



February 15, 2017

The Honorable Louis Cappelli Jr., Director
Members of the Camden County Freeholder Board

Via e-mail: louc@camdencounty.com; mcdonnell@camdencounty.com;
jnash@camdencounty.com; carmenr@camdencounty.com;
jonathan.young@camdencounty.com; susan.shinangulo@camdencounty.com;
william.moen@camdencounty.com

Dear Mr. Cappelli and Members of the Camden County Freeholder Board,

I hope you are well. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the world's largest animal rights organization, with more than 5 million members and supporters, including more than 114,000 in New Jersey. We hope the information herein is useful in your consideration of Resolution 26, which we understand seeks to legalize the abandonment of domestic cats in programs referred to as "trap-neuter-return" (TNR). **PETA is strongly opposed to such programs.**

PETA is an animal-protection organization, so [our opposition to TNR](#) arises from animal-welfare concerns. Public officials should be concerned about the practice for a number of reasons, in addition to those related to animal welfare—e.g., potential liability exposure when taxpayers are denied assistance with removing cats from their properties, the spread of rabies and other zoonotic diseases, the impact on wildlife populations, and more.

Advocates of TNR routinely mislead officials into believing that all cats in the community can and will be captured, vaccinated, and sterilized by unpaid volunteers and that TNR will eventually reduce the number of homeless and feral cats. **Neither is true.** Many cats are missed or too difficult to trap. Volunteers can't realistically be relied on to follow through with such a time-consuming, labor-intensive, long-term project. Cat populations also change in dynamics and grow rapidly—and when unsterilized, exponentially—when residents abandon unwanted cats at colonies, mistakenly believing that they will be taken care of.

TNR programs conflict with the mission of public-health and public-safety agencies. According to the **National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians**, "[N]o evidence exists that maintained cat colonies adequately reduce human public health risks or appropriately address their impact on pets or native wildlife. Several reports suggest that support of 'managed cat colonies' may increase the public's likelihood of abandoning unwanted pets in lieu of more responsible options."¹ Phoenix College in Arizona decided to end its TNR program, because, according to a spokesperson, "Instead of stabilizing the population, it has doubled, creating an unhealthy situation for the cats and the community."² And after experimenting with a pilot TNR program, the city of

¹National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, "Free-Roaming/Unowned/Feral Cats," Position Statement, Sept. 1996 <<http://www.tnrrealitycheck.com/media/NASPHV.pdf>>.

²Eugene Scott, "Phoenix College Ending Feral-Cat Program, to Remove Animals," AZCentral.com, 7 Feb. 2014 <http://www.azcentral.com/community/phoenix/articles/20140129phoenix-college-ending-feral-cat-program.html?nclink_check=1>.

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

Washington, D.C.
1536 16th St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
202-483-PETA

Los Angeles
2154 W. Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90026
323-644-PETA

Norfolk
501 Front St.
Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-PETA

Oakland
554 Grand Ave.
Oakland, CA 94610
510-763-PETA

Info@peta.org
PETA.org

Affiliates:

- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

Parry Sound, Ontario, reconsidered allowing the practice, because "the number of feral cats appears to be increasing—as does the noise, smell and general nuisance."³

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that cats are the main domestic animal linked to human exposure to rabies.⁴ Just last month, a homeless cat who was part of a colony in Wyckoff tested positive for rabies and it was reported that **cats have accounted for 90 percent of the domestic animal rabies cases in New Jersey since 1989.**⁵ In December, a [homeless cat](#) who had been fed in a colony tested positive for rabies in Estell Manor. Last summer, a couple brought home a [rabid kitten](#) they had adopted from the Animal Welfare Association shelter in Voorhees; a family in Hammonton required post-exposure treatment after finding a [homeless kitten](#) who tested positive for rabies; and [two homeless cats](#) in Hunterdon County tested positive for rabies, one of whom was reportedly part of a large colony of cats fed by a resident.

Feeding stations set up for cats attract wildlife—including coyotes, skunks, and raccoons—which increases the risk of disease and parasite transmissions among these animals. Many of these ailments—including rabies, toxoplasmosis, roundworms, [hookworms](#), and even [plague](#)—are also contagious to people. In addition, many people do not want wildlife in their yards, so they employ pest-management companies to kill roaming wildlife—and almost without exception, those killing methods are inhumane. Once trapped, many wildlife species cannot be relocated by law.

PETA's Emergency Response Team fields numerous [reports of incidents](#) in which cats—quasi-"managed" or not—suffer and die because they have to fend for themselves outdoors. Homeless cats are forced to fight (and lose) daily battles against parasites, deadly contagious diseases, dehydration when their water sources evaporate or freeze, speeding cars, loose dogs, and malicious people. On a daily basis, our cruelty caseworkers handle cases involving "outdoor cats" who are abused or killed by property owners or neighbors who simply didn't want the cats there, sterilized or not.

To prevent environmental contamination and protect public health, some municipalities in Camden County require cat and dog owners both to pick up and properly dispose of all waste or face fines. For example, the city of Camden imposes a \$25 fine if the owner of a domestic animal fails to pick up excrement left on private or public property immediately.⁶ Allowing the widespread abandonment of homeless domestic cats in the county would undermine local

³Stephannie Johnson, "Town Council Tires of Feral Cat Problem," ParrySound.com, 15 Oct. 2014 <<http://www.parrysound.com/news-story/4915139-town-council-tires-of-feral-cat-problem/>>.

⁴A.D. Roebing *et al.*, "Rabies Prevention and Management of Cats in the Context of Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Release Programmes," *Zoonoses and Public Health*, 2013 <<http://www.coloradonativebird.org/uploads/3/3/7/5/3375180/catsrabiestnvr-article.pdf>>.

⁵Daniel Hubbard, "Feral Cat in Wyckoff Tests Positive for Rabies, County Issues Warning," 21 Jan. 2017, Patch.com <<http://patch.com/new-jersey/wyckoff/feral-cat-wyckoff-tests-positive-rabies-county-issues-warning>>.

⁶ECode360.com, City of Camden, New Jersey §210-37.1 Disposal of Pet Waste <<http://ecode360.com/12331572>>.

ordinances created to protect residents within their communities. It's important to consider that a [2013 report](#) revealed that there are about 82 million owned cats and anywhere from 25 to 60 million homeless cats in the U.S. Combined, they deposit about **1.2 million tons** of feces into the environment **each year**,⁷ presenting health risks associated with contagious diseases, bacteria, and parasites that can be passed on to humans and their owned animals.

It's also of serious consequence that roaming cats terrorize and kill countless birds and other wildlife who are not equipped to deal with such predators. A 2013 *New York Times* article reports that feral cats account for the majority of cat-caused wildlife deaths in the U.S., an astounding "2.4 billion birds and 12.3 billion mammals a year, most of them native mammals like shrews, chipmunks and voles rather than introduced pests like the Norway rat."⁸ The American Bird Conservancy reports that "[c]at predation is one of the reasons why one in three American bird species are in decline."⁹

Ensuring that homeless cats are rescued and taken to open-admission animal shelters for a chance at adoption, even if euthanasia is the most humane option that can be provided in some cases, is critical while working to reduce cat homelessness through *prevention*—by legally requiring responsible cat ownership, which includes spaying and neutering, microchipping, and keeping cats from roaming at large. PETA stands ready to assist in any way that we can.

Thank you for your consideration and for all your hard work for the citizens of Camden County.

Yours truly,



Teresa Chagrin
Animal Care and Control Specialist
Cruelty Investigations Department

Attachment

PETA Flier: "Homeless Cats Are Not Super-Felines"

⁷CNN Staff, "Is Cat Poop Dangerous?" CNN.com, 9 July 2013

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/09/health/expertqa-cat-poop-risks/?hpt=he_c1>.

⁸Natalie Angier, "That Cuddly Kitty Is Deadlier Than You Think," *The New York Times*, 29 Jan. 2013 <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/30/science/that-cuddly-kitty-of-yours-is-a-killer.html?_r=4&>.

⁹Elizabeth Weise, "House Cats Kill More Critters Than Thought," *USA Today*, 7 Aug. 2012 <<http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-08-06/house-cats-kill/56831262/1>>.