

Neighborhood/Community Affairs Committee Meeting
November 19, 2012

Follow Up Report On The Progress Of The Cat Network's Efforts In The City Of Miami Beach. (Originally A Discussion Regarding Prohibition Of Cat Feeding In Miami Beach City Parks).

*Commission Item C4J, March 21, 2012
(Requested by Commissioner Tobin)*

Lynn Bernstein, Community Resource Coordinator

ITEM #6



MIAMI BEACH

City of Miami Beach, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, Florida 33139, www.miamibeachfl.gov

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Neighborhood and Community Affairs Committee

FROM: Kathie G. Brooks, Interim City Manager

DATE: November 19, 2012

SUBJECT: The Cat Network, Inc. Spay and Neuter Services in the City of Miami Beach

Background

Feral cats have been known to live in the City of Miami Beach in varying numbers since 1912. In that year, JN Lummus introduced cats into the community as a way of attacking rats. After that situation was resolved, the City was left with a feral cat population. Over the years the City has worked with organizations that have assisted in controlling the population by introducing spay and neuter programs. Due to allegations of hookworm caused by the feral cat population in Miami Beach in 2010, the City has aggressively formed partnerships to address methods to manage the current population of feral cats and to reduce the numbers over time through the implementation of enhanced spay and neuter programs.

The Mayor and City Commission at its September 14, 2011 meeting, passed and adopted Resolution No. 2011-27007, which retroactively approved and authorized the City Manager, or his/her designee, to submit an application to PetSmart Charities® in the approximate amount of \$80,000 to assist in funding the City's feral cat spay/neuter program. The City submitted an application to PetSmart Charities®. for funding to continue and expand the feral cat spay/neuter program that had been implemented with The Cat Network, Inc.

The free-roaming cat grant offered by PetSmart Charities® provides funding, strategic planning and mentoring for a comprehensive trap-neuter-return (TNR) program for free-roaming cats. The goal is to build a program that is community-wide in scope, effective in reducing the local feral and stray cat population, efficient in its use of resources, measurable in impact and sustainable over a period of years to come.

The Cat Network, Inc. (CN) is a 501(c)3, incorporated in December 1995 and is dedicated to reducing the overpopulation of stray and feral cats in South Florida through the humane practice of sterilization, vaccination, and return. It also dedicated to providing low-cost spay/neuter services for stray, homeless and abandoned cats; helping members in their efforts to place adoptable cats in loving homes; and advocating non-lethal population control and humane public policy.

The Cat Network, Inc. is the only local organization that does this service routinely and on the scale required by the City's program. As a non-profit volunteer organization, Cat Network absorbs all the costs other than the surgery itself – the biggest cost being trapping, but also includes expenses such as gas, insurance, medications and materials. The costs associated with the Cat Network's services for spay/neutering will be funded by PetSmart Charities®.

The City has been collaborating with the Cat Network for approximately three (3) years to address animal issues in the community, namely spay and neutering of feral cats. Over these years, the City and The Cat Network, Inc. have held monthly spay and neutering events that yielded an average of 40 surgeries per event.

The Cat Network, Inc. first brought its mobile surgical unit, the Miami Meow Mobile, to Miami Beach in March 2009 providing low cost spay and neuter services to Miami Beach for pets, strays and feral cats. For the past three years, the Cat Network had been receiving the City's annual allocation that had been identified to sterilize stray and feral cats (\$5,000). From September 26, 2010 until The Cat Network entered into an agreement with the City of Miami Beach to implement a program utilizing the PetSmart Grant, 715 stray and feral cats were sterilized in Miami Beach.

In addition to the City funding, The Cat Network, Inc. secures other resources to fund the costs of the spay/neuter mobile unit used to provide this service (and the reduced fee charged by the Veterinarian). The City has worked closely with The Cat Network, Inc. to identify dates, locations (for the placement of the mobile unit, as well as storage of trapped and treated cats) and additional funds to expand this effort. The goal of both the City and The Cat Network, Inc. has been to secure funding to sterilize 1000 cats per year. The PetSmart Charities® Grant program was identified as an opportunity to continue the partnership between the City and The Cat Network, Inc. to this reach this goal. The City applied for this grant in partnership with The Cat Network.

Following a grant submittal, on October 11, 2011, the City received notification that it had been selected to receive the requested grant amount (\$40,000 per year for two years, or a total of \$80,000). Staff worked with the City Attorney's office on the particulars of the grant agreement. The grant agreement with PetSmart Charities® was executed by the City on March 9, 2012. A Professional Services Agreement between the City of Miami Beach and The Cat Network, Inc. was approved by the City Commission and executed on April 9, 2012. Spay and neuter services began in May 2012.

The Cat Network, Inc. has spayed/neutered 665 community cats in the City of Miami Beach during the months of May, June, July, August, September and October 2012. This puts them in line with the goal of sterilizing 1,000 cats in the first year of the two year agreement to sterilize 2,000 cats. The program began by concentrating efforts in the North Shore Open Space Park area based on requests from the community to address the large number of free roaming cats. Beginning in January 2013, efforts will be shifted to the South Pointe Park neighborhood. In addition to trapping cats in the area, residents can schedule appointments to bring in their pets.

The success of the program is dependant on the partnership and cooperation of the PetSmart Charities, Inc., The Cat Network, Inc. and the many cat feeders who routinely feed the colonies of cats throughout Miami Beach. The majority of cat feeders are independent of The Cat Network. The City has developed a program to educate cat feeders as to the rules that regulate cat feeding and litter control. A flier "Caring for Animals" is distributed by Code Compliance and Greenspace Management. The flier refers to City Code Section 46-92 as pertains to Litter Control and No Trespassing in the Dunes. It is legal for people to feed cats in the City of Miami Beach, but they must comply with the rules that mandate that the feeder stay with the cat while eating and that

the food and materials must be picked up as soon as the cat is finished eating. Food cannot be placed directly on the ground, including on leaves or plants. When using plates, cans or containers, these objects must be removed. The flier provides information to the feeders to connect them to the trap, neuter and release program (TNR) and encourages their participation in the program.

The City of Miami Beach Health Advisory Committee at the meeting of October 22, 2012 adopted Recommendations to the City Commissioners Regarding Feral Cats. The recommendations are attached. Although the recommendation summary refers to the Waterfront Protection Committee, no action relevant to cats was taken by that committee.

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Recommendation to the City Commissioners Regarding Feral Cats from the Health Advisory Board

The Issue: Feral Cats are a public health threat. This is a given, not a point of debate, for anyone who educates themselves on this issue. Feral cats carry diseases and parasites which pose serious and potentially fatal risks to adults, children, pets, and the native bird and wildlife populations, such as RABIES and VISCERAL LARVA MIGRANS.* Feral cats stool in the grass and on our beaches. Their feces introduce long lived parasites into the soil and sand that can then spread to residents and tourists who have never come in direct contact with these cats. Local veterinarians state that the application of a monthly product to control disease and parasites could work, but each cat must be treated every month to control the problem - a solution that is likely not feasible. The cats are reproducing which only exacerbates the problem. Finally, the cats compromise the aesthetics of South Pointe Park. The city has spent \$23mm renovating the park, and it is in danger of becoming overrun by feral cats with time. Humane animal societies agree that feral cats must be vaccinated and treated to contain the spread of disease as well as advocate for Treat-Neuter-Release strategies

The Health Advisory Committee proposes 3 action items to the City Commissioners:

- 1. Oppose the establishment of a feral cat feeding area and consider legislation prohibiting it** – Feral cat advocates are presently trying to establish a designated area where these cats can be fed. Such efforts will exacerbate and multiply the public health threat. Not only should a feeding area not be designated, but it should be made illegal to feed feral cats. This will create a mechanism by which repeat offenders can be cautioned and reprimanded.
- 2. Promote Trap-Neuter-Release for existing feral cats by leveraging existing resources** – It is our understanding that the city of Miami Beach has been awarded resources to trap feral cats, and there are numerous local veterinarians who will spay / neuter these animals as a service to the community. The resources are in place already and must now be utilized.
- 3. Cat Network Accountability and Oversight** – An organization termed The Cat Network has taken it upon itself to feed the feral cats and care for them. This organization operates wholly under its own auspices without oversight from the city. The Cat Network claims that all of the feral cats have been spayed and neutered. We find this claim difficult to believe as the empirical evidence suggests otherwise – every year there are more and more cats and while there could be sampling or attribution bias behind that observation – eyewitness accounts of feral kittens irrefutably confirms that these cats are multiplying. You cannot have kittens without multiplying cats. If the Cat Network has spayed and neutered the population, at a minimum the city should periodically review their records to verify that all known members of the cat population have documented sterilizations. If the Cat Network is as diligent and thorough as they claim, we should be able to audit their records to confirm this on a regular basis.

Summary: The Health Advisory Committee is not alone on this issue. Specifically, the Waterfront Protection Committee is trying to address the feral cat threat to our beaches, our homes, and our health. Feral cats are not simply hungry pets who need a meal. We need to address this issue before it grows beyond the ability of the city to control its consequences. In our opinion this is exactly the sort of thing the Health Advisory Committee should be addressing via the three recommendations above.

*Please see attachment for more complete list of communicable diseases.



Zoonotic Disease: What Can I Catch From My Cat?

What is a zoonotic disease?

While most feline infectious diseases affect only cats, and most human infectious diseases affect only humans, it is important to be aware that some of these diseases-called zoonotic diseases-can be transmitted between cats and people. You are much more likely to contract ailments from other humans than you are from your cat. However, simple precautions, common sense, and good hygiene, including careful handling of litter boxes and treating cats with fleas and other parasites, can further reduce the risk of zoonotic disease.

How are zoonotic diseases transmitted?

Transmission of a zoonotic disease can potentially occur when a person comes into direct contact with secretions or excretions-such as saliva or feces-from an infected cat. Additionally, a disease may be contracted through contact with water or food that has been contaminated by an infected cat. Many zoonotic diseases can be transmitted from fleas or ticks (called vectors) to a person or a cat from another animal.

Who is at risk?

Most zoonotic diseases pose minimal threat; however, some humans are particularly at risk. Those with immature or weakened immune systems, such as infants, individuals with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), the elderly, and people undergoing cancer therapy, are more susceptible to zoonotic infections than others.

What are some common zoonotic diseases?

Bacterial Infections

Cat-scratch disease, also called *bartonellosis*, is by far the most common zoonotic disease associated with cats. Approximately 25,000 people are diagnosed every year in the United States. Cat-scratch disease can occur when a person is bitten or scratched by an infected cat. Fleas may also play a role in the transmission of infection. People with cat-scratch disease usually have swollen lymph nodes, especially around the head, neck, and upper limbs. They may also experience fever, headache, sore muscles and joints, fatigue, and poor appetite. Healthy adults generally recover with no lasting effects, but it may take several months for the disease to go away completely. People with compromised immune systems may suffer more severe, even fatal, consequences.

Some healthy cats are continuously or intermittently infected with cat-scratch disease bacteria, but antibiotics do not reliably cure infection in these cats and are not currently recommended. However, avoiding scratches and bites (for example, by not allowing children to play roughly with cats), controlling fleas, and keeping cats indoors all reduce the risk of cat-scratch disease. Because most cases of cat-scratch disease result from contact with kittens, immunosuppressed people should avoid such contact.

Salmonellosis, another common bacterial disease, can cause diarrhea, fever, and stomach pain beginning one to three days after infection. Salmonellosis usually resolves on its own. However, some people require medical attention because the diarrhea is severe or the infection is affecting other organs. People usually get salmonellosis by eating contaminated food, such as undercooked chicken or eggs. However, cats and other animals-even those that appear healthy-can carry and pass salmonella bacteria in their stool. Salmonella bacteria are more commonly harbored by cats that feed on raw meat or wild birds and animals. Feline infection can be prevented by keeping cats indoors and feeding them

cooked or commercially processed food. Human infection can be prevented by wearing gloves and washing hands thoroughly after cleaning litter boxes (especially if used by a cat with diarrhea).

Parasitic Infections

Fleas are the most common external parasite of cats. While fleas cannot thrive on humans, their bites can cause itching and inflammation. Fleas may also serve as vectors for cat-scratch and other zoonotic diseases. Flea-infested cats may become infected with tapeworms from fleas ingested while grooming. Children, albeit rarely, can also become infected with tapeworms from inadvertently ingesting fleas.

Some feline intestinal parasites, including roundworms and hookworms, can also cause disease in people. Children are particularly at risk due to their higher likelihood of contact with contaminated soil. *Visceral larva migrans*, a potentially serious disease that can affect the eyes and other organs, results from inadvertent consumption of roundworm eggs (e.g. when soiled fingers are placed in the mouth). *Cutaneous larva migrans*, an itchy skin disease, is caused by contact with hookworm-contaminated soil. Proper hygiene, including washing hands before meals, cleaning soil from vegetables, and reducing exposure to cat feces (e.g., by covering children's sandboxes when not in use) can prevent infection. Anti-parasite medications for kittens and annual fecal exams for adult cats can reduce environmental contamination and the risk of human infection.

Fungal Infections

Ringworm is not caused by a worm at all; it is a skin infection caused by a group of fungi. Infected cats most often come from environments housing large numbers of animals. In cats, ringworm appears as a dry, gray, scaly patch on the skin. In humans, ringworm often appears as a round, red, itchy lesion with a ring of scale around the edge. Ringworm is transmitted by contact with an infected animal's skin or fur, either directly or from a contaminated environment. Infected cats continuously drop fungal spores from their skin and fur; these spores, which remain capable of causing infection for many months, are difficult to eradicate from a household. Children are particularly at risk of infection. To reduce environmental contamination, confine infected cats to one room until they are free of infection; then thoroughly clean and disinfect the household.

Protozoal Infections

Protozoans are single-celled organisms. The three most common protozoal diseases in cats and humans are *cryptosporidiosis*, *giardiasis*, and *toxoplasmosis*. Cryptosporidiosis and giardiasis can cause diarrhea in both cats and people, who usually become infected by a common source—for example, contaminated water—not by each other. To prevent the spread of infection, schedule annual fecal examinations for your cats, and medicate infected cats as directed by your veterinarian. Other preventive measures include wearing gloves while handling feces-contaminated material, washing hands afterwards, and boiling or filtering any surface water used for drinking.

Toxoplasmosis is caused by the parasitic protozoan *Toxoplasma gondii*. People with weakened immune systems, or infants whose mothers are infected during pregnancy, can develop severe illness. People commonly become infected by eating undercooked or raw meat, or by inadvertently consuming contaminated soil on unwashed or undercooked vegetables. Unfortunately, pregnant women or immunosuppressed individuals are often mistakenly advised to remove cats from the household to reduce the risk of toxoplasmosis. However, people are highly unlikely to become infected from direct contact with their cats.

Cats can become infected by eating infected rodents, birds, or anything contaminated with feces from another infected cat. An infected cat can shed the parasite in its feces for up to two weeks. The parasite must then mature for one to five days before it becomes capable of causing infection. However, it can

persist in the environment for many months and continue to contaminate soil, water, gardens, sandboxes, or any place where an infected cat has defecated.

Basic hygiene can prevent toxoplasmosis. Wear gloves when handling potentially contaminated material (for example, when gardening or handling raw meat), and be sure to wash your hands afterwards. Avoid eating undercooked meat, and thoroughly wash fruit and vegetables before eating. Surface water should be boiled or filtered prior to drinking, and children's sandboxes should be covered when not in use to prevent wandering cats from defecating in them. Scoop litter boxes daily while wearing gloves, and wash your hands afterwards. Pregnant women or immunosuppressed individuals are safest when other household members clean the litter box.

Viral Infections

Most viruses infect only their natural host species. Human viruses, like those that cause the common cold, infect only humans, while feline immunodeficiency virus, feline infectious peritonitis virus, and feline leukemia virus infect only cats. However, one virus that can be passed from cats to humans is rabies, a viral disease resulting from the bite of an infected animal. Cats are highly susceptible to rabies, which attacks the central nervous system, causing a variety of signs. Rabies is almost always fatal. In people, rabies infections usually occur when an infected animal bites a person. In order to protect human health, rabies vaccination of cats is required by law in many areas. Even if your cat is kept indoors, it is important to keep rabies vaccines current because cats occasionally escape outdoors, and because rabid animals such as bats and raccoons occasionally enter houses. To further reduce your risk of rabies, avoid contact with wildlife and stray animals. See a doctor immediately if you have been bitten by an animal.

What can I do to protect my cat and myself?

Common sense and good hygiene will go a long way toward keeping you, your family, and your cat free of zoonotic diseases. Here are a few simple precautions:

- . Wash hands before eating and after handling cats.
- . Schedule annual checkups and fecal exams for your cat.
- . Seek veterinary care for sick cats.
- . Keep rabies vaccinations current.
- . Maintain appropriate flea and tick control.
- . Avoid letting your cat lick your face, food utensils, or plate.
- . Consider keeping cats indoors.
- . Seek medical attention for cat bites.
- . Feed cats cooked or commercially processed food.
- . Scoop litter boxes to remove fecal material daily.
- . Periodically clean litter boxes with scalding water and detergent.
- . Wear gloves when gardening or handling raw meat; wash hands afterwards.
- . Cover children's sandboxes when not in use.
- . Wash fruits and vegetables before eating.
- . Filter or boil surface water before consuming.
- . Cook meat to 160°F or 80°C (medium-well-done).

* * * * *

This brochure was prepared by the American Association of Feline Practitioners and the Cornell Feline Health Center, Cornell University, College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, New York 14853-6401. The center is committed to improving the health of cats by developing methods to prevent or cure feline diseases and by providing continuing education to veterinarians and cat owners. Much of

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