



ORA-Organization for the Rescue of Animals  
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## Submission to the Licensing and Standards Committee

### **Re: Amendments to Municipal Code, Chapter 349, Animals**

My name is Claudia Vecchio and I am the Founder and Chair of ORA-Organization for the Rescue of Animals.

First of all, we are glad that our suggestion contained in ORA's September 13, 2012 Submission to TAS to enact a Trap Neuter and Return program for all healthy feral and stray cats has been accepted as per Article VI, § 349-21. A and B of the Amendments to Municipal Code, Chapter 349.

For many years, TNR programs for feral and stray cats have been implemented in many progressive communities throughout North America and Europe and they have constantly proven to be financially effective and the best system to control cat population.

At a small level we have experienced, first hand, the many positive effects of TNR through the Neighbourhood Cat Watch Program, established in the Fall of 2003 by ORA—Organization for the Rescue of Animals.. Participants to the Neighbourhood Cat Watch Program are vigilant as to new cats roaming their neighborhood and any newly roaming cat is immediately taken to a vet or to a spay and neuter facility for sterilization. The sterilized cats are cared for and regularly fed by animal friendly people in their neighbourhood.

The most positive outcome of the program is that, where implemented, we had no more litters of kittens and the number of adult cats have decreased and often considerably decreased over the years. The cats are healthier looking and calmer.

Community engagement has also generated an increased sense of cooperation among neighbours and a sense of fulfilment as neighbours are successful in protecting the cats in their neighbourhood.

People uncaring about the cats have been anyway pleased that there are no longer mating noises and cats fights at night and that spraying from un-neutered male cats is over.

On a large scale, the proposed spay and neuter program of healthy stray and feral cats in Toronto will have therefore enormous beneficial effects for the community, considerable reducing future costs to taxpayer. Spaying and neutering just two animals avoid the cost of killing thousands down the road. Killing is expensive and it never ends.

Also for today's public sensibility, it is unacceptable to continue killing stray cats when alternative do exist and are in fact more effective in controlling the cat population.

Also cats fulfill very positive community services, by keeping rodents at bay.

Cats have always associated with humans to get food and shelter and humans have welcomed cats as natural control against rodents. This symbiosis is still valid nowadays as Toronto is registering an increase number of rodents ( in the last few years even my real estate clients who live in upscale downtown areas have registered an increased mice problem).

**There are however some minor changes that we think should be made**

1. It would be important to replace “**may**” in § 349-21. A and B with “shall” to read:

*A. The Executive Director shall operate a trap, neuter, return program in respect of any feral cat or feral cat colony and maintain a record of the feral cat's sterilization.*

*B. Any feral cat shall be spayed or neutered by the Executive Director and subsequently released*

Since this is a very positive program that will generate very positive results, we should not leave it to the discretion of the Executive Director to avoid the possibility that future Executive Directors decide to no longer implement it.

2. Also we propose to amend § 349-21. C as follows:

*A feral cat shall be euthanized without delay upon a determination that the cat is irremediably suffering made in writing and signed by a veterinarian licensed to practice medicine in this state. That certification shall be made available for free public inspection for no less than three years.*

*A feral cat is irremediably suffering if he/she has a medical condition with a poor or grave prognosis for being able to live without severe, unremitting pain even with prompt and necessary medical care, as determined by a veterinarian licensed to practice in this state*

Similarly we propose to amend § 349.- 20 as follows:

*A cat seized under § 349-19 shall be euthanized without delay upon a determination that the cat is irremediably suffering made in writing and signed by a veterinarian licensed to practice medicine in this state. That certification shall be made available for free public inspection for no less than three years.*

*The seized cat is irremediably suffering if he/she has a medical condition with a poor or grave prognosis for being able to live without severe, unremitting pain even with prompt and necessary medical care, as determined by a veterinarian licensed to practice in this state.*

For the amendments to § 349-21. C and to § 349.- 20 A I have consulted with Nathan Winograd, the illustrious attorney, leader of the US No-Kill Advocacy Center and Nathan Winograd, himself, has formulated these two amendments.

Close attention should be given so not to apply laxer rules for the euthanasia of feral cats. Many cats act "feral" in a shelter, especially when, being indoor-only cats, got out and got caught in a trap. Therefore to practice laxer rules when it comes to euthanize feral cats, would not only result in the mass killing of feral cats, it will also result in the mass killing of people's cherished cats.

**Another important amendment.**

We are proposing that the wording “registered with Toronto Animal Services” should be removed from Article I ,  
Definitions § 349-1

*RESCUE GROUP –A not-for-profit or charitable organization, **registered with Toronto Animal Services,** whose mandate and practices are predominately the rescue and placement of animals, and facilitating the spaying or neutering of animals, for animal welfare purposes.*

A non for profit rescue group or a registered charity receive their status from the Ontario and/or from the Federal Government. Registration with Toronto Animal Services cannot be seen as a condition to be considered a “ rescue group”. A part from being unnecessary the registration with TAS may pose the risk that rescue groups find themselves obliged to be acquiescent to TAS policies in order to maintain their registration status with TAS. This violates any democratic rules.

Finally we were hoping that Toronto would have joined more progressive cities in making it unlawful to tether dogs on private properties.

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