

FRC task Force
Meeting March 5, 2014
Notes prepared by Suzanne Roy

Members in attendance: DeWana Anderson, DVM (chair), Aviva Scully, Judy Miller, Suzanne Roy, Warren Porter.

Staff in attendance: Bob Marotto, Animal Services Director; Josh Fisher, Veterinary Health Care Manager, Animal Services; Sarah Fallin, Program Coordinator, Animal Services

Public In Attendance: Approximately 30 members of the public were present, including representatives of Independent Animal Rescue, AnimalKind, SNAP, Kids4Kindness, Durham Cat Hospital, Scott Anderson, Wildlife Biologist, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Sarah Reichman, Volunteer Leader for Durham County for the Humane Society of the United States.

I. Introduction

Task Force chair DeWana Anderson, DVM, set the stage for this meeting by stating that Orange County is a community that cares about our cats and stressing that while we have made progress on dog overpopulation, we still have work to do with cats. A significant number of cats are still being euthanized every year, and we would like to make progress in reducing that.

II. Orange County Cat Statistics

Orange County Animal Services (OCAS) director Bob Marotto provided an overview of cat statistics for Orange County.

He noted the most significant challenge with managing cats is kitten season, when the inventory of animals in the shelter spikes in June and July due to flood of incoming kittens.

The Beat the Heat campaign is targeted to address and prevent this influx of cats. OCAS has placed a billboard at the corner of Highway 70 and 86 in Hillsborough that promotes spay neuter.

Key statistics presented by Mr. Marotto:

- Influx of animals during kitten season results in longer length of stay.
 - 20,000 board days for 1,500 dogs
 - 35,000 board days for 1,500 cats
- Shelter must have capacity to provide more board days to cats than dogs. OCAS is lucky to have resources that other shelters don't have.

- Intakes for dogs and cats have decreased 2008-2013. For cats:
 - 2008 – 2,000+ cats taken into the shelter.
 - 2013 – under 1,500 cats taken into the shelter.
 - Decrease allows OCAS to keep animal longer.
- Euthanasia to intake
 - 2008 - .6 (60 out of 100 animals euthanized)
 - 2013 - .35 (35 out of 100 animals)
- Return to owner rate for cats is very low.
 - Dogs 25%
 - cats 3-4%. (2013 – 600-700 stray cats incoming; just 43 returned to owner. This is higher than the national average for cats.)

Mr. Marotto said that the decrease in intakes is primarily due to spay neuter initiatives in conjunction with community partners such as SNAP and AnimalKind. He said that the OCAS decision to end practice of trapping free roaming cats at the request of residents in 2010 may have contributed to decrease in cat intakes, however, the intake rate began to decrease before that.

He concluded by stating that community solutions are needed to the cat overpopulation problem, including strong partnerships between OCAS and community non-profits.

III. Discussion

The remainder of the meeting was a wide-ranging discussion of the status of free-roaming cats in Orange County, and what is being and what can be done to address the problem. Highlights of the discussion include:

A. STATUS OF FREE ROAMING CATS IN ORANGE COUNTY

- SNAP

Dr. Bartfield from SNAP reported that they see feral cats but not as many as they would like. They offer a special rate for feral cats - \$50 flat fee including vaccinations. They do an average of 2-3 cats a day when they could do 5-6 a day – except when they are in IAR territory, then they fill up with ferals. They will organize special days to s/n ferals – can do 40 in a day, but just need a place to put the traps.

- Durham Cat Hospital
Has a few clients who regularly trap. Spring and summer – see one a week. Ear tip.
- Dr. Sunita Driehuys, Chapel Hill Mobile Veterinary Housecalls

Does home visits. Believes that most households in Chapel Hill with cats have extra cats outside. Seems like there are extra cats behind every house in Chapel Hill. They are loosely affiliated with people. People will feed them but don't want to bring them in.

- **INDEPENDENT ANIMAL RESCUE (IAR)**

Trapping, sterilizing and releasing 1,200 cats a year, but not just in Orange County. Estimate for Orange County is 200 per year. They have a few local veterinarians helping. They organize clinics where 30-35 feral cats will be spay/neutered at a time. Many of these cats are coming from OC. SNAP can do spay days with IAR, but they need staging area

IAR's adoption program for cats has changed. Instead of taking them from shelters, they take mostly kittens of feral mothers and socialize them and adopt them out.

B. ORDINANCE

Orange County ordinance does not prohibit or authorize Trap Neuter Release (TNR). It's not illegal provided other requirements are met. In Orange County, a permit is required to maintain more than 20 non-livestock animals.

Situation gets complicated when you look at legal status of caretakers and the cats themselves. Are caretakers owners? Are ferals wild animals?

Scott Anderson pointed out that if ferals are considered wild animals, it is illegal under state law to release a wild animal.

Mr. Marotto stated his belief that it is better to have some framework for TNR that says it is permissible under certain conditions. Issues with TNR that must be addressed: Nuisance complaints, vaccinations for rabies, licensing, what it means for animal to be off the property of the caretaker. Nuisance complaints are the vehicle by which OCAS usually gets involved in free roaming (and feral) cat situations.

C. EDUCATION

Mr. Marotto asked the question: How do we deal with free roaming cats as an educational issue within our community? The situation for cats here is similar to dogs in third world countries. We don't let this happen to dogs here. How do address this?

Ideas included:

- Identifying any correlation between cat abandonment and university schedules.
- Getting into universities with educational programs for fraternities and sororities.
- Look at national initiatives – [CATalyst Council](#) is addressing this nationally – to change how cats are perceived in society.
- HSUS Pets for Life program provides a good model.
- Dr. Banfield said that middle school/high school best age to address the issue—before kids get to adulthood. Time to convey the basic understanding that cats can get pregnant at 4-5 months of age and can be impregnated by siblings. Require a tour through the shelter. Make eye contact with animals going to be euthanized. Show them the euthanasia room.
- Get the word out that TNR works. Outreach through veterinarians about available services: IAR, SNAP, Spay NC Helpline.
- Outreach through veterinarians:
 - Josh Fisher from OCAS doing outreach to veterinarians about community resources, spay/neuter availability for low-income citizens. Goal is to build partnerships with veterinarians.
 - Address veterinarian outreach/awareness of services through veterinary medical association.
 - Get veterinarians to commit to 1-2 low cost or no cost s/n surgeries per week.
 - Get veterinarians to promote adoptions. Help change the perception of the shelter.
- Wendy Stewart and Sandy Greene – have education program in Orange County that targets 4th graders. Based on the Pet Responsibility Program in Moore County. Following model in Moore County. Eight teachers and four fourth grade programs involved so far.

D. KEEPING CATS INSIDE

Need for a paradigm shift – value of keeping cats inside.
In Chapel Hill – it's illegal to have cats off your property.

Scott Anderson – Wildlife Resource Commission.

- WRC does not have a position on cat control.
- Commission concerned about native wildlife species.
- Evidence that cats kill native species.
- No good evidence regarding impacts of cats on birds.
- Most recent study – direct human mortality on birds. Collisions with buildings, cars, etc. cats included. 4 billion birds annually killed.
- Wide variety of predation activity around cats.
- Cat control programs do not work without public support.

Sarah Reichman– reducing the number of free roaming cats across the board – will lessen impacts on wildlife species. Need to find common ground. We have the same goal:

Reducing the cat population improves cat welfare and alleviates impacts on wildlife.

IAR only adopts out cats to people who will keep them inside.

E. PARTNERS

Partnership with Coalition to Unchain Dogs key to success of enforcing tethering ordinance.

OCAS needs similar partners for Free Roaming Cats initiatives.

Potential partners include:

- IAR
- AnimalKind
- SNAP
- Local Veterinarians

F. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION & ASSISTANCE

- Request from Mary Dow from Independent Animal Rescue (IAR) for statistics on number of cats being brought into the shelter by people who have trapped them.
- Shelter provide a staging area for traps/carriers for SNAP feral cat s/n days
- Possibility of using the shelter for feral spaying.