

June 7, 2022

Deputation in support of Report Number: ML2022-001, Stray and Feral Cats by Aaron Sloan

My name is Janice Jones-Skinner and I am the Chairperson of the Kawartha Lakes Community Cats TNRM Committee. The Committee consists of the following people: Executive Director of Humane Society of Kawartha Lakes, Shelter Manager of HSKL, Former Shelter Manager of HSKL, three Board members of HSKL, and five citizens from various areas of the City of Kawartha Lakes. All Committee members have taken the Community Cats Toronto TNRM course.

Some history to the issue in question:

My husband, Richard Skinner and I were the founding President and Secretary of the Victoria County Branch of OSPCA in 1986. During the time we were in office, until the property on McLaughlin Road was purchased, we fielded many calls day and night for injured animals. The majority of the calls were in regards to stray cats.

I rejoined the Board of Humane Society of Kawartha Lakes in 2014.

The issue of stray and feral cats has arisen several times over the past few decades and has been brought before City Council by various individuals. It has been a difficult issue to come to grips with – how to effectively and humanely deal with the thousands of stray and feral cats that exist within the City (formerly Victoria County) and that HSKL has been the receiver of.

So that brings us to the creation of the Kawartha Lakes Community Cats TNRM Committee two years ago. This group of people have the passion to solve the problem of strays and ferals in City of Kawartha Lakes. We have already been active with trapping and saving cats and kittens, finding suitable placements for them (in barns, workshops, factories, or if socialized enough, in homes). The people on the Committee who have been doing the trapping spent much of their own money transporting the cats to and from Toronto Humane Society as we are able to have the cats spayed/neutered, vaccinated, ear-tipped and micro-chipped for free. They have housed the cats in their own homes, heated garages and have fostered mother cats and kittens, working on socializing them to hopefully place them in homes or other suitable venues. There has been some money donated, through the HSKL donation section, to this Committee and those funds are being used to pay for food, litter, gas, medications, cleaning supplies, crates, traps, etc. The women doing the trapping are being very careful to not deplete this finite amount of money, and if I know them, are likely still not claiming their full expenses as they are doing this work from a compassionate stance. To date they have had over 200 cats and kittens vetted and returned to colonies or adopted with the assistance of the HSKL or other TNRM groups working within Kawartha Lakes.

Bobcaygeon Friends of Ferals, now closed, is proof that TNR works. Bobcaygeon and Fenelon Falls have seen a reduction of strays and ferals through attrition since their first spay in 2014. In total, they have helped almost one thousand cats and kittens. They did this with tens of thousands of their own funds and with the help of local vets who gave them reduced rates for spays and neuters.

The pandemic has created serious set-backs with assisting animals and in our case, cats. There is a huge backlog for veterinary appointments for spaying/neutering on top of other veterinary needs. The HSKL has found this to be the case for many months with animals surrendered or brought in stray. Even the clinic at OSPCA Newmarket which used to be able to do large numbers at a time, has been unreliable. The Toronto Humane Society used to do mass trappings, but during the pandemic have not been able to. Usually they take a couple of cats at a time so this means more trips with less animals to

THS. COVID outbreaks among their staff means postponed appointments. Example: 3 pregnant female cats were scheduled to go in at one time (the kittens would be aborted – sounds bad, but it is the most humane thing), the cats would have been spayed and vetted as described above. However, COVID outbreak, appointment cancelled, 3 pregnant moms give birth within the day. So the trappers scrambled to find space for them in their own homes, find fosters so that the kittens can be raised to an age of adoption. More time, more expense, more animals.

The women doing the trapping have a waiting list and are trying to work through it answering calls from farmers, citizens of Kawartha Lakes, businesses, trailer parks, nursing homes.

Included in our Mandate is: Educate and build awareness among cat owners and colony caregivers about the many resources available for a TNRM program and colony management. Educate the public about the benefits of a TNRM program.

In Aaron's proposal, cats will not allowed to be at large in urban settings and will need to be licensed. Both of these regulations will enhance the idea of cats having value. People will take better care of their cats and by doing so will be more considerate of their neighbours.

HSKL has in its Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023 Priority #1, Goal #5: Building on the existing relationship with the City of Kawartha Lakes, collaboratively explore a joint task force on animal care and a Trap-Spay/Neuter-Return-Manage Program.

Aaron's report, page 19: 'This report aligns with the Guiding Principles fundamental to the 2020-2023 Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan, which are to foster and strengthen Partnerships and Collaboration with external organizations on projects and services.

While I am here making a deputation to ask for support of this partnership, I am requesting that Council consider creating an Animal Care Advisory Committee that will look over existing by-laws relating to animals and recommend changes as needed. Oshawa has such a Committee and it works very well.

Martin Field, who will be another deputant on this issue, is a member of that Committee. He has been a valued advisor to our Committee from the start two years ago, providing much needed advice. He will speak on the successes of TNRM in Oshawa and other municipalities with which he is very familiar.

I cannot stress this enough, that the numbers of stray and feral cats is a human problem, not a cat problem. We have the power to implement a solution.

I encourage City Council to support the proposed partnership between the City and our Committee. We are offering a viable solution, but need the funds to continue the program. It has worked in many municipalities to reduce the feral cat population. We will only see concrete results after a few years, after monitoring the numbers of cats in colonies and the numbers coming through the doors of the HSKL.