

## **CITY OF VAUGHAN**

### **EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 19, 2018**

Item 21, Report No. 21, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 19, 2018.

---

#### **21 FREE-ROAMING / FERAL CATS**

**The Committee of the Whole recommends:**

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Deputy City Manager, Community Services dated June 5, 2018, be approved; and**
- 2) That the following deputations be received:**
  - 1. Mr. Martin Field, Somerville Street, Oshawa; and**
  - 2. Ms. Monika Sudds, Board Member of Toronto Humane Society and Adoption / Resource Coordinator, Action Volunteers for Animals, Oren Street, Kleinburg.**

#### **Recommendations**

- 1. THAT Council receive this report for information.**

Item:



## Committee of the Whole Report

---

**DATE:** June 5, 2018

**WARD(S):** ALL

**TITLE:** FREE-ROAMING / FERAL CATS

**FROM:**

Mary Reali, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

**ACTION:** FOR INFORMATION

---

**Purpose**

In response to City Council direction on December 11, 2017 to provide a comprehensive report respecting feral cats, staff provide the follow information to be received.

**Recommendations**

1. THAT Council receive this report for information.

**Report Highlights**

- This report provides an initial review and preliminary findings regarding feral cats with respect to a Trap, Neuter, Return and Manage (“TNRM”) program, including feedback obtained from initial public and stakeholder consultations.
- Staff need to establish whether there is a measurable feral cat problem in Vaughan and, if so, continue to assess the impact of the proposed approaches on public health and safety, community standards, the welfare of pets, and the natural environment.
- There has been considerable research on the impact of feral cat management with some studies generally being inconclusive about the success of the various approaches.
- Staff will continue to work with stakeholders to determine if a TNRM is required and if it aligns with effective animal welfare and a broader public interest perspective.

- Staff shall report back to future Committee of the Whole with recommendations and any consequential budgetary impacts, at their earliest opportunity in 2019.

### **Executive Summary:**

In response to City Council direction from December 11, 2017, staff initiated a comprehensive review and consultation to identify whether the City of Vaughan has a measurable problem with feral cat populations and whether a Trap, Neuter, Return and Manage (“TNRM”) program could be considered as an effective solution.

This report provides a status update, including findings from initial stakeholder consultations, information regarding free-roaming/feral cats and TNRM programs.

The issue of free-roaming and feral cats has arisen in many municipalities and other jurisdictions across Canada and the US. The presence of free-roaming and feral cats impacts communities in a variety of ways, including but not limited to:

- presenting a nuisance to local residents;
- creating unwanted conditions on both private and public property;
- negatively impacting natural wildlife and ecosystems;
- contributing to higher cat population densities; and
- increased exposure of otherwise healthy owned cats to disease and predation.

To address these issues, communities employ a number of different approaches that include enhanced animal control by-laws to prohibit cats from roaming supported by comprehensive adoption programs for unclaimed stray cats, public education on responsible pet ownership, municipal spay/neuter clinics and in some municipalities the support or adoption of TNRM programs, carried out in various forms.

The City of Vaughan currently employs all of the above except for a TNRM program, focusing primarily on effective animal control regulations and comprehensive adoption programs that include private partnerships and public education. TNRM programs are promoted as, and intended to, reduce cat populations through inhibiting the possibility of breeding and natural attrition; however, there are a number of varying expert opinions on the success of such programs and limited quantifiable data on whether the intent is actually achieved.

Based on the research staff have reviewed, once TNRM programs are initiated, they tend to be ongoing, implying that while such programs may assist in controlling cat populations, their efficacy appears to be limited. Thus, TNRM has not been decidedly established as effective through objective, quantitative study. For this reason, staff do not currently believe that it can recommend its unfettered use in Vaughan. It should also

be noted that much of the published research indicates that a TNRM program should not be implemented unless there is broad and clear community and public support. As such, staff are not in a position to make recommendation to Council on TNRM at this time.

Developing effective public policy options that are intended to support the mandates of Council, protect public interests, and support effective governance requires a systematic methodology that addresses the following questions:

1. Does a problem exist and is it salient?
2. Is intervention required, and would it effectively address the problem and in a way that aligns with Council's public service mandate?
3. What options require consideration?

These questions require comprehensive study and cannot be made arbitrarily or in isolation of the City's broader priorities and initiatives. As with any undertaking of this nature, staff must ensure there is a balanced approach that yields findings and recommendations that Council can rely upon to make an informed decision on the matter.

In accordance with Council's direction, staff are continuing a comprehensive study of this matter, and require additional time to conclude their review. As such, staff are recommending that this report be received and that staff be permitted to continue their study, accordingly.

## **Background**

### ***Mandate of Vaughan Animal Services***

Directly aligned with Council's mandate and the Term of Council Priorities (2014-2018) Vaughan Animal Services ("VAS") delivers services to protect the City's public health, safety, well-being and quality of life by:

1. regulating and managing interactions between residents, pets and wildlife;
2. ensuring that pet owners uphold community standards;
3. promoting responsible pet ownership; and
4. supporting animal welfare.

VAS accomplishes this through dog and cat licensing, pet adoption, effective regulation and animal control, by-law enforcement, by-law education, response to injured or sick dogs, cats and wildlife, and by finding and re-uniting lost pets with their homes and families.

This mandate is the basis for how staff analyze related issues and evaluate the merits of any proposal relating to the control and regulation of animals. In other words, no issue or proposal can be viewed in isolation of its impact on the health and safety of people and

their pets, community standards, public expectations, and the natural environment, including its diverse fauna and flora.

### ***Defining the issue***

On the basis of public deputations made by advocates and interested individuals in support of TNRM programs in December 2017, City Council directed staff to review this matter and provide a report regarding feral cats in Vaughan, including the necessary stakeholder engagement.

### **Previous Reports/Authority**

[Item 15, Report No. 44, of the Committee of the Whole, considered by Council on December 11, 2017, in which the Member's Resolution directed staff to report back on feral cats.](#)

[Item 2, Report No. 26, of the Committee of the Whole \(Working Session\), which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 7, 2016, on the Animal Services Wildlife Response Service.](#)

### **Analysis and Options**

This report provides Council with a general analysis and initial information of the issues surrounding feral cats and identifies areas that require additional work and further study.

A great deal of literature exists regarding this subject, including a variety of studies carried out in various parts of Canada and the United States that provide varying opinions on the effectiveness of TNRM and its unintended consequences.

### ***Why managing feral cats is a complex issue***

Beyond the inability to identify a measurable problem including the challenge of understanding the scale and impacts of feral cats in Vaughan, consideration of any approach including TNRM raises some key questions requiring resolution prior to staff being in a position to make an informed recommendation to Council. Questions such as:

- How do we best support the health of the community, including pet owners and pets?
- How do we best address the public nuisance caused by free-roaming cats?
- How do we support the best health outcomes for cats?
- How do we protect our natural wildlife and protected species that may be predated upon by cats, such as birds and small mammals?
- How do we manage potential financial implications to best meet the mandate of VAS and protect the broad public interest?
- If a problem can be identified, can it be addressed through municipal intervention and be able to clearly and confidently support the introduction of a TNRM program? and

- How do we determine what is in the City's best interest with the many varying and opposing expert opinions that exist about the effectiveness and benefits of TNRM programs?

### ***Effective policy decisions and program design***

Based upon the information gathered thus far, staff have identified that prior to being able to support the introduction of any program, additional insight is needed to determine whether the City has a measurable problem, whether any form of intervention is required and if so, how to craft effective policies and programs to ensure the support of the greater public interests, health safety and well-being of all citizens, while balancing the well-being of all animals within the City of Vaughan.

### ***What is a "feral" cat?***

Feral cats are defined by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ("ASPCA") as "a subset of community cats (i.e., outdoor, unowned cats that are roaming freely), is a commonly used phrase generally referring to a cat who appears unaccustomed to close contact with people and, if taken to an animal shelter, is typically not a candidate for adoption into a home as a pet". A cat is considered feral when it has been born outdoors and is not sufficiently socialized to humans. This condition is most often due to being born and/or living in the wild for a prolonged period of time. Feral cats live as wild animals outdoors, sometimes in residential neighbourhoods or urban settings, where they are attracted by people who provide food, water, and shelter. Despite this, most feral cats cannot be handled by humans and are not suitable for home environments. They also, as a predatory species, will hunt birds and small mammals for their survival.

Feral cats very often share their environment with domesticated cats, most often these being free-roaming or abandoned pets. Although it is a violation under the City's Animal Control By-law, residents sometimes allow their pet cats to wander outside. Collectively, these pet cats, feral cats and any other cats roaming the community, such as lost cats, can be referred to as "free-roaming cats".

### ***Challenges faced by feral cats***

Feral cats, like most wild animals, face many challenges in the wild where they must fend for themselves. They must face the environment, scarcity of food and shelter, predators and other hostile cats, disease, trauma, and the general risks of living in an urban setting.

According to a [Toronto Humane Society position statement on Outdoor Cats](#), "the average lifespan of an indoor cat is 13 to 17 years; some live 20 years or more. Outdoor cats have much shorter lives, averaging only two to five years. Declawed cats are at particular risk and should never be allowed outdoors, as their defenses have been seriously compromised."

Outdoors, cats are exposed to a multitude of ailments, including:

- incurable feline viruses, such as Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), the feline equivalent of HIV, Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV), and Feline Coronavirus (FCoV), which is the causative agent of Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP), are all transmissible to other cats and can result in morbidity and mortality;
- Toxoplasmosis, a parasitic infection that is shed by cats, is contagious to humans and can negatively affect human pregnancies;
- Bartonellosis, a bacterial infection which can cause “cat scratch fever”;
- Ringworm, a fungal skin infection transmissible to human and animal hosts; and
- Rabies, a reportable and fatal viral infection that is transmissible to all mammals and humans.

As well, the risk of illness for cats is increased for those that are not vaccinated. In addition, feral cats that find their way to VAS are often afflicted with conditions such as:

- ocular infections and/or conjunctivitis, both of which can be contagious;
- keratitis, often caused by feline viral complexes, for which pet cats are routinely vaccinated against, and which can cause scarring and ulceration resulting in varying degrees of blindness;
- maggot and lice infestations;
- upper respiratory tract infections;
- advanced dental disease; and
- chronic untreated injuries.

### ***What is a Stray or Free-Roaming Cat?***

Stray or free-roaming cats are commonly defined as someone’s pet who has become lost, abandoned or simply permitted to roam free. Stray cats are usually acclimated to people, and are friendly and comfortable around people. Unowned stray cats will also try and make a home near people, including under decks, in garages or vacant buildings. Unowned stray cats are and can be prime candidates for adoption through municipal animal services and local Humane Societies alike.

### ***How does the City of Vaughan (VAS) currently deal with feral cats?***

Over the two-year period of 2016 to 17, VAS had 1,090 service requests relating to cats and, as a result, impounded 135 sick or injured free-roaming cats, some of which were feral.

Because of their fear of humans, predatory behaviours, difficulty adjusting to indoor living and the likelihood that they suffer from one or more ailments, many adult feral cats are not suitable as house pets.

Nevertheless, not unlike with any other animals, cats that are brought into the shelter are scanned for any type of identification, such as collars/tags, microchips, and tattoos. If present, every reasonable effort is made to contact the owners or custodians, so that these animals can be reunited with them and returned home. When ownership cannot be determined, and the finder is interested in adopting the animal, staff then proceed to have the animal examined, sprayed/neutered, microchipped, vaccinated and dewormed. VAS has done this many times in the past for those wishing to provide feral cats with a better future.

Otherwise, healthy animals that are candidates for adoption are held indefinitely, until a forever home can be found for them. Kittens in particular are often quite adoptable. Not unlike any other municipal animal service, any animal that cannot be safely adopted due to disease, condition and disposition, or injury is humanely euthanized, in accordance with Provincial legislation.

As reflected by some municipalities that have introduced a TNRM program, VAS current practices have also recorded a reduction in the number of stray cats being taken in by the shelter. Although VAS does not have clear data to account for the reduction, they believe, aside from trapping and sterilizing that may be carried out by some volunteers without the knowledge of VAS, that the reduction in in-take can be attributed to many factors including but not limited to, VAS's current practices, predation, the urban environment, disease, and responsible pet ownership.

Additionally, VAS does not proactively locate or trap free-roaming or feral cats. VAS responds to public complaints, conducts necessary investigations to determine the disposition of the cats and where VAS comes into possession of the cat, VAS will follow the same process as described above that includes determining if the cat is owned and can be returned to its family, or whether the cat becomes a candidate for public adoption, ensuring the appropriate health assessment and care is provided prior to.

### ***What is a Trap, Neuter, Return and Manage (“TNRM”) Program?***

A TNRM program is a program through which free-roaming and feral cats are humanely trapped by volunteers, spayed or neutered, provided initial vaccines and returned to the location they were originally found or relocated to an alternative more suitable location. Note that kittens or socialized stray cats that are trapped can be candidates for adoption and are not returned.

In addition to the trapping, sterilizing, vaccinating and returning the cat, TRNM programs are also required to incorporate a volunteer run management component that includes, but is not limited to, identification of a cat custodian (an identified individual who is responsible for the “colony”), providing food, basic shelter, keeping of accurate records of treatment, vaccines, release locations and maintaining of community relations; including with the local municipal animal service.

Often, such colonies include the provision of make-shift shelters made of common household items (e.g. storage bins, coolers, wood, etc.). In many cases, TNRM programs are supported financially through either in-kind services or financial support by

local municipalities. These services can include subsidized spay/neuter clinics, providing cages for trapping, free medical assessment and medical care, and related assistance from animal control officers.

Cat advocates generally support the establishment of TNRM programs as a means to reduce, or at least manage, the over-population of cats. Cat colonies are seen as a way to help cats live out their often-short lives, as humanely as possible by providing food and shelter.

### ***Framing the TNRM question in the context of Vaughan***

In considering the proposals of TNRM supporters, a thorough understanding of the following is needed:

1. Is there a measurable feral cat problem in Vaughan and how can such a problem be defined? For example, how can we determine whether there is an overpopulation of cats within the City's boundaries? What kind of issues do feral cats represent to residents, private property, public property, pets, and other wildlife?
2. If a problem cannot be quantified, as found in other jurisdictions, will the introduction of a TNRM program create a problem by encouraging further abandonment of otherwise owned cats and/or further encourage the immigration of cats from other jurisdictions by TNRM volunteers looking to relocate cats to more "favourable" conditions?
3. How does the problem affect the mandate of VAS? Given the parameters of public interest, does TNRM adequately balance the relevant interests of residents, pet owners and greater tax payers at large?

### ***What are the issues associated with a City-approved TNRM program?***

Primarily of key concern for staff is attempting to ascertain whether a conflict exists between the interests and intended purpose of TNRM supporters and the obligation on City staff to ensure alignment with the greater public interests.

As part of staff's research, a public survey through Access Vaughan was conducted in the spring of 2018 that engaged 254 residents; of these, 88 agreed to complete the survey. Despite half of respondents saying that they had seen free-roaming cats in the city, almost two thirds of all respondents indicated that free-roaming cats are not an issue of great importance in Vaughan. One fifth of all respondents did identify public nuisance concerns with free-roaming cats.

In its broader research, staff identified three main negative impacts often associated with TNRM and feral cats:

1. nuisance to humans and the potential damage, deterioration of property conditions and/or destruction of private property;

2. detriment to the natural environment and ecosystem including threat to native species of birds and small mammals; and
3. aligning TNRM to municipal and provincial legislation.

Additionally, TNRM does not distinguish between non-feral owned pets and stray or feral cats. Pets can and are trapped and may be subject to being sterilized and relocated away from their home; thereby creating a stray cat that may have, without human intervention, returned home. The impacts are detailed below.

(1) ***Nuisance to humans and potential damage, deterioration of property conditions and/or destruction of private property and the environment.***

Free-roaming cats, including feral cats, are known to create common public nuisance complaints especially when near or within residential areas, including complaints regarding spraying of urine (to mark territory), noise associated with yowling, fighting often taking place at night, accumulation and contamination of area where excrement is found and general property damage such as digging in flowerbeds, accessing accessory structures (e.g. sheds) and under desks, etc. Some behaviours, such as spraying of urine and yowling, are reduced or eliminated by sterilization. Additionally, residents are concerned with finding sick, injured, dying or dead cats, injured wildlife and/or the remains of prey left by cats.

(2) **Detrimental to the natural environment and ecosystem including threat to native species of birds and small mammals**

In Vaughan over the last few years, VAS has received over 1000 complaints about free-roaming cats, with the majority of complaints centering around roaming, injury or illness, or nuisance. In 2016 and 2017, approximately 10% of public complaints received by VAS were related to free-roaming cats (see Attachment 1), including complaints respecting:

- accumulation of excrement on properties where residents are putting out food;
- cats congregating in one locale;
- damage to gardens/plants caused by digging;
- injury and illness to cats, leading to a poor quality of life;
- injury and death to wildlife due to predation, such as birds and small mammals;
- establishment of homemade cat shelters made of materials that appear to be discarded or waste creating sub-standard property conditions; and
- groups of cats creating a food source that attracts predators, such as coyotes.

Every year, wildlife rehabilitation facilities and other animal services, including VAS, are inundated with calls about birds and mammals who have been injured or killed, many of which are injured by outdoor cats, as well as concerns regarding predators, such as coyotes, who are encroaching onto human territory because of non-natural food sources. Predation of wildlife is the number one concern of wildlife advocates. Cats are proficient hunters, are highly adaptable and can be self-sustaining in many

differing environments through predating upon birds and other small wildlife. Feral cats exist largely as wildlife and as such their lifespan is generally shorter than that of pet cats and can be enhanced through human intervention. However, healthy feral cats, in contrast to those who may be sick or injured, do not require such intervention to survive in the wild.

As such, when seeking to understand the impact of cats on a larger and longer-term scale, it is important to consider what the impact of feral cats is on naturally existing balances. Pete Marra, wildlife ecologist and head of the U.S. Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, has noted that birds are critical to maintaining a healthy ecosystem, necessary for seed pollination, insect control and mitigating the effects of climate change. Through decades of study, he has identified outdoor cats as being the greatest human-influenced cause of bird deaths, with the average cat killing two birds per week. He also cites a global study that established that cat predation has significantly contributed to the extinction of over 33 species of birds.

In addition, cats often carry diseases that can impact other cats, animals and, in some cases, human health. Marra has expressed that the establishment of feral cat colonies, “subsidizes” predators, while harming other animals in the ecosystem and hampering their ability to survive.

For Marra and other critics of TNRM programs, a key concern is that TNRM programs can have a devastating impact on the natural environment, especially on native species of birds and small mammals.

### **(3) *Aligning TNRM with municipal and provincial legislation***

A key mandate for the City and specifically the By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services Department (BCLPS), includes the establishment of regulations and standards by which properties are kept and maintained. While there are a number of regulatory by-laws that establish and support property conditions and standards, the two primary related by-laws are the City’s Animal Control By-law No. 53-2002, as amended, and the City’s Property Standards By-law No. 231-2011.

The Animal Control By-law supports control of cat populations by prohibiting owned cats from roaming beyond the owner’s property, and prescribes a number of requirements specifically designed to support animal welfare; such as rabies vaccinations and visible licensing; to ensure that a lost pet can be reunited with its family.

A component of TNRM includes but is not limited to, establishing and managing of cat colonies, which include basic man-made shelters. Below are photographs of cat shelters found in Vaughan on public lands, namely parkland/storm water ponds.

Figure 1 – A cat colony on Vaughan public lands, using recycling bins, plastic containers, and other re-used materials.



Figure 2 – Cat shelter made from a cardboard box, containing food and water dishes, as well as fabric bags for bedding.



The City's Property Standards By-law prohibits conditions on private property that allow for discarded, dilapidated structures/fixtures, accumulation of garbage, waste, debris, conditions that attract pests, vermin or infestations and/or any conditions that are not in keeping with community character. This includes conditions that may be caused by free-roaming cats and/or the establishment of cat colonies.

Additionally, the City ensures that the property conditions on publicly owned lands, parks and facilities are kept to or at a similar standard, including being kept free from waste, debris, discarded materials, etc. This is achieved through maintenance and property care being carried out by City staff, and having regulatory by-laws in place that establish standards for private property and provide the authority to initiate corrective measures to address unacceptable human behaviours (e.g., dumping waste, picking up pet excrement, feeding of wildlife, etc.), including but not limited to prosecution for by-law violations, corrective remedy and cost recovery (where possible).

While it can be recognized that volunteers have a limited ability to manage colonies in a manner that would not create concerns, the conditions found due to establishment of cat colonies, feeding and man-made shelters as reflected in the above photographs are not in keeping with any property regulations the City could condone on publicly owned or on private property. This is a key concern that demonstrates some of the difficulties in aligning TNRM programs with municipal regulations and the greater public interest and an area requiring further study to determine if managed colonies can be permitted and maintained in accordance with established standards.

In an attempt to address some of these key issues, the International Companion Animal Management Coalition recommends that any jurisdiction or organization undertaking a TNRM intervention should ensure that four key elements are met:

1. that managed colonies should not be allowed where cats are known to pose a threat to vulnerable species, not be allowed near municipal water supplies and/or other areas where the cats are likely to come in contact with humans or in any regions where terrestrial wildlife rabies is epizootic unless widespread vaccination of cats against rabies is included;
2. TNRM location should give caretakers easy access, and are safe for colony cats away from all major roadways, without attracting excessive attention from passers-by as TNRM programs are also known to attract the abandonment of owned cats;
3. TNRM intervention should not be undertaken if a significant proportion of the community is opposed which could cause conflict and a threat to the returned cats or there may not be reliable volunteers to provide the required care;
4. any TNRM program requires a public education campaign. While many supporters suggest that allowing for a TNRM program creates no financial pressures and or costs to be borne by the municipality, public education along

with the over-site and assistance that would be required by the local municipal animal services would be bore by the municipal tax base. Given the variation in fiscal involvement by various municipalities, a further cost analysis would need to be undertaken by staff. Additionally, given the extensive growth demands experienced by VAS over the past two years, any additional service demands will likely equate to the need to increase staff and related costs (e.g. vehicle, etc.).

### **Approaches taken by other jurisdictions**

City staff received input from eight municipalities in Ontario: Toronto, Mississauga, London, Windsor, Burlington, Oakville, Burlington, Pickering and Caledon.

Weather, food availability, disease outbreaks and cross-jurisdictional migration all have a substantial impact on feral populations, making population estimates difficult to make and unreliable. For example, in Toronto the Humane Society estimates that there are between 20,000 and 100,000 ferals; while in Pickering the estimate from the City is that there are between 20 and 30.

Of the municipalities examined, only Caledon and Toronto do not prohibit cats from roaming freely. All municipalities have some form of cat-management program, each with its unique approach; however, all incorporate sterilization and vaccination in different programs. The source of funding varied widely, from the cost being fully undertaken by Windsor, through a voucher program, to no cost at all being borne by Oakville, where the Humane Society covers all related expenses. The impact of the various programs tended to be both anecdotal and uncertain, with none of the municipalities examined having undertaken a systematic study of their programs.

### ***Alignment with Provincial Legislation: The Animals for Research Act***

The Animals for Research Act (“ARA”) establishes minimum standards for humane care of animals, as well as use of all animal care facilities, including a pound in Vaughan’s case, the Vaughan Animal Shelter. The ARA requires a pound to hold an impounded dog or cat for a period of no less than three days, excluding the day in which the dog or cat was impounded, and any subsequent day when the shelter is closed (i.e., Sundays or statutory holidays). This is referred to as the redemption period. After the redemption period has expired, a pound may sell (adopt out) or gift a dog or cat to an individual for three specific purposes:

- as a pet;
- for use of hunting; or
- working purposes.

The ARA also permits the destruction of impounded dogs and/or cats that are not redeemed. The ARA does not distinguish between stray, free-roaming or feral cats, subsequently creating challenges for municipal animal service providers. Depending on the level of involvement by municipal animal service in a TNRM program, the ARA does not recognize a feral cat as being impounded, unless the cat is in the possession and

released to the service provider (VAS) by the person who trapped and delivered the cat to the animal shelter. Once impounded, the cat cannot be released under any condition other than those provided within the ARA and noted above.

As part of the preparation of this report, staff conducted two stakeholder consultations, attended almost exclusively by cat advocates. Of 24 attendees, 11 were residents of Vaughan. Staff received the following input from participants:

- There are as many as 50 to 100 cat colonies in Vaughan; however, only four general locations were explicitly identified:
  - o Weston & Rutherford
  - o Nashville & Huntington
  - o Woodbridge
  - o Highway 400 & Langstaff.
- Ferals tend to have a lifespan that rarely exceeds five years, with a better-than-average life-span in well cared-for colonies.
- Sterilization prevents breeding and helps to reduce populations and should be mandated for all cats, including pets. The City should provide a spay-neuter service and seek grants (such as from PetSmart) to do so.
- Cat colonies have existed in Vaughan for decades and require a few people to maintain effectively. Well-meaning residents may sometimes attract other wildlife by supplying other (often human) food.
- The feral cat problem is a social problem created by humans, it is therefore a communal responsibility to take care of and manage these animals. Residents should become accustomed to and learn to share their environment with feral cats.
- They believe that the impact that feral predation has on local wildlife can be mitigated by regular feeding.
- Although vaccination for cats requires subsequent booster shots, re-capture of a feral is unlikely; however, even one dosage is better than nothing.

***Weighing the pros and cons of TNRM***

Considering the information above, staff have included a summary of some key pros and cons of TNRM programs:

Table 1 - Pros and Cons of Trap, Neuter, Return, and Manage programs

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allows for feral cats to live out the length of their natural lives and provides an alternative to euthanasia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishment of cat colonies can exist for decades and require active and intensive maintenance</li> <li>• unlike pet owners who are legally responsible and liable for their pets, volunteers/colony custodians are not required by law to continue their activities,</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• controls the breeding cycle, which can contribute to mitigating against feral cat population increases</li> <li>• some municipalities that have established a comprehensive TNRM program have reported a reduction in cat euthanasia and intake of strays</li> </ul>	<p>which may lead to leaving colonies abandoned after being established</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishment of cat shelters built out of discarded or otherwise waste materials create unsightly and substandard property conditions within a community (property standards)</li> <li>• without complete support from the greater community at large, TNRM can be viewed by residents as the imposition of sub-standards, nuisance and acceptance of property damage being supported by the City</li> <li>• greater concentration and spread of disease in a given area, resulting in poor health outcomes for cats and poor quality of life</li> <li>• encroachment on territories of native species by this predatory species, which can impact populations of birds, small mammals and the general ecosystem</li> <li>• responsible oversight by local animal services may create additional demands and pressures on existing resources and to be effective should be subsidized through services such as spay/neuter clinics, veterinary care and health assessment</li> </ul>
---	--

When viewed objectively, commonalities can be found between TNRM programs/ supporters and municipal animal services such as VAS; namely that both:

- have an interest in animal welfare and care;
- recognize that responsible pet ownership and regulations that deter roaming of cats mitigates against disease spread and reproduction, that sterilization is essential for any free-roaming cat (whether owned or feral); and
- recognize the importance of having an effective adoption program ensures that healthy adoptable animals are provided with a good home, and that public education regarding this matter is important.

Conversely, it is as important to note, that local governments have a responsibility to ensure a standard by which all property is maintained, while some TNRM supporters are silent on how to achieve this and/or the importance of it in relation to their interests for the cats. Municipal animal services are bound by legislation and a duty of public care, volunteers are not. Municipal animal services, as with all local governments are responsible for the greater public interests, supporters of TNRM are not.

Although some benefits of TNRM cannot be disputed, such as that a sterilized animal cannot reproduce, other claims such as a measurable reduction in cat populations are somewhat inconclusive at times. Staff believe that continuing to research this complex

issue and work with stakeholders will allow for a better understanding of the causal relationships between TNRM and the concerns and obligations of staff.

### ***Current State***

The information gathered and research carried out to date demonstrates a number of important issues, concerns and findings, including:

- although the number of cats, caretakers and range of care is still unclear, there are feral cats in the City of Vaughan that residents are feeding and caring for;
- there are a number of varied TNRM solutions in place in other municipalities, involving residents, municipal resources, various Humane Societies and advocacy groups, but that the impact on free-roaming cat populations is often not well monitored, documented and/or understood;
- various types of TNRM programs exist involving different parties, with different costs being borne by participants, with total operating costs for various programs not readily available;
- wildlife may be significantly impacted by free-roaming cats, to the extent that this could have detrimental impacts on the ecosystem, which may be poorly understood;
- traditional TNRM programs do not address the impact on wildlife and/or the possible adverse effects to acceptable property standards; and
- responses from Vaughan residents engaged thus far reflect that residents do not think that free-roaming cats are a serious issue.

Although free-roaming and feral cat populations in Vaughan are unknown, staff are in favour of continuing to investigate this matter, with the understanding that the impact on residents, community standards and the welfare of pets and other wild animals be addressed. As such, staff are proposing to continue to work with cat advocates, as well as other interested stakeholders, to determine how best to move forward.

### **Financial Impact**

This is an information report and has no financial impact.

### **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

Staff are continuing the process of consulting with neighbouring municipalities, other public agencies and advocacy groups to further understand the scope of any issues, explore effective means to address them and opportunities for alignment.

### **Conclusion**

There are significant gaps in data and information available to determine the extent of the issues relating to free-roaming cats in Vaughan and how effective conventional approaches, namely TNRM, might be in addressing such issues or if even such a program is reasonable. Initial public consultation conducted through an Access Vaughan phone survey reflects that the majority of residents/respondents surveyed do not view this as a pressing issue. In addition, any future considerations need to support the City's and VAS' mandate, ensure the greater public interest are maintained, ensure

that any program to be considered does not create unintended consequences such as an acceptable deterioration of established standards that properties are required to be kept and must take into account financial impact and value for the taxpayer.

As a result, staff are recommending that they be allowed to continue examining this complex issue through continuing to discussions with TNRM supporters and other stakeholders to conclude the review and be in a position to make recommendations allowing for City Council to make an informed decision on this matter.

**For more information, please contact:** Gus Michaels, Director and Chief Licensing Officers, By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permits Services

### **Attachments**

None.

### **Prepared by**

Gus Michaels, Director & Chief Licensing Officer, ext. 8735

Susan Kelly, Manager, Animal Services, ext. 8952

Rudi Czekalla-Martinez, Manager Policy and Business Services, ext. 8782

Carol Ramchuram, Regulatory Policy Analyst, ext. 8783