

Office of Neighborhood Services

City of Richland Hills, Texas

Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor Bill Agan and members of the Richland Hills City Council
From: Scott Mitchell, Director of Neighborhood Services
Date: January 8, 2018
Subject: Feral Cat Control Update

Council Action Requested:

Update on new partnership as an attempt to gain control of the growing feral cat population in the city. No Council action required.

Background Information:

A growing issue in Richland Hills, as well as the entire North Texas Region, is the explosive growth of the feral cat population. Feral cats are defined as:

A feral cat is a cat that lives outdoors and has had little or no human contact. They do not allow themselves to be handled or touched by humans, and will run away if they are able. They typically remain hidden from humans, although some feral cats become more comfortable with people who regularly feed them.

The growing population of these animals is caused by several issues:

- Feeding of stray cats
- Lack of any natural predators
- Inability to eradicate due to large numbers
- Rapid reproduction at up to four litters a year

These cat colonies become a source of noise, filth, odor and destruction of surrounding bird populations.

Historically animal control agencies have tried to trap and euthanize feral cats when complaints are received. The issue has become that the cat colony populations are growing faster than animal service agencies can euthanize them.

Recent studies have shown that the best control method for feral cats is the Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate, and Release (TNVR) program. This is done by trapping the cats in a problem area, neutering and vaccinating the cats, then returning and releasing at the point of capture. This process stops the reproductive cycle and leads to shrinking of the cat population through natural attrition. As these cats live in the wild, their life span is usually only 1-3 years vs. a well-cared for house cat.

Richland Hills Animal Services has been approached by an established TNVR non-profit organization, Mid-Cities Community Cats. This organization will respond to reported problem cat areas, place traps, remove feral cats for neutering/spaying/vaccination, then return them to the colony where captured. More information is available about the organization at www.m-ccc.com. This service is provided to the city at no charge. Partnering with this organization will start the process of reducing the feral cat population while reducing the drain on our animal services personnel involved in capture and euthanasia. It also reduces our cost as we will no longer have to invest personnel, drug cost and disposal costs for dealing with these cats.

The Richland Hills Animal Services Advisory Board has seen a presentation from Mid-Cities Community Cats and has approved the idea of partnering with them. It is seen as a win/win for the city.

The only negative impact that we can foresee is that the public may not understand why a nuisance cat is being released back into the same area it was originally captured in. M-CCC has an educational program built to help explain the program. It is available on-line, or can be presented in community meetings.

Richland Hills Animal Services plans to start this partnership immediately in hopes of possibly getting control of at least some cat colonies before spring.

Board/Citizen Input: Partnership has been recommended by the RHASB

Financial Impact: N/A

Staff Contacts:

Scott Mitchell
Director of Neighborhood Services
smitchell@richlandhills.com

Attachments: