

Staff Report 2019-105

Meeting Date: June 18, 2019

Subject: Proposed Community Cat Pilot Program

Submitted By: Laura Hall, Manager, Regulatory Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the Proposed Community Cat Pilot Program outlined in Staff Report 2019-105 be approved;

That staff be authorized to draw up to \$5,000 from the Town's Animal Services Contingency Reserve Fund to fund the 2019 Community Cat Pilot Program;

That the Supervisor, Animal Services be delegated authority to enter into agreements with local caretakers regarding the Program; and

That staff report back on the progress and impact of the Community Cat Program as part of a future Budget process.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The issue of feral cats (also known as homeless cats) is present in many municipalities across Ontario and in jurisdictions around the world.
- Feral cats impact local communities in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, negatively affecting the surrounding ecosystem; presenting a nuisance to local residents; and contributing to the problem of cat overpopulation.
- Based on the feedback received at the Town's Open House regarding the proposed Animal Care & Control By-law, staff undertook a preliminary study of feral cats in Caledon.
- Staff have records that indicate there are approximately 30 colonies throughout Caledon with anywhere between 4 and 12 cats in each colony. Most colonies are within the Bolton industrial and commercial areas, with some colonies located within natural areas
- From the research conducted, several municipalities have implemented Community Cat Programs (known as Trap, Neuter and Return). These programs have reduced homeless cat populations by about 30% and are well received by the property owners where the cats reside.
- Staff feel it is advantageous for the Town to provide support to the management of feral cats within the community by implementing a Trap, Neuter, Return pilot program at this time.
- Staff are recommending to use \$5,000.00 of the Town's Animal Services Contingency Reserve fund to go towards the pilot program to spay/neuter, vaccinate and identify approximately 23 cats.
- At the completion of the pilot program, staff will report back to highlight the success of the program and impact.

DISCUSSION



The issue of feral cats (also known as homeless cats) is present in many municipalities across Ontario and in jurisdictions around the world. Feral cats impact local communities in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, negatively affecting the surrounding ecosystem; presenting a nuisance to local residents; and contributing to the problem of cat overpopulation. To address this issue, municipalities have employed a host of animal control and education programs. For example, Toronto, Oshawa, Markham, Whitby, Innisfil and Mississauga all provide TNR Programs. More recently, community volunteer groups have actively engaged in Trap, Neuter and Return programs designed to reduce the feral cat population through natural attrition. From the research conducted, such programs have managed over time to reduce homeless cat populations by about 30% and are well received by the property owners where the cats reside.

Based on the feedback received at the Town's Open House regarding the proposed Animal Care & Control By-law, staff undertook a preliminary study of feral cats by hosting a meeting with local groups that care for various cat colonies throughout the Town. Based on the geographic size of Caledon, discussions, statistics and evidence available suggests the presence of small or moderate-sized colonies in Caledon. Notwithstanding this, there is an opportunity for the Town to assist in proactively controlling the feral cat population from expanding through the implementation of a community cat program (commonly known as a Trap, Neuter, Return program). The success of such programs is largely dependent on the participation and dedication of local volunteers who essentially take on most of the responsibility. Currently, staff have records that indicate there are approximately 30 colonies throughout Caledon with anywhere between 4 and 12 cats in each colony. Most colonies are within the Bolton industrial and commercial areas, with some colonies located within natural areas. It is understood that local volunteers attend each colony on a daily basis to provide food, water, shelter and check the health of the cats. The local volunteers are often affiliated with charitable organizations that assist with food supply and in some cases build shelters. Staff feel it is advantageous for the Town to provide support to the management of feral cats within the community by implementing a program to spay/neuter, vaccinate and identify each cat as this is what is most needed at this time. The local volunteers did advise that they often pay out of pocket to have feral cats within the colonies neutered or spayed, or travel a fair distance to participate in a similar program offered in other municipalities.

Based on the information collected, staff recommend implementing a pilot program to support local volunteers and assist in maintaining the feral cat population within the Town. Such a program will continue to ensure feral cats do not become a nuisance to local property owners and businesses.

Pilot Program Information

Staff Report 2019-105

In a Community Cat Program, community cats are humanely trapped, brought to a veterinarian to be spayed or neutered, vaccinated, eartipped (the universal sign that a community cat has been neutered and vaccinated), and then returned to their outdoor home (colony).

Staff are proposing to utilize funds available in the Animal Services contingency reserve fund to purchase 10 traps and to spay/neuter, vaccinate and ID approximately 23 cats. As part of the program, a local cat colony caretaker would enter into an agreement with the Town to trap and manage each cat that is delivered to the Town. Staff are recommending that the Supervisor, Animal Services is given authority to enter in such agreements on behalf of the Town. The Town would transport the cats to a local veterinarian to be spayed/neutered, vaccinated and identified. Once each cat is fully recovered the caretaker would return them to their colony and continue to care for the cat.

Staff will set dates and times throughout the next six months to facilitate the intake of the cats to ensure the day to day operations and administration of animal services is not disrupted.

In addition, at the conclusion of the program, staff will report back as part of the 2020 budget process.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff are recommending to draw up to \$5,000 from the Town's Animal Services Contingency Reserve fund account # 08-00-900-35005-000-25000 which has a current uncommitted balance of \$20,364 to fund the following costs of the 2019 Community Cat Pilot Program:

- Start-up one-time costs:
 - Purchase 10 live traps at approximately \$150.00 per trap = \$1,500.00
- Spay/Neuter and Vaccinate:
 - Spay/Neuter, Vaccinate and ID approximately 23 cats at approximately \$150.00 per cat = \$3,500.00

The uncommitted balance in the Animal Services Contingency Reserve Fund after funding the estimated Pilot costs of \$5,000 ($=\$1,500+\$3,500$) will be \$15,364 ($=\$20,364-\$5,000$).

COUNCIL WORK PLAN

To adopt an innovative approach that adapts to the changing needs and expectations of our community while supporting best practices

ATTACHMENTS

None.