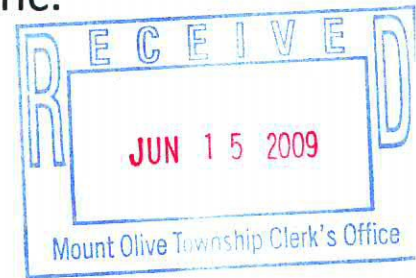




cc: Admin

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June 11, 2009

Council President Russ Tepper
Mount Olive Township
204 Flanders-Drakestown Road
PO Box 450
Budd Lake, NJ 07828

Dear Council President Tepper,

I have been following with great interest the cat advocates' push to implement Trap/Neuter/Release (TNR) as the solution to the feral cat epidemic we are currently experiencing through out New Jersey and the country. In theory, this looks like a humane workable solution, but in practice, a much more gruesome truth is revealed.

Mount Olive is a target on the pro-TNR agenda and I would like to dispel some of the misleading statements that are made in defense of this highly controversial topic. Scientific data should be used to determine TNR's feasibility not anecdotal evidence that only plays on the human/animal emotional bond. TNR advocates care deeply about their cats but they turn a blind eye to the damage their cats cause to the environment and the balance that is so important to a native ecosystem.

First, let me state that cats are domestic companion animals that have no natural habitat outdoors. I cannot accept the idea that cats can live happy and healthy lives outdoors without routine veterinary care, proper food and shelter or the day to day human interactions that domestic animals innately crave. Domestic cats, whether owned or feral, rely on humans for their survival. Without our misguided help, feral cats would not congregate in such large numbers or be healthy enough to breed as prolifically as they do today. Without the food source supplied by misguided humans, feral cats just might deminish through natural attrition without TNR. TNR is based on perpetual colony maintenance; these colonies never go away thanks to human intervention.

Our native wildlife deserves a habitat without the presence of an additional introduced species. The evolutionary process did not include domestic cats and therefore, our native species have no natural defenses against them. TNR advocates will argue that this is the natural order of things but there is nothing natural about TNR or domestic cats preying on our native fauna. Feral and free roaming cats also take prey that is meant for native predators so these creatures suffer indirectly due to the presence of feral cat colonies. Feral and free roaming cats also exist in much denser populations than any natural predator/prey ratio and the native prey base cannot withstand the added pressure. This imbalance gives the advantage to other invasive species like the Norway rat and the house mouse which quickly outnumber native rodent species in areas with outdoor cats.

TNR proponents will argue that TNR saves municipalities money because the cats are not impounded. I am currently enrolled in a New Jersey Certified Animal Control Officer course and we are being taught that legally, all stray domestic animals must be held for a period of seven days. How can the TNR proponents trap and surgically alter stray animals without first giving the rightful owners a chance to reclaim their pet? Who is liable if a "prized" show cat is accidentally trapped and neutered? TNR practitioners break the law every time they take possession of a stray cat and neuter the animal before the seven day holding period has elapsed. Will Mount Olive also be held liable if TNR is formally sanctioned by town ordinance?

TNR proponents state that nuisance behavior will be diminished if TNR is implemented. Behaviors such as fighting and vocal expressions may subside with TNR, but cats using sand boxes, flower beds and other personal property as litter pans and other undesirable behaviors will persist. Will Mount Olive require permission from surrounding property owners before TNR is started in an area? What happens if bears, skunks, raccoons, coyotes and other wildlife are attracted to the artificial food source? Will the TNR colony take precedence over the native creatures struggling to survive? Is Mount Olive prepared to deal with the pet cats that are abandoned at colonies because the Town has created an "ideal" place for cat dumping? Will Mount Olive allow displaced cats from other areas to be relocated to Mount Olive's TNR colonies? This is a common but unpublicized occurrence in the TNR community that is not usually considered when contemplating TNR.

Feral cats rarely die from old age. The average life span of a feral cat is greatly reduced due to the severe conditions these cats face on a daily basis. From fleas and ticks to severe weather, automobiles, and predation by other animals, the life of a feral cat is never easy. Feral cats often suffer from injuries that never receive medical attention. If the injury is severe enough the cat will linger and die a horrible death from infection or infestation. Summer time is prime season for flies and open wounds that frequently become home to maggots and the cats are eaten alive. Will the TNR caregivers be held responsible for the medical welfare of all of the cats? What about the implied animal cruelty issues associated with TNR?

The typical identifier in feral cat colonies is left ear tipping. This may show that the cat has been neutered but what about current vaccinations? Can individual cats be recognized in a colony of many similar looking cats? How can vaccination for rabies be ensured when

individuals cannot be distinguished from one another? Most cats cannot be retrapped for vaccinations so even with a positive identification they become a threat for spreading disease when their vaccines expire.

More money and resources should be directed toward traditional animal control efforts to help resolve the feral cat problem. Trapping and removing the cats will work if you can also stop the artificial food source. Giving cats value through required licensing, anti-roaming laws and mandatory spay/neuter requirements will help with the abandonment and over population problems. Opening the door to a very controversial program with no proof of validity is not the option to take and will only cause additional problems down the road.

Thank you for your time and I hope that you seriously consider the negative impacts of TNR while contemplating this very pivotal decision.

Sincerely,



Tim Steinbeiser, Director
Redbud Avian Rehabilitation Center, Inc.