

Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee

Report

The 6th Meeting of the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee
June 1, 2023

Attendance PRESENT: W. Brown (Chair), M. Blosch, A. Hames, M. Toplack

ABSENT: K. Coulter, H. Duhamel, G. Leckie

ALSO PRESENT: S. Corman, W. Jeffery, O. Katolyk, M. McBride

The meeting was called to order at 3:04.

1. Call to Order

1.1 Disclosures of Pecuniary Interest

That it BE NOTED that no pecuniary interests were received.

3. Consent

3.1 5th Report of the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee

That it BE NOTED that the 5th Report of the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee, from its meeting held May 4, 2023, was received.

3.2 Municipal Council Resolution – 4th Report of the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee

That it BE NOTED that the Municipal Council Resolution, from its meeting held on May 16, 2023, with respect to the 4th meeting of the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee, was received.

4. Sub-Committees and Working Groups

None.

5. Items for Discussion

5.1 Bird Friendly Window Collision Tape Update

That it BE NOTED that the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee held a general discussion with respect to the bird friendly window collision tape.

5.2 Goldfish Brochure Draft Recommendations

That the following actions be taken with respect to the attached report from the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee Sub-Committee:

a) that the above-noted report BE FORWARDED to the Environmental Stewardship and Action Community Advisory Committee (ESACAC);

b) that ESACAC BE REQUESTED to consider the following actions from the above-noted report:

i) the recommendations;

- ii) the proposed language for the brochure;
- iii) the image from the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority signage; and,
- iv) the example from the Province of Alberta's Don't Let it Loose Campaign.

it being further noted that the above-noted report from the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee Sub-Committee, was received.

5.3 Green Week Collection and Migratory Birds Update

That it BE NOTED that the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee heard a verbal update from W. Brown, with respect to the green week collection and the migratory birds update.

5.4 Clear Your Gear Status Update

That it BE NOTED that the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee heard a verbal update from O. Katolyk, Director, Municipal Compliance, regarding a Clear Your Gear status update; it being further noted that this matter will be deferred to next meeting.

6. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:47 PM.

Report from Sub-Committee to AWCAC Meeting June 1, 2023

Comments on Proposed Goldfish Brochure

Background

At the April AWCAC meeting, a draft brochure titled “Protecting our waterways” was discussed. The brochure was prepared by the City’s Ecological Community Advisory Committee and submitted to AWCAC for comments. AWCAC members made some editorial comments and raised two issues. The editorial comments were:

1. The title “Protecting our waterways” does not indicate that the information is about goldfish.
2. The sign in the photo is too small to read.
3. The photo of the goldfish needs some text to explain that these fish can grow very large. A reader might assume they are different types of fish.
4. Include stormwater ponds as a place where infestations currently occur. These ponds are near homes and are an attractive place to release a pet fish because the kids can “visit” their fish. Goldfish are routinely captured and killed when these ponds are drained for maintenance or cleaning.
5. The three references to fish as “it” should be deleted because fish are not inanimate objects. Using plurals allows “it” to be changed to “them”.

The two issues discussed by AWCAC members focused on whether the brochure should include a list of alternative fish to purchase instead of goldfish, and a proposal by a member of the Ecological Community Advisory Committee to include information about euthanizing unwanted goldfish. These issues were referred to the AWCAC Sub-Committee. Brendan Samuels, Chair of the Ecological Community Advisory Committee, attended the May AWCAC meeting as a delegation to discuss these issues.

Recommendation

The AWCAC Sub-Committee has two recommendations:

- Delete the suggestion to purchase other types of fish.

Like goldfish, these other species should not be released into waterways as they also cause problems and will likely die.

The suggestion to purchase African Dwarf Frogs is particularly troublesome as they are often sold in inhumanely small plastic containers inaccurately described as “biospheres” or “frogospheres”.

Instead of suggesting alternative species to buy, more information about the lifespan of a goldfish and the difficulty of re-homing should be included to encourage people to think about the consequences of acquiring a fish as a pet.

- Omit information on euthanasia.

The AWCAC Sub-Committee looked at materials used in other jurisdictions and is including those used in Alberta as a good example because they are informative and easy to read.

The AWCAC Sub-Committee feels strongly that it is beyond the role and scope of advisory committees to recommend euthanizing an unwanted pet. Further, advising someone on how to “humanely” euthanize a pet is fraught with problems if performed by pet owners. It may result in unintended suffering for the animal, is considered cruel, and must be performed by trained veterinarians.

Rather, we recommend a preventative approach such as highlighting the consequences of acquiring goldfish. Information on how to re-home them if necessary and other considerations that should be given careful thought before purchasing a goldfish should be included in the brochure.

Proposed Language for Brochure

Is a Goldfish the Right Pet for You?

Goldfish might seem like inexpensive, easy to keep, and fun starter pets for kids. But they are not for everyone.

- A goldfish is not a temporary pet. They need proper care for their entire lifespan of five, ten or even more years.
- A bowl is not an appropriate container. It costs money to set up an aquarium and buy essential equipment like a gravel vacuum, filter, heater and air pump, all of which run on electricity.
- Caring for goldfish is more than just feeding. You must regularly clean the aquarium and test the water chemistry. Sick goldfish need special care.
- Aquariums are not portable. Someone will have to come to your house to take care of your goldfish while you are away.
- It may be difficult to find a new home for your goldfish if you cannot care for them. Goldfish should never be flushed or released in a pond or waterway. Killing a pet for convenience is never right.

Signage

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and the City of London have posted signs saying do not release goldfish. This was posted at Sifton Bog:



Alberta's "Don't Let It Loose" Campaign

In 2015, in response to large numbers of goldfish in stormwater ponds, Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) launched a "Don't Let It Loose" campaign. Educational materials included a poster and leaflets on several species. A screen capture of the poster, general brochure, and specific brochure about goldfish are included in this report for reference. In addition to a catchy slogan (we would prefer "Don't Let Them Loose"), they have interesting graphics and a fair amount of information. There is no mention of alternative species to buy or euthanasia.



DON'T LET IT LOOSE

Never release aquarium or domestic pond water, plants, dead or live animals into waterbodies. Common aquarium and pond plants and animals can become invasive when released in the wild, potentially causing both ecologic and economic harm.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON INVASIVE SPECIES, CALL:
1-855-336-BOAT (2628)





Never release aquarium or domestic pond water, plants, dead or live animals into waterbodies. Common aquarium and pond plants and animals can become invasive when released in the wild, altering habitat, increasing competition for limited resources and spreading disease to native species.

- Releasing fish or other aquatic species is illegal and can result in large fines, or even jail time!
- Goldfish populations have been found throughout Alberta. They are surviving the winter, altering water quality, and reproducing rapidly.
- Pour unwanted aquarium water over dry land and freeze aquarium plants before throwing them in the garbage.
- Unwanted pets can be disposed of humanely by returning them to pet stores, donating to schools or community organizations or given away.
- Make sure to bury your fish after it passes away – flushing it down the toilet can lead to the spread of unwanted diseases.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES, CALL:

1-855-336-BOAT (2628)

ISBN 978-1-4601-2566-3 (Print)
ISBN 978-1-4601-2567-0 (PDF)
Printed: February 2018



Alberta
Government

GOLDFISH

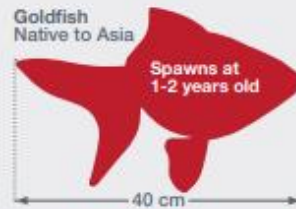
(CARASSIUS AURATUS)



Bull Trout
Native to Alberta



Goldfish
Native to Asia



100+ LOCATIONS
across Alberta where goldfish
have been **illegally dumped**

45,000

Number of goldfish removed
in 2017 from storm water
ponds in St. Albert

Goldfish in the wild:

- ↑ increase water cloudiness, blocking light
- ↑ increase the growth rate of blue-green algae
- ↓ reduce native plants that produce oxygen
- ☠ carry exotic diseases and parasites

Average number of eggs
laid by a single female
in a spawning period



- What to do with unwanted goldfish?**
- Donate to a friend or school
 - Return them to the pet store



Don't flush your fish!
Goldfish carry diseases
that could harm native fish
Bury them instead



**DON'T
LET IT
LOOSE**

Help us protect Alberta's
waters by never releasing
aquarium water, plants and
animals into the environment.

Alberta