

FERALS CATS IN LILLOOET A GROWING CONCERN

LILLOOET REGIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES
SOCIETY AGM



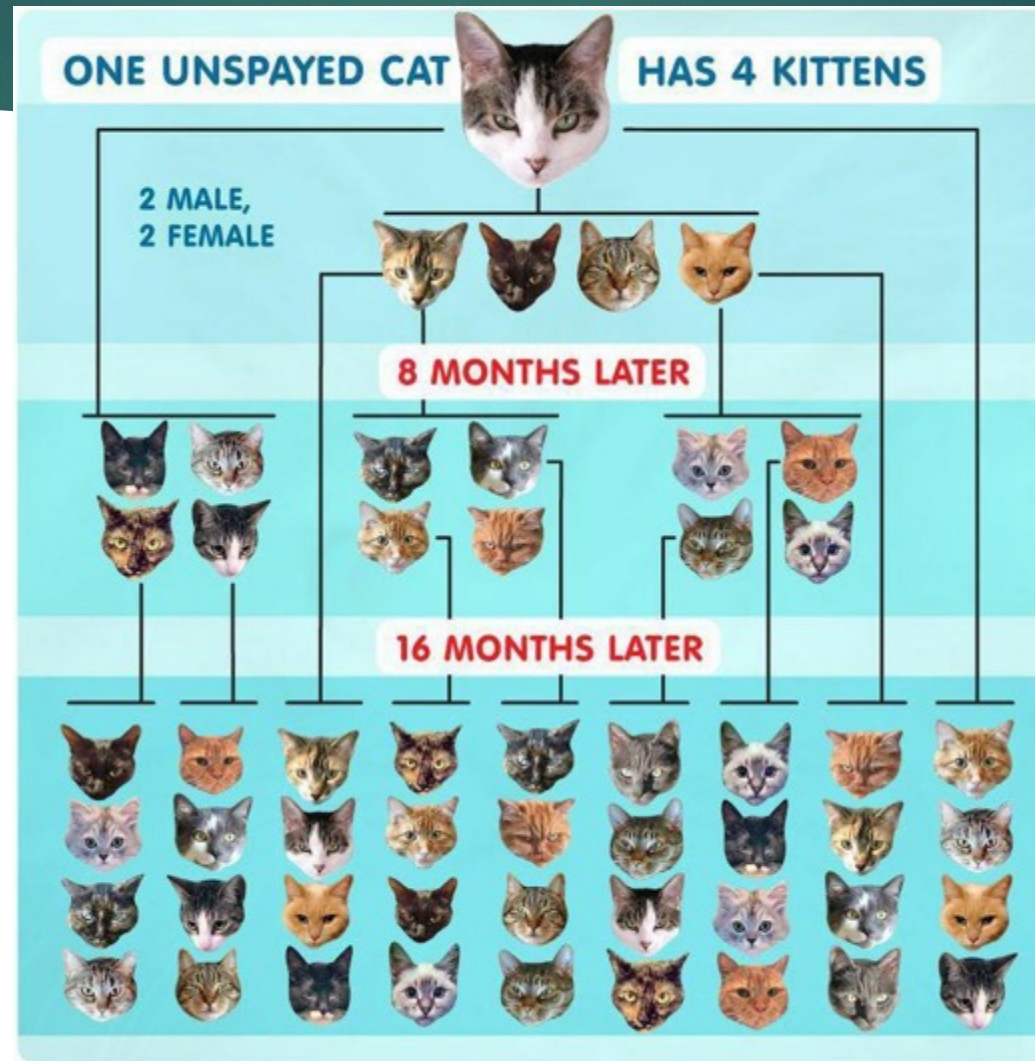
How are Cats an Invasive Species ?

- ▶ An Invasive species is an organism that is not indigenous, or native to a particular area.
- ▶ Such species can cause great economic and environmental damage to the area it is introduced to.
- ▶ To be invasive means that the species must adapt easily and reproduce quickly.
- ▶ It must upset the balance by causing harm to the environment, the native plants and animals of the region.
- ▶ Some invasives have been introduced as a form of pest control or as pets to provide companionship & comfort...without anticipating the exact consequences if managed improperly.

EXAMPLE

- ▶ In 1949, 5 cats were brought over to the Marion Islands, a part of South Africa in the southern Indian ocean.
- ▶ The cats were introduced as a form of pest control for mice.
- ▶ By 1977 approximately 3400 cats were living on the island.
- ▶ Endangering the local bird populations.

THE REALITY



CAT REPRODUCTION FACTS

- ▶ Cats are seasonally polyestrous, meaning they will go into heat and look to breed multiple times a season (2-3 times a year)
- ▶ They are induced ovulators so they do not go out of heat until bred.
- ▶ Each female can have 2-3 litters a year and litter size can be up to 6 kittens.
- ▶ Both males and females can start breeding as early as 4 months old.

ITS NOT JUST A FERAL PROBLEM

- ▶ Outdoor cats fall into 3 categories – Feral, stray or domestic
- ▶ Feral cats have not had human contact or very little and likely not good interactions. They have adapted to survive outside and are likely not spay or neutered.
- ▶ Stray cats are either lost or abandoned pets who reproduce and create ferals.
- ▶ Domestic cats are peoples pets who if unmanaged can procreate with both strays or ferals.

WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM

- ▶ Noisy fighting for territory
- ▶ Spraying, urinating and defecating on peoples property
- ▶ The spread of fleas.
- ▶ The spread of diseases – Rabies, plague, ringworm, toxoplasmosis (which can damage the human nervous system especially in infants), mumps, feline leukemia and distemper as well as the Parvovirus which is transferable to humans can bring about various respiratory illnesses with symptoms such as nasal and eye discharge, coughing, nausea and diarrhea

WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM?

- ▶ And of course the inevitable breeding issues which cause much suffering for both the pregnant mothers as well as the helpless kittens who are most vulnerable.



A NUISANCE TO WILDLIFE...

- ▶ Cats are natural hunters and hunt even when not hungry.
- ▶ They may be good at reducing the mouse population but are also fond of birds.
- ▶ As they grow in number, they compete for the available food sources which are also food for carrion birds, raccoons, coyotes etc.
- ▶ They can actually be a wildlife attractant as they too are food, bringing predators closer to town.

CAT HOARDERS

- ▶ What could have started from compassionate care for cats can soon become unmanageable.
- ▶ A home overrun with cats can destroy drywall, insulation and wood floors.
- ▶ The saturation of urine can produce ammonia which is toxic to breathe in for the home owner and occupants.
- ▶ The cost to clean, repair or demolish a home belonging to a cat hoarder is often too high for the occupant or owner.

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE

- ▶ Mental health implications – why has nobody offered to help? or what resources are available to those who need it? (community disconnect at the heart of the matter)
- ▶ The rising cases of compassion fatigue for animal care givers who just can't do it alone or meet the needs of so many un managed and uncared for strays, abandoned pets and ferals who often have a short life of suffering (average 3-5 years if lucky)
- ▶ The prevalence of animal cruelty and people taking the issue into their own hands by killing cats, relocating them to die a horrible death.

ANIMAL RIGHTS & THE LAW

What are the Five Freedoms?

The BC SPCA believes that all animals should enjoy, as a minimum, five essential freedoms, which were first described by the Farm Animal Welfare Council of the UK:

- ▶ Freedom from hunger and thirst
- ▶ Freedom from pain, injury and disease
- ▶ Freedom from distress
- ▶ Freedom from discomfort
- ▶ Freedom to express behaviours that promote well-being

ANIMAL CRUELTY

The BC SPCA derives its powers to investigate and take action in instances of animal cruelty from the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA Act).

It is the only animal welfare organization in B.C. with the authority to enforce laws relating to animal cruelty and to recommend charges to Crown Counsel for the prosecution of those who inflict suffering on animals.



CRIMINAL CODE OF CANADA

It is a crime in Canada to intentionally harm animals. Anyone who deliberately harms animals can be charged under the Criminal Code of Canada.

The Criminal Code of Canada deals specifically with cruelty to animals in sections 444 to 447.

Our Cruelty Investigations team can recommend charges for Crown Counsel for the prosecution of individuals who inflict suffering on animals under the Criminal Code of Canada.

IN LILLOOET

- ▶ I have been working on cat control since November of 2018
- ▶ On average I receive 20 complaints a month from home owners about the presence of too many cats being a nuisance.
- ▶ I have to write a response letter to every complaint I receive which is time consuming for my part time hours.
- ▶ With the help of a few community members, the cooperation with our local vet and the BCSPCA Sea to Sky Branch I have coordinated, **cared for, rehabilitated and saved close to 100 cats.**

LOCAL STATS EXPLAINED

- ▶ 50% of those saved, rescued or trapped have been kittens born outside.
- ▶ 30 % were abandoned domestics who have been spay or neutered then if re-home-able were either adopted or sent to the BCSPCA.
- ▶ 20% were feral, they also were treated with the same respect and dignity – received vet care, deworming, treated for ear mites, spay or neutered then released so as not to create the vacuum effect.

SCIENCE



THE VACUUM EFFECT



Intact cat
living inside
the territory

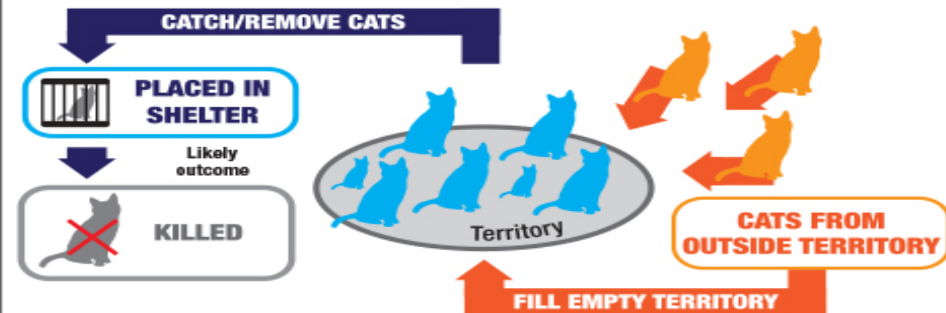


Intact cat
from outside
the territory

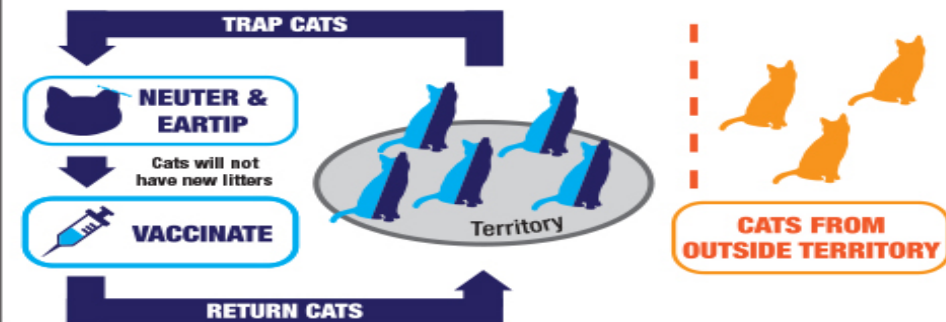


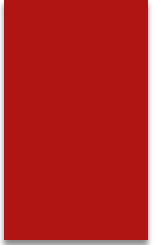
Neutered
cat living in
the territory

CATCH AND KILL – INEFFECTIVE



TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN – EFFECTIVE





Removing cats from an area by killing or relocating them is not only cruel—it's pointless. Animal control agencies and city governments have blindly perpetuated this futile approach for decades. But scientific research, years of failed attempts, and evidence from animal control personnel prove that catch and kill doesn't permanently clear an area of cats.

Scientific evidence indicates that removing feral cat populations only opens up the habitat to an influx of new cats, either from neighboring territories or born from survivors. Each time cats are removed, the population will rebound through a natural phenomenon known as the “vacuum effect,” drawing the community into a costly, endless cycle of trapping and killing.

The vacuum effect is a phenomenon scientifically recognized worldwide, across all types of animal species

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- ▶ Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return is the responsible, humane method of care for feral cats
- ▶ Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return stabilizes feral cat populations. The cats are humanely trapped, vaccinated, and neutered, so no more kittens will be born. They are then returned to their original location to live out their lives in their outdoor home. Not only is TNVR the humane option for feral cats, it also improves cats' lives by relieving them of the stresses of mating and pregnancy. In the end, unlike catch and kill, TNVR works.
- ▶ A community that cares for the feral colonies so as to manage overpopulation.

SOLUTIONS CONTINUED

- ▶ Don't contribute to the problem – **Have your pets spay or neutered**, consider keeping your cats indoors or build a fenced in enclosure. Be a responsible pet owner. If you need help you may be eligible for the low cost spay/ neuter program where you pay 40\$ plus cost of the vaccination included in the vets bundle and the District Spay / Neuter fund pays the balance.
- ▶ Don't feed and forget – if you feed cats, you are inviting them to stay. If they stay they will also require healthcare. If you can't manage ongoing care then consider how compassion can become careless.
- ▶ If you want to help by feeding then connect with the right agencies – BCSPCA, Lillooet Animal Control officer and the Local Vet.

VOLUNTEER

- ▶ Volunteer your time, effort or resources.
- ▶ Help educate others about the importance of being a responsible pet owner.
- ▶ Refer others to resources that may help them be better pet owners.
- ▶ Write letters, apply for grants, help with fundraisers.
- ▶ Offer to care for nursing mother cats until the kittens are weaned.
- ▶ Provide pre- opp or post operative care for newly spayed or neutered cats who need time to recover.
- ▶ Provide transportation for kittens to be rehomed outside the district.

LILLOOET
GUARANTEED RUGGED

