feral cat colony management | *kitten rescue* | *community outreach and education*
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January 14, 2024

Executive Policy Committee
Winnipeg City Council
510 Main St.
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 1B9

Re: Amendment to Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw

Dear Chair and Committee Members;

I am writing today as I am unable to attend in person, and wish to express support for the proposed amendment to the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw. As the founder and executive director of the largest community cat management program in Winnipeg, I have seen first hand the very positive effects of well planned trap, neuter, return (TNR) initiatives.

The proposed amendment will allow citizens who are so inclined to provide spay or neuter, vaccination, food, and shelter for cats that would otherwise breed uncontrolled. This will help to reduce the population of unowned cats living on our streets, while also removing the nuisance of cat mating and territorial behaviour (smell, spraying, fighting, etc.). It is important to note that this will not cost the city anything. Non-profit organizations and private citizens are footing the entire bill for these initiatives, and will continue to do so. Should the city wish to join the effort by providing free or low cost spay and neuter for community cats, colony managers will welcome the help.

While some may argue that eradication is a more appropriate approach, any reduction in population achieved this way is only temporary (as witnessed by the repeated dog culls in Manitoba's northern communities), and the city would have to cover the entire cost. There would be no assistance from non-profit organizations or private citizens. Nor would veterinarians be willing to kill healthy cats for such a program. Although those who suggest eradication call for “humane euthanasia”, they are simply using a euphemism for killing. Euthanasia is a kindness given to an animal that is sick or injured, and suffering beyond our ability to provide relief. Ending the life of a healthy cat is not a kindness, and cannot be called euthanasia.

On the other hand, where comprehensive colony management techniques are put into practice, community cat populations go down over time. In every area where Craig Street Cats has established management of a cat colony (spay or neuter, vaccination against rabies and distemper, removal of kittens and friendly adults for adoption, feeding stations, and simple winter shelter) populations have dropped. The average is 70% reduction within 5 years. Occasionally a new cat will wander into a managed colony site, or an irresponsible person may dump an unwanted cat. When this happens colony managers simply catch the cat, get it fixed, and either return it to the colony or find it a home. These occurrences do not alter the downward population trajectory.

Given the strong positive results of TNR programs, I am very hopeful that you will endorse the proposed amendment. I look forward to working with the city to humanely reduce the number of unowned cats living on our streets.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Lynne Scott
Executive Director

cc: Leland Gordon