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PROPOSAL 62

RC 019

The board of directors of Alaska Cat Adoption Team, an all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) Southcentral Alaska-based nonprofit feline rescue, firmly supports the changes noted in Proposal 62 before the Alaska Game Board.

In explaining our support, we should start at the beginning: cats did not domesticate themselves, nor did they create this problem. Humans did. Therefore, it is the responsibility of humans to fix the problem in the most ethical and "humane" way possible.

Most people agree colonies of feral, stray or "community" cats can be a problem. The disagreement is in finding a solution. On one hand you have calls to eradicate the cats, often accompanied by scare tactics with just enough truth to give them credence. On the other you have the "save-them-all" proponents. Logic seems to be that as flawed humans we should take a middle ground. We adamantly support Trap-Neuter-Return methods as an effective tool in the ultimate solution because we have seen first-hand that the current system does not work.

Some people say extermination is the only solution. It is not. The current system, catch-evaluate-euthanize, fails to solve the problem, proven by the ever increasing number of feral and stray cats.

Trap-Neuter-Return is not a solution in of itself. It is part of a solution that includes altering and responsible pet ownership. Education is the key. Alaskans must understand responsible pet ownership means compassionate care and altering of animals. It means understanding you cannot simply feed the cat living under a shed, but must strive to reunite it with its owner, release it to a shelter or rescue or, in the case of a cat that is not adoptable, and with the allowance of TNR, arrange for its altering and vaccination so it is no longer a breeding animal.

All of the reputable feline rescue organizations in Alaska have been in situations where our hands have been tied, and we are unable to help people in the community, as well as the feral cats, because of the existing verbiage in the regulations that prevents us from returning feral cats to their original location. The public is faced with three options: ignore the problem until it is out of control; have the cats killed only to have cats return in six to twelve months; or illegally trap, alter and release the cats, accepting that they will have adult cats with mitigating impact on the environment.

Mitigation of impact is the central goal of TNR. Instead of a never-ending cycle of breeding colonies and killing, TNR promotes attrition, reducing the impact until the impact is negligible. Many cats living in a colony are domestic dumps and strays that could be removed and rehomed. Pulling kittens and young cats that have a good chance at being tamed further reduces the size and impact of the colony. Without the option of returning feral cats, altered and vaccinated, to their community, people are reluctant to tackle the problem of colony cats.

TNR advocates have locally been accused of "seeking permission to establish and maintain colonies of feral cats in Alaska communities." Look around — those colonies are already established and are growing. TNR advocates want to eliminate breeding, illness and starvation in colonies, until they are Eliminated.

Does TNR work? Yes, but it doesn't work alone. As long as we have irresponsible people allowing cats to breed, we will have a problem. TNR is a tool to help solve a problem. In a perfect world, people would take responsibility for their pets, alter them, care for them and in 18 years, search for another.

Proposal 62 outlines the benefits of a TNR program without ignoring that it is not a fix-all solution. Changing this regulation is a positive, small first step towards control and management.

Rescues are standing ready to use the TNR option to reduce the feral cat problem in Alaska, while helping to educate Alaskans about responsible cat ownership. Alaska Cat Adoption Team will do its part in addressing the problem of feral cat colonies in Alaska. We urge the Board of Game to view

TNR as a practical tool to help restore a balance lost because of the irresponsibility of humans. We have the opportunity to make things better for all, and we strongly urge you to approve Proposal 62.