

## Council Agenda Report

**Date:** March 13, 2017

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**SUBJECT:** Feral Cat Strategies

**Recommendation:** That Council receive a report on feral cat strategies.

**Discussion:** Staff has explored various options on containing the feral cat population. Three options have been looked into.

One option was to have in house animal control with paid staff. As staff mentioned in the January 22 council meeting, this is cost prohibitive.

A second option was to work with a third party vendor to trap feral cats. If a licensed third party vendor traps feral cats, the vendor is obligated to take the cats to a humane society. The problem is that Dorchester County does not have a humane society. So this option cannot be pursued.

A third option is to work alongside a nonprofit agency and assist them in their efforts to control the feral cat population. Snip Tuck, a 501c agency, will take trapped cats and spay or neuter them and return them to the area found. While this does not have an immediate effect on feral cat populations, it does long term.

Snip Tuck has indicated that they would like to work with us to help trap animals. Staff and Snip Tuck have discussed ways this could occur and paying for costs. After discussion, Snip Tuck has indicated they have received donations that would help to purchase traps (the biggest costs in capturing cats) and do not need fiscal support at this juncture.

As mentioned a key way to control the population is to spay and neuter cats. A resident would call Snip Tuck to inform them of a feral cat problem. Snip Tuck would provide them with a trap and training on catching the cats. Once caught, Snip Tuck will spay or neuter the cat and return the cat to where it was found. It is also vaccinated against rabies before being returned. If a resident is unable to trap animals do to special needs or age, volunteers can assist that resident.

In addition, Snip Tuck feels another key way to control the feral cat population would be to work with the City to provide education on feral cats to residents. There are volunteers within the Snip Tuck who are willing to take on this initiative. Representatives of Snip Tuck will present their ideas about a public education program.

Finally, as part of addressing the feral cat problem, Staff looked at ordinances specifically ordinances related to implied ownership of a feral cat if they are feeding the cat. Alley Cat

Allies, one of the largest feral cat associations in the country consulted with their staff attorney. He did not find any provisions that state if someone is feeding a cat, they are considered the owner or keeper. Based on the county definition of "owner," someone is considered an owner when they keep or harbor a dog or knowingly permit a dog to remain on or about any premises occupied by them. Cats are not mentioned.

**Conclusion:** Staff has not identified ways of removing feral cats but has concluded that long term reduction in the feral cat populations can be achieved through neutering and education that encourages that encourages the public to catch then for neutering and vaccination.

**Fiscal Impact:** None at this time except the cost of staff to work with Snip Tuck. The amount of time required is unknown at this time.

**Approved:** 