

May 31, 2018

Dear Municipal Official,

Humane Canada is pleased to provide you with a copy of our recently released report: *Cats in Canada 2017: A five-year review of cat overpopulation*. This report presents findings from a follow-up study, five years after the release of our ground-breaking report that first highlighted Canada's cat overpopulation crisis. We conducted surveys of the general population as well as stakeholders involved in animal care (municipalities, humane societies, SPCAs, rescues, spay/neuter groups, TNR groups), asking them about their perception of cat overpopulation and its solutions, and requesting they submit data regarding the number of animals they offer services for. In this way, we have been able to track the evolution of the situation over the last five years.

Our report recommended several actions that municipal organizations can take to address cat overpopulation. We recommend that:

- **Municipalities implement a policy of sterilizing all animals in their care prior to adoption.** While 95% to 100% of respondents from other stakeholders groups sterilize all animals prior to adoption, less than 60% of municipal stakeholders who offer animals for adoption do so. The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines for spay-neuter programs recommends organizations adopting out animals make every effort to spay/neuter 100% of animals prior to adoption, and that surgery be considered as early as six weeks.¹
- **Municipalities provide permanent identification for the animals they offer for adoption, to ensure lost animals can be returned to their owners.** Only 43% of responding municipalities provide permanent ID to animals who are adopted from their facilities. This is much lower than the average of 78% of animal care organizations who provide permanent ID. Responding SPCAs are the leader in this area, with 98% providing permanent ID.
- **Municipal governments provide resources to make spay/neuter accessible in their communities.** Currently charitable organizations, their donors and veterinary partners are funding much of the important work to ensure cats are not reproducing unchecked. Data in the report show that almost half of all the cats taken in by responding animal care organizations are kittens, clearly demonstrating the need to curb the production of entire litters of unwanted felines.

¹ Griffin, B. *et al.* (2016). The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' 2016 Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 249, 165-188. Retrieved from <https://avmajournals.avma.org/toc/javma/249/2>



- **Municipalities communicate, collaborate and strategically align their efforts with other animal welfare stakeholders in their community.** For example, municipalities can partner with local organizations to support educational messages and spay/neuter initiatives with laws, compliance promotion and enforcement. Municipalities can also adopt bylaws and supportive programs with mechanisms to incentivize and provide resources for sterilization.

While *Cats in Canada 2017* reports some improvements in cat overpopulation issues, there is still much that needs to be done. Those with animal mandates – municipalities, humane societies, SPCAs, and other local groups – need to work together across their communities to find the coordinated solutions to finally bring this issue under control.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to discuss the results of our report further.

Sincerely,

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