

Subject: By-law to remove exemption for rescue group fosters

Hi Maureen

I am frustrated by the City's continual eroding of Animal protection. I understand that Salt was unfortunate enough to be caught in a fire - but has anyone (City Councillors, City Animal Welfare Co-ordinator, anyone) taken the time to understand the depth of the cat issue in the city? If a rescue group doesn't want the strays or surrenders to end up dead in the pound (70% live exit is not a good number of saved lives- and certainly doesn't qualify as a No Kill Shelter) then the rescues put themselves at risk by taking in more than they would like. I have had many calls to say that tenants have left during the night, leaving the cats behind with no food or water. What are we supposed to do - turn away and say "Not my problem".

The exemption for fosters was hard-fought and in a perfect world, there would be enough shelter space, to place all these unfortunate cats. But there isn't. Seniors going into long-term care or dying and the family often don't have space for Mom or Dad's cats. The Humane Society charges the person who surrenders their cat (and they are not No Kill either); persons going into emergency shelter have no where to place their animals neither do people undergoing treatment. This doesn't even come close to the number of people who just turf out a female in heat or a pregnant cat - abandoning them to the streets because of the expense of spaying and their own challenges to get a cat to the City Vet (good idea by the way). This is not a cat problem it is a people problem. Someone has to Care!

Those someones are usually Rescues. True rescues are not wealthy, scrabbling for a few donations, with no nice buildings to showcase their charges, no discounts from vets, food companies etc. This makes life very difficult for rescues. The better a rescue is known, the more calls they get. We have, in the past, worked with people who had huge numbers of cats (it spirals, you take in one - guess what she's pregnant, then in 5 months the male kittens get the female ones pregnant now you have 35 in your apartment) Paying for that many spay/neuters would bankrupt a middle class person overnight. We were fortunate that we did work with the City (even in court) to allow us time to get the numbers under control. Vet spays/neuters, shots, it was a huge job. The couple should not have been continually charged for having too many cats. Never did the City offer to help!! Then came disaster - one of the couple died and the other had mental health issues and SALT took in their last 12. They got no City support for food or shelter. A large group of surrenders, takes so many resources, that they probably didn't have. But again, Where is the compassion, instead, there is a heavy penalty from the powers that be.

Why would the City take away Everyone's exemption because one rescue was caught with too many cats. Maybe the rules should be amended to allow for MORE cats, not fewer. It would take more cats off the streets, alleviate a lot of cat suffering and relieve rescues of constantly looking over their shoulders to see if By-Law control is coming with the big stick. The pound gets 2.8 million dollars a year of our money and still kills 30% of the cats they pick up. The rescues get ZERO financial support and try their best to rehab and rehome all the cats they get. Where is the justice? Where is the compassion? Answer - there is none, only support to prop up the "institutions".

Where will all the "extra" confiscated cats go? The pound? They will be out of space so they will have to dump them onto a rescue in Toronto, like last time, or kill them (but only the old, cranky, pregnant ones - good thing they are not in charge of long-term care).

This is extremely unfair and the exemption for all rescues should be left as it is. Maybe some financial help for the poorer rescues with large numbers of cats in their care would be a more compassionate option. Time to drop the big stick approach.

Sandra Leckie
Animal Outreach Cat Rescue