

Our Community Plan Submission Form

Instructions

Please read before completing your submission

It will help us process your submission if you clearly state the issue you want the Council to consider, what specific action you think the Council should take, and why that should be done.

If you wish, you can present your submission at a hearing. (If that is the case, please tick the box). The hearings will be held between Thursday 25 May and Wednesday 7 June 2006. Generally, 10 minutes are allocated for hearing each submission, including time for questions.

It will help us if your submission also refers to the page of either the full version or the summary version.

Please note: We are legally required to make all written or electronic submissions available to Councillors and to the public. This includes the name and address of the submitter. All submissions will be published on the Council's website from 10 May 2006.

No anonymous submissions will be accepted.

You may send us your submission:

By mail

Please mail your submission (no stamp is required) to:

Freepost 178
Our Community Plan
Christchurch City Council
PO Box 237
Christchurch 8003

By email

Please email your submission to:

ccc-plan@ccc.govt.nz

Please make sure that your full name and address is included with your submission.

On the internet

You may enter your submission using the form provided on the Council's web site at

http://www.ccc.govt.nz

Please follow all the instructions on the web site.

Please remember to indicate if you wish to present your submission in person at one of the hearings.

Please ensure your submission arrives no later than Friday 5 May 2006.

Your submission

You may use this form for your submission on our draft Community Plan if you wish. Whether you use this form or not, please include your name, address and contact telephone number with your submission.

Tick one I do NOT wish to present my submission at the hearing, and ask that this written submission be considered OR I wish to talk to the main points in my written submission at the hearings to be held between Thursday 25 May and Wednesday 7 June 2006

Are you completing this submission: For yourself On behalf of a group or organisation

If you are representing a group or organisation, how many people do you represent? About 12

My submission refers to: Full version Page No. Summary version 14 Page No.

Do you also want to respond to: Development Contributions Aquatic Facilities Other

Contact Name Ray Spring
 Organisation name (if applicable) Christchurch Cat Control Campaign
 Contact Address 17, Huntsbury Avenue,
Christchurch, 2
 Phone No. (day) 981-92-14 Phone No. (evening) same as day
 Email (if applicable) raylois.spring@paradise.net.nz
 Signature [Signature] Date 25 April 2006

CHRISTCHURCH CAT CONTROL CAMPAIGN

As I was going to St. Ives, I met a man with seven wives,
Each wife had seven cats, each cat had seven kits,
Kits, cats, man and wives, how many were going to St. Ives?

There were 56 felines per wife. Seven wives results in 392 felines. Only one person was going to St. Ives as the local council had evicted the chap, wives and cats. They were leaving St. Ives. If St Ives was able to deal with their cat problem so many years ago, Christchurch should be able to solve our cat problem today. Funds should be allocated by the Council in this community plan, 2006 to 16, for cat control in Christchurch.

The experience of overseas councils should be sought so that a fair control system can be implemented. A proposed strategy for South Australia is attached, but I do not know if it was implemented. I understand that a number of Australian cities have cat control programmes in place now. The proposals for South Australia were simple. Each cat to be desexed and those not desexed to be registered and only owned by breeders. All cats to have ownership tagging fitted to the cat, microchip or collar. Trapped cats with ownership information to be returned to the owners, the rest to be euthanized.

The Christchurch City Council has responsibilities to both cat owners and those who do not own cats. Non cat owners should be able to enjoy their garden and wildlife without it being destroyed by cats. The Christchurch Cat Control Campaign proposals are:

- 1/. A night curfew, during darkness.
- 2/. No more than 1 cat per house.
- 3/. All cats, apart from breeders cats, to be desexed.
- 4/. Microchip cats with owners details, the owner being responsible to keep the information on the microchip up to date.
- 5/. Trap and euthanize any cats breaking the curfew, microchip or not, and euthanize cats trapped without a microchip during daylight hours.

6/. Cat owners to make their sections cat proof to prevent their cats wandering.

7/. Possible annual registration of cats to pay for any cat control costs. Typical fee \$100.00 for the first cat, \$200.00 for the second

8/. Christchurch City Council to supply cat traps to residents and to dispose of any trapped cats. A big problem for residents who trap cats is how to dispose of them. The Council should arrange disposal.

9/. Parks, reserves etc., to have any trespassing cats trapped and euthanized whatever time they are trapped. Even if they have been microchipped. Our reserves should be a sanctuary for our wildlife.

I was telephoned by a man who lives next to a nature reserve. He trapped and killed, I think he said he drowned them, a total of 30 cats in 9 months at night only. This was on his property which has a nature reserve next to it. Many, many cat owners are irresponsible and 30 cats trapped and killed next to a nature reserve demonstrates this. The letter from Wendy Sisson in "The Press" 25 April, copied, demonstrates this and also questions when the Christchurch City Council will actually enforce its own bylaws.

Christchurch has a wonderful range of birds, insects and small reptiles. In my experience this is not so in English Cities. They have no birds and no butterflies. We have to protect our unique heritage. Having dog control and no cat control has resulted in many more cats and fewer dogs. This produces even less control of cats, since the presence of a dog deters cats from trespassing onto the dog owners property.

Enforce the law

Christchurch has a cat problem because people keep more cats than they can afford to feed or desex. Their cats scavenge on neighbouring properties and kill birdlife.

The RSPCA will not rescue neglected cats under the Animal Welfare Act and the Christchurch City Council will not enforce its bylaw on keeping animals. Housing New Zealand ignores tenants keeping 30 or more neglected cats. No authority in Christchurch holds itself responsible for accepting unwanted cats, and unwanted cats become abandoned cats. Abandoned cats breed, and the problem compounds every breeding season. Neighbours complain, but what is the point when the authorities will not enforce the law?

The Veterinarian Association, voluntary animal welfare groups and animal lovers should ask the authorities why this problem is not being addressed and why the Animal Welfare Act is not being upheld.

Good luck to the Cat Control Campaign. Maybe it can get the authorities to act responsibly, but I doubt it.

WENDY SISSON
Fendalton

Ray Spring,

President,

Christchurch Cat Control Campaign.

25 April 2006.

17, Huntsbury Avenue, Christchurch, 2.

Proposed strategy for the management of domestic cats in South Australia

There are five components to the proposed strategy.

1. desexing of all domestic cats except those belonging to a limited number of registered breeders;
2. identification for all domestic cats (consisting of a disc attached to the cat showing the owner's address);
3. no registration for desexed cats (but registration for entire cats);
4. some level of confinement, perhaps a night curfew; and
5. registered breeders to be the only source of replacement kittens.

These proposed actions require a little explanation. Desexing reduces the numbers of unwanted kittens which are ultimately destroyed or dumped. When properly managed the numbers of domestic cats produced each year should balance the demand for replacements. This will not be reached until 97% of cats are desexed. The present level in South Australia is 80% so up to 6 times as many kittens as are needed are still being produced. Furthermore desexed cats live longer, may roam less, and are likely to make better companion animals.

Rather than formal registration I advocate compulsory identification for domestic cats - where owners are required to place an engraved disc on a cat's collar showing the owner's name and address. This would enable lost or straying cats to be promptly returned to owners and unowned cats to be trapped, relocated or destroyed knowing that the cat did not belong to anybody. Placing identification on an owned cat promotes companionship, may provide legal status, not to mention improving the welfare for that cat. I see no value in a registration scheme for desexed cats. This would simply burden councils and cat owners. Registration discs like those used for dogs and microchips would require a central registry that linked the number of the disc or microchip to an owner. This would delay the return of pets to owners since that registry would need to be accessed each time (not to mention the costs to implement and manage that register). In my proposed scheme the onus is on the owner to identify that their cat is owned.

Although I do not advocate registration for desexed cats, I do advocate that entire cats that are capable of breeding be registered on a state-wide registry and that owners of such cats be required to furnish annual reports on the number of kittens produced and the fate of those kittens. People keeping native wildlife as pets are already required to furnish annual returns to State Wildlife Authorities, so such a scheme is not novel. Most cat breeders already keep records for their own purposes and so there would be little added burden to these people. Part of the aim with this central registry is to help limit the numbers of kittens being produced to something close to the number of replacement kittens needed annually, so reducing the need to destroy large numbers of surplus

kittens. Registered breeders would be allowed to sell desexed cats to the general public but only a limited number of entire cats. Entire cats would only be sold to people who had already registered their intention to breed from the cat. Ultimately the only way of preventing the over-production of kittens in the domestic environment is to manage the production of kittens so that supply equals demand. Estimates suggest that only 3% of cats need to be entire to produce sufficient kittens to maintain a stable cat population, and placing restrictions on the numbers of domestic cats capable of breeding would probably be necessary to guarantee that neither too few nor too many kittens were being produced. This control can only be achieved if breeding cats were registered.

Confinement is controversial, yet many cat owners are in favour of some form of confinement (particularly at night), and most breeders confine their cats almost constantly to home or outdoor catteries. Confinement is not cruel, protects cats from accidental injuries (e.g. car accidents), contraction of diseases, from annoying neighbours, promotes companionship and protects wildlife. Confined cats also live longer (average cat longevity would increase by up to 50%). Local councils seem to be most concerned about curfews since they are likely to be responsible for policing a curfew. However a curfew does not need to be rigorously policed. The purpose of this aspect of the proposal was to have legislative support to enable councils to solve public disturbances and complaints caused by cats (i.e. councils would only act on complaints from residents). Having made a complaint, the resident would be provided with a cat trap, and when the cat was caught it would be collected by local authorities. If the cat carried no identification then the animal could be relocated or destroyed. If owned (identification disc on cat), the cat would be returned to the owner and steps taken to minimize further occurrences, perhaps a fine could be used as a deterrent for repeated offences and the cat eventually confiscated if the owner continued to ignore the regulations and concerns of neighbours.

The costs to councils for implementing this scheme is probably small. District councils might need to purchase a few cat traps and allow relevant council officers time to help in cat management. The level of their commitment would depend on the number of public complaints. Councils have responsibilities to both owners of cats and residents who do not keep cats. Some councils may receive few complaints not because cat owners confined their cats but because residents were tolerant of neighbouring cats entering their gardens. In such cases, councils would not need to take action. In other council districts more complaints may be received.

Critics of legislative action to support cat management as outlined above argue that too many people would not conform and that the schemes would not work. That criticism is aimed at the ideal situation where every cat owner acts responsibly. The legislation, however, is largely aimed at providing some legal support to enable councils and other authorities to solve the environmental, health and public nuisance problems of cats as they arise. The above proposal is cost effective and has broad public support (e.g. in a recent survey more than 80% of over 1,000 respondents were in favour of legislation being introduced to support all of the five actions outlined above- the level of support being similar for people owning and not owning cats) and so there is likely to be a high level of conformity in the community.

Ultimately better management of domestic cats will be required before any concerted effort can be made to eradicate feral cats. Eradication of feral cats will only succeed if domestic cats are adequately controlled, since feral cat populations are continually restocked by domestic cats that stray from home or are deliberately dumped. The first stage in controlling feral cats then is to introduce appropriate legislation to manage domestic cat populations. Responsible cat management benefits cats, wildlife and neighbourly relations and should be introduced as a matter of urgency. Many people who keep cats are already responsible owners, and the introduction of appropriate legislation to enforce certain requirements on cat owners will effect only a relatively small proportion of the general public. Once legislation is in place, eradication of feral cats can begin.

Summary

Cat legislation aims to address four important issues: improving the welfare of domestic cats in our society; reducing the numbers of unwanted cats; reducing public nuisance and health risks associated with free-ranging domestic and unowned cats; and helping to reduce losses of native wildlife to cats.

Desexing is of paramount importance since the domestic cat population is already producing over three times the numbers of cats needed to meet demand, although nearly 80% are desexed. Up to 97% of the domestic cat population needs to be desexed before this surplus production is halted. Strategies to reach this level of desexing need to be developed. Failing to place limits on the numbers of breeding cats in the domestic population, however, will prevent this goal from being achieved.

Registration schemes are fraught with administrative burdens. A scheme that requires people to place identification on their cats is all that is required. Breeders, however, should be registered and be required to keep records of the fate of kittens since that information is essential for effective management of the domestic cat population.

Domestic cats should be confined to their owner's property so that they do not cause problems for other residents (public nuisance etc.). Local councils should manage confinement by responding to complaints about cats from residents rather than strict policing. Troublesome cats that are owned can be returned and unowned cats disposed of. The costs of this should be borne by the whole community and paid for out of general state revenue or from rates paid to councils, since the community as a whole benefits.

Of these actions, only confinement addresses the issue of losses of wildlife to cats in urban areas. Confinement is not cruel and will lead to longer average life expectancies for domestic cats. Eventual control of feral cats may also depend on breaking the link between feral and domestic cat populations.

Some education programs are probably needed at points of sale, at veterinary clinics, animal welfare agencies, and through local councils. Animal behaviour clinics can help train cats and other animals to live in harmony within human habitation. Architects may need to show some

initiative by including facilities and features for household pets when designing and re-designing homes.

There should be little opposition to the development of sound cat management practices and legislation. The vast majority of South Australians recently surveyed want the cat issue tackled and will support the introduction of legislation that includes compulsory desexing of cats, some identification or registration scheme for all domestic cats, and also curfews. Most cat owners were also in favour of these actions. Legislation will bring the irresponsible cat owners into line, promoting cats in our society while protecting native wildlife and the community from some of a cat's less palatable activities.

Many of the arguments put forward about the value of cats in controlling vermin lack substance. The predation pressure of domestic cats on urban wildlife is likely to be higher than that of feral cats in non-urban environments largely because of the very high densities of domestic cats in urban areas. To argue that losses of wildlife are irrelevant in urban environments ignores the intensity of this predation and the desires of many people who want to attract and maintain native fauna on their properties.

Domestic cats play an important role as companion animals in society. These values are promoted by introducing compulsory desexing programs, identification for owned cats and confinement. They are not anti-cat.