Concerns Over Revised Draft Bylaw

"Responsible Pet Ownership"

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Concerns over revised draft bylaw

" Responsible Pet Ownership"

Licensing:

- although the stated purpose of licensing is to reduce the number of cats on Winnipeg's streets, the draft bylaw contains no provisions that will actually cause those numbers to go down.
- Sending 50% of license revenues to the Winnipeg Humane Society for possible distribution to 2 other organizations would not have resulted in any reduction in the number of cats on the streets. Likewise, leaving 100% of license revenues with Winnipeg Animal Services will not reduce the number of cats on the street. WAS does not deal with cats, has no programs for cats, and has no capacity to manage cats. Asking an organization that has no experience with cats to decide how best to spend money targeted to reducing the number of cats on our streets seems rather silly.
- Imposing a $15 / yr. fee on cat ownership may result in many cats being surrendered to shelters, or dumped on the streets. Low income families will be hardest hit, and most likely to give up their pets. **In this way the bylaw is likely to cause the number of cats on the streets to increase.**
- Unless the city intends to send officers door to door, with warrants to enter private homes and search for cats, the bylaw is unenforceable. Such tactics would likely cause a backlash, making licensing even more difficult to enforce.
- Requirement for cats to wear a collar and license tag: collars are dangerous for cats, and often cause severe injury or death. Any bylaw that requires a cat to wear a collar, even a so called 'breakaway' collar, is irresponsible.
- A $15 / yr license fee is unsustainable. Administration fees will soon amount to

more than that, and the license fees will rise to the same level as dog licenses. Given that the city provides no services for owned cats, this is usurious.

Harbouring:

Leaving this antiquated concept in the bylaw makes criminals of hundreds of citizens who are actually doing the work this bylaw is intended to do. Any person who allows cats to remain in their yard is labeled a 'harbourer' and is therefore guilty of an offense under the bylaw.

Hundreds of Winnipeggers manage colonies of cats in their yards. They trap the cats, have them spayed or neutered, and return them to their yards where they live out their lives. These people pay for this out of their own pockets, and have saved the city tens of millions of dollars, yet they are made criminals.

Trap / Neuter / Return (TNR) is the only method of cat population management that has ever been shown to reduce the number of community cats in ANY area. Citizens who are practicing TNR should be applauded and helped. Instead, this bylaw makes them criminals.

Citizens charged with harbouring and forced to pay fines are not likely to continue practicing TNR. The colonies that they have cared for will return to the wild, and new cats will not be trapped for sterilization. **In this way, the draft bylaw is likely to to cause the number of cats on the streets to increase.**

Permitted number of cats and dogs in a home:

The limit is an arbitrary number that in no way relates to a person's ability to care

for a pet. For some, one pet is too many. For others, 6 are easy to manage, and more would not cause a problem. We would prefer to see the limit removed, and citizens encouraged to maintain the number of pets for which they can provide adequate food, shelter and veterinary care.

If the intent of the limit is to discourage hoarding, it fails. Hoarding is a psychiatric issue, unaffected by laws limiting the numbers of anything a hoarder might want to hoard.

Reduced 'hold time' for impounded cats:

The stray hold time for impounded cats is being reduced to 3 days, from 4. This will result in hundreds, if not thousands, more cats being killed by the Winnipeg Humane Society every year.

Provision for an eight day hold for cats wearing a collar and license tag is ridiculous. If a breakaway collar is working properly, the cat will not be wearing it when impounded.

Provision for an eight day holding period for cats with a 'registered tattoo or microchip' is likewise ridiculous. Even the sweetest tempered cat can turn into a hissing, spitting demon in a shelter situation. This means that the cat will be dead before shelter staff get a chance to read its tattoo or scan it for a microchip.

Although the Winnipeg Humane Society states that it examines every cat for identification before it is sent for "euthanasia" , over the past year several cats bearing Craig Street Cats tattoos have been slated for death and actually had the first injection administered before anyone checked them for a tattoo. These cats

required an antidote and medical care to recover from this ordeal. Some will have medical problems for the rest of their lives because of it. While not the norm, these are not isolated incidents. Cats with perfectly legible tattoos are already dieing because their ears are not checked during their stray hold period. Reducing the hold period to 3 days, from 4, will result in more cats dieing.

Recommendations:

- remove cat licensing from the draft bylaw
- retain mandatory spay/neuter for cats
- enforce mandatory spay/neuter for cats
- remove arbitrary limits on numbers of cat and dogs permitted in a home
- remove 'harbouring' from the bylaw
- adopt systematic trap / neuter / return as the recommended method of controlling the number of cats on Winnipeg's streets.

Creative Solutions:

It has been suggested that a stand alone, high volume, low cost spay and neuter clinic would be a better way to invest license revenue. We agree that Winnipeg needs such a clinic, but disagree on the funding model. Winnipeg's community cats are a community problem. Forcing cat owners to fully fund a spay and neuter clinic to deal with the city's community cat problem is patently unfair.

A more equitable solution could be a $1 / household / yr assessment added to water bills. This would provide more money than estimated returns from licensing, and spread the burden across the entire city, where it rightly belongs. While Winnipeggers are

notorious for complaining about any increase in taxes or utility bills, it would be very hard to complain about $1 / year that would have a direct effect on the health of owned cats, as well as directly reduce the number of unowned cats on our streets.

Some Canadian Communities Using Trap Neuter Return to Control Cat Populations:

- London, Ontario
- District of Maple Ridge, B.C.
- Cape Breton Regional Municipality
- Windsor, Ontario
- Delta, B.C.
- Richmond, B.C.
- Langley, B.C.
- Halifax, N.S.