



June 8, 2016

The Honorable Anthony Vaz, Mayor of Seaside Heights
Members of the Seaside Heights Borough Council

Via e-mail: mayor@seaside-heightsnj.org; publicaffairs@seaside-heightsnj.org; municipalclerk@seaside-heightsnj.org

Dear Mayor Vaz and Borough Councilors,

I hope you are well. **I'm writing to let you know that PETA strongly supports the borough's decision to end its program to feed, collect, sterilize, and re-abandon homeless cats** (often called trap/neuter/release [TNR]). 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.

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

PETA's Emergency Response Team fields numerous [reports of incidents](#) in which cats—quasi-"managed" or not—suffer and die badly 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

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?nclick_check=1>.

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/>>.

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are abused or killed by property owners or neighbors who simply didn't want the cats there, sterilized or not.

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.

Moreover, roaming cats terrorize and kill birds and other wildlife who are already struggling with habitat destruction and environmental degradation. A 2013 *New York Times* article reported that roaming cats account for the majority of cat-caused wildlife deaths in the U.S., killing an astounding "**2.4 billion birds and 12.3 billion mammals a year.**"⁴

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. Good intentions are nice, but warehousing animals in a "facility," as has been suggested, is not a long-term solution and is sure to get out of control quickly. Every day, our office fields calls about well-intentioned individuals who are overwhelmed by the number of animals they've taken in. In many cases, conditions have been allowed to deteriorate to such a degree that animals have suffered tremendously, died, or have had to be euthanized for medical or behavioral reasons.

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 Seaside Heights.

Yours truly,



Teresa Chagrin
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Cruelty Investigations Department

⁴Natalie 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&>.