildlife. If TNR was embraced, caretakers could feed the cats during the day ensuring a clean feeding station before skunks and raccoons and other wildlife come out to feast too!. By contrast, colony feeding guidelines limit the number of active feeding stations. In addition, a caretaker would ensure cleanliness. Rabies fears also are alleviated as any cats going through any TNR program would be vaccinated.

Newcomers. Actively monitored feeding stations allow cats to be easily monitored for spay/neuter, and veterinary care by their caretaker. Due to eartipping and being familiar with the colony, caretakers also can easily spot any tamed newcomers who have recently strayed in, for removal and adoption. Again, rabies vaccinations protect the colony cats. Since spayed and neutered cats are healthier than those who are not, TNR also ensures that colony cats are healthy and removes any sick or injured animals. Regarding monkeypox, it is highly unlikely that a TNR'd cat in Pennsylvania will come into contact with a prairie dog.

Chance Encounters with Humans. TNR and colony management are also effective in reducing the number of cats, and therefore, the number of chance encounters with humans. Prevention of TNR or the use of lethal methods, on the other hand, actually allows the population to continue multiplying. A survey of feral cat caregivers in San Francisco found that EVERY caregiver who implemented a TNR program saw their colony stabilize or decrease in number--in one case from 85 to two!

Rabies. The Journal of the American Veterinary Association reported 288 cat rabies cases in the U.S. (1995). Out of what is claimed to be 60 million feral cats and about 70 million house cats, that is only .0002% of the cat population. In addition, a rabies vaccination as part of TNR eliminates the risk. In New York State, there are no known cases of a cat getting rabies if the animal received at least one vaccination. And the last case of cat to human rabies transmission in the U.S. occurred in 1975--almost 30 years ago according to the Centers for Disease Control!

Toxoplasmosis. According to a July 15, 2000 British Medical Journal article, "contact with cats, kittens, cats' feces, or cats who hunt for food was NOT a risk factor for infection." The authors found that "No significant associations were detected between infection and presence of cats (whether adults or kittens), the diet and hunting habits of the cats, or cleaning a cat's litter tray." Instead, the study concludes that eating undercooked meat is the primary risk factor in contracting the organism.

Monkeypox. Manifestations of Monkeypox in Animals: In the current outbreak, illness in animals has been reported to include fever, cough, blepharconjunctivitis, lymphadenopathy, followed by a nodular rash. Some animals have died while others reportedly recovered. The types of animals that may become ill with monkeypox are currently unknown; as a precaution, all mammals should be considered susceptible at this time. (Centers for Disease Control). All mammals are susceptible not just cats.

So, are feral cats a public health and safety risk? The Stanford University Department of Environmental Health and Safety, in conjunction with the Stanford University Department of Comparative Medicine and the Santa Clara County Health Department, found that there was a general consensus that feral cats pose virtually no health and safety risk to individuals.

Drawing the Line

Where does it end? If we must kill cats because they kill birds, where do we draw the line? A lot has been written about the supposed controversy surrounding feral cats, much of it of dubious value. Common sense, not statistics or hard-line arguments, could have pointed the way, as it did as early as 1949 when then-Governor Adlai Stevenson of Illinois, vetoed a bill to restrain cats: "We are all interested in protecting certain varieties of birds. That cats destroy some birds, I well know, but I believe this legislation would further but little the worthy cause to which its proponents give such unselfish effort. The problem of cat versus bird is as old as time. If we attempt to resolve it by legislation who knows but what we may be called upon to take sides as well in the age old problems of dog versus cat, bird versus bird, or even bird versus worm. In my opinion, the State of Illinois and its local governing bodies already have enough to do without trying to control feline delinquency." So why, 50 years later, are wildlife advocates still belaboring the point?

Indigenous Species

Indigenous vs. non-native wildlife. The hunting and gaming community has actually introduced non-native species such as ring-necked pheasants for the purpose of blood sport. In fact, Mr. Ross suggested that in order to increase their populations and those of other ground nesting game birds, that the Game Commission implement a program for killing federally and state protected raptors GH owls and redtail hawks! (When, in fact, early hay cutting practices and habitat destruction are the primary source of reduction in ground nesting species). If there is a proposal to round up and kill cats because they are "non-native" is based on a troubling belief: value comes from lineage, and worth as a species stems from being here first. The belief that some species of animals are worth more than others because they were here first is backward-thinking and shortsighted. But it is hardly surprising.

The call for extermination of animals in the name of protecting others deemed more worthy by some arbitrary standard is not new. "Cats kill birds, so we must kill cats." This is the banner under which many wildlife and other native species advocates have long rallied to label cats as "pests" of our cities and "invasive non-native" intruders in our parks and countryside.

But cats aren't the only ones to be targeted for slaughter in the name of protecting other species or preserving "native" habitats. They have been joined at different times and in different places by raptors, red foxes, gulls, cowbirds, elk, sea lions, coyote, mountain lions, ravens, skunks, raccoons, wild horses... the list goes on. Referred to as "garbage animals," "alien" species, "weeds," and "vermin," these creatures have become scapegoats for the massive habitat destruction, environmental degradation, and species extinction causes by one species and one species alone: humans.

Mandating Responsibility

In our view, the way to teach people to be responsible pet owners and help the cats in a community is through voluntary incentive-based measures that enable people to do the right thing. Government mandates that seek to blame and punish pet owners are likely to be costly and counterproductive. Moreover, it seems to us grossly unfair to penalize the community at large through coercive mandates, when it is the local shelters who are the primary source of animals, and whose policies and practices have the greatest impact, for better or worse, on local animal welfare issues. We realize that in some cases local shelter policies may have failed, and animal problems may be worsening in a community. In such cases, government intervention might be warranted, providing it is carefully focused to have the greatest impact. For instance, requiring shelters to alter animals before adoption and to devote a substantial proportion of their annual animal control and shelter budgets (e.g. 10-20%) to offering free neutering services would do far more to help cats and reduce pet overpopulation than punitive mandates.

For nativists, the point is clear: the lives of these animals don't count, and therefore they can and should be eliminated to protect more important species and to preserve "natural" environments. Had we honored and preserved life, had we treated all animals--cats, birds, and every other creature who shares our planet--with the respect they each deserve, we might have spared many of the species now lost forever.

To us, there are no "garbage" animals and slaughter and death aren't the tools we need to preserve life. To do that--to preserve the life of all animals--we believe we must honor and preserve the life of each.

Feeding Stray Cats

Feeding hungry animals is a normal, healthy, life-affirming activity for people of all ages. It is part of our human biophilial needs; it is an intrinsic adaptive behavior; it is part of the human-animal bond which has tremendous strength.

It is our responsibility.

It is compassion, it is love, it spreads love in this world. It is what we want to teach our children.

It counteracts to a small extent the cruelty of those who threw out these cats.

It gives animals some nourishment with which to fight off disease and predators.

“Caring for free-roaming cats can be of psychological benefit to lonely elderly adults, because it allows them to perform meaningful tasks, provides an outlet for affection, gets them outdoors, helps prevent depression, reduces social isolation, and provides companionship and the opportunity to nurture.”⁽²⁾

Shaming and demeaning people for this compassionate act is an act of abuse.

Facts and Figures:

In the U.S.A.: 7 - 22% of households feed stray cats

Results of Cat Demographic Studies:

1. **Massachusetts** ⁽²³⁾:
 - a. 22 % of households have cats
 - b. Average of 1.6 cats/household that has cats
 - c. 90.3% of males are neutered
 - d. 91.5% of females are neutered
 - e. Main reason for not neutering: Not necessary - indoor.
 - f. Main religious group not neutering: Catholic

2. **Las Vegas** ⁽²⁴⁾
 - a. 22% of households have cats
 - b. Average of 1.61 cats/household that has cats
 - c. 78.95% of males are neutered
 - d. 85.7% of females are neutered

3. **Santa Clara County** ^(25, 26)
 - a. 19.4 % of households have cats
 - b. Average of 1.65 cats/household that has cats
 - c. 86% of all cats are neutered
 - d. 33.27% of cats are indoor only; 2.535 are indoor/outdoor; 14.2% are outdoor only.

4. **San Diego** ⁽²⁷⁾
 - a. 16% of households have cats only; 9% have cats and dogs
 - b. Average of 1.7 cats/household that has cats
 - c. 84.2% of all cats are neutered
 - d. 37.2% are indoors only; 45.4% are indoor/outdoor; 17.4% are outdoor only.

5. **U.S.A.** ^(23, 28)
 - a. 30% of households have cats
 - b. Average of 2.1 cats per household with cats
 - c. 77% of cats are neutered
 - d. Main reason for not neutering: not necessary (indoors)

More Programs that Work!

San Jose, California ⁽²⁹⁾

Strategy: Municipality funded free spaying/neutering.
Results: Decline in number of cats destroyed at shelter.

Houston, Texas ⁽²⁹⁾

Strategy: Four separate free sterilization clinics
Results: While human population grew by 25%, cat surrenders remained stable.

San Mateo County, California ⁽²⁹⁾

Strategy: 120 managed feral cat colonies wherein cats are sterilized, vaccinated, FeLV tested.
Results: Feral cat euthanasia declined by 23 % in the first year
31% reduction in shelter surrenders
48.5% reduction in cat euthanasia after five years.

San Diego County, California ⁽²⁹⁾

Strategy: Free monthly sterilization clinics for feral cats
Results: 50% decrease in cat euthanasia in 1996-97.

Miami, Florida ⁽²⁹⁾

Strategy: Mobile and stationary sterilization clinics
Results: Reduction in cat populations

Norfolk County, Massachusetts ⁽²⁹⁾

Strategy: Trap, Neuter, Release
Results: Fewer calls requesting help with finding homes for strays

Spokane, Washington ⁽²⁹⁾

Strategy: City allocates 0.1% of its annual budget to cat and dog sterilization.
Results: Evaluation is incomplete

Central North Carolina ⁽²⁹⁾

Strategy: Veterinary students organized "Spay Day" each month
Results: Evaluation is incomplete

Stanford University ⁽³⁰⁾

Strategy: Trap, alter, release and manage feral cats
Results: Zero population growth.

San Francisco SPCA

Strategy: Adopt out all homeless cats, free neutering
Results: A no-kill city

Carville, Louisiana ⁽⁵⁾

Strategy: Trap, Neuter, Release, Manage

Results: 20.5% reduction in feral cat population after 3 years; enhanced health of existing colony; elimination of nocturnal vocalization.

Tolerance, Decency and Compassion

What has happened to us? We cannot tolerate a little cat on our property?

Are we all so callous that we no longer can empathize with hunger? With loneliness? Abandonment?

Are human communities to be sterile of all other life?

Have we become so denaturalized?

Psychologist Reinhold Bergler wrote:

“But if today neighbors no longer experience a dependence on one another under certain circumstances, and therefore raise the barriers of selfishness, aggravate a lack of consideration, and increase their personal claim to power, such behavior explains why some people sue each another over the ‘trespassing’ of a cat on their property. Nothing attests more strongly to the denaturalization of man than such instances”⁽¹⁹⁾.

A Decent Alternative:

From the Chief of Police of the City of Berkeley, California:

“Animal Services shall educate and inform the public regarding coexistence with wildlife. Animal Services shall not trap, relocate, or kill any healthy wildlife, nor shall it aid or assist any person in such activity.”⁽²⁰⁾

From the City Manager, City of Berkeley:

“Staff is in agreement that feral cats will be given the same protected status as wildlife.”⁽²¹⁾

From The Oakland Tribune ⁽²²⁾:

“The new policy puts Berkeley on the same page as other areas, such as Oakland, San Francisco, and San Mateo and Marin counties...(it) brings the city into compliance with the state Fish and Game law..

”We’re trying to protect healthy animals, which includes wildlife and feral cats ... just because you don’t like having it around doesn’t mean that you have the right to put it to sleep. (Mimi Cary)”

Windsor, Ontario (very preliminary pilot study)

79% of all respondents believe that urban wildlife should be protected.

75% of all respondents believe that feral cats should be considered part of urban wildlife.

Recognize Humans' Biophilial Needs

Within the last few decades, scholars in more or less disparate disciplines such as architecture, psychology, theology, sociology, anthropology, ecology, evolution, and ethology have converged upon an amazing but common conclusion:

Human beings have an intrinsic physiological, psychological and spiritual need to live a life closely integrated with a diversity of life.

“This theory asserts a biological and evolutionary basis for most fundamental values people attach to nature, particularly living biota. The effective realization of these values is integral to the full expression of our humanity. The notion of biophilia proclaims a human dependence on nature extending far beyond the narrow demand for physical and material sustenance to a broader range of emotional, intellectual and even spiritual needs.”⁽³¹⁾

This phenomenon enlightens our attempts to understand the many psychological dysfunctions so prevalent in “normal city life”. The more we attempt to cleanse our cities of “extraneous” animal or plant life, the more we dehumanize ourselves.

We need to embrace life in all its forms. For our own mental and spiritual health, and definitely for the sake of our children and grandchildren, we need to value life, and to honor those who nurture it.

The person who is intolerant of animal life within human communities needs our help in finding his inner humanity; the intolerance, however, should not be rewarded and should never be made a norm mandated by any law or regulation, or by-law.

We know that abuse in all its forms is interrelated and mutually causative. Child abuse causes animal abuse. Since children intrinsically empathize and identify with animals, the witnessing of or participation in animal neglect or cruelty is child abuse. ***The single strongest predictor of domestic abuse within a community is the prevalence of hunting.***

This earth belongs to all life forms. The minuscule rectangle on which sits my abode is a piece of the earth which I am privileged to be able to care for. It “belongs” to me only as a care taker. The rabbits behind my

shed, the birds on the trees, the occasional skunk, the many squirrels, the worms in the ground, the gophers, the cats that share their lives with me and those that sleep with neighbors - they all own it as much as I do. The richer the living habitat, the richer I am as a human animal.

Recommendation

We recommend that TNR programs continue throughout the state. It is likely that we may never know how many feral cats exist. They are afraid of humans and elude detection. Where they exist, managed feral colonies are the most effective programs. Cats are caught, neutered, vaccinated, then released into a controlled and managed environment. There already are dozens, if not hundreds of wonderful Pennsylvania citizens who at their own expense are caring for feral cats - including neutering, vaccination and other veterinary care. They are the true heroes of the Keystone State.

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