



City of Needles, California

Request for City Council Action

CITY COUNCIL NPUA

Regular Special

Meeting Date: August 13, 2024

Title: Research on Ordinance for Feeding Feral Cats

Background: On July 9, 2024, the City Council requested City Staff to research the feasibility of adopting an ordinance for feeding feral cats. While no California law prohibits feeding unowned cats, cities can adopt local ordinances to address the issue. Several cities have passed ordinances prohibiting the feeding of feral cats due to health, sanitation, and safety concerns.

Existing Ordinances in Other Cities

- **City of Anaheim (Exhibit A):** Prohibits feeding feral or stray cats on public or private property if it creates harmful health or sanitation conditions, destruction of property, attracts vermin, or disrupts peace.
- **San Bernardino County (Exhibit B):** Prohibits leaving food outside for mammalian predators and any animal during specific hours.
- **City of Bullhead, Arizona (Exhibit C):** Under Arizona law (ARS Section 11-1001(10)), a person becomes the owner of an animal if they keep it for over six consecutive days, enabling the city to apply existing codes regarding pet ownership, public nuisance, and animal cruelty or neglect.

Current Ordinances in the City of Needles (Exhibit D)

The City of Needles has several ordinances that can be applied to address the issue of feeding feral cats:

1. **Ordinance No. 645-AC (2022):**
 - Prohibits owning, keeping, or harboring an unaltered, un-neutered, or un-spayed cat over the age of four months.
 - Requires owners or custodians to have their cats spayed or neutered, provide a certificate of sterility, or obtain an unaltered cat license.
2. **Animal Limitation and Welfare Ordinances:**
 - Limits the number of animals per residence to four.
 - Prohibits depriving animals of food, shelter, or medical care.

Trap-Neuter-Release Program

Earlier this year, the City of Needles implemented a Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) Program to manage the feral cat population. Key aspects of the program include:

- **Process:** Cats are trapped, neutered, and then returned to their colonies with clipped ears to indicate they have been fixed.
- **Implementation:** Animal control officers capture feral cats twice a week for spaying or neutering.
- **Impact:** Over 80 cats were spayed or neutered in June alone.
- **Funding:** The Animal Shelter received a \$112,000 grant to support the TNR program.

The Council can choose to adopt a new ordinance specifically targeting the feeding of feral cats or:

1. **Enforce Existing Ordinances:** Utilize current ordinances related to animal ownership, spaying/neutering, and animal welfare and update to determine ownership.
2. **Expand TNR Program:** Continue and expand the TNR program to manage the feral cat population effectively.
3. **Public Education:** Educate the community on the importance of not feeding feral cats and the benefits of the TNR program.
4. **Collaboration with Animal Control:** Work closely with animal control to ensure compliance with existing ordinances and the success of the TNR program.

Fiscal Impact: TBD

Environmental Impact: N/A

Recommended Action: Provide Staff Direction

Submitted By: Tony Rubalcaba, Animal Control Officer
Patrick Martinez, City Manager

City Manager Approval: _____

Date: _____

Other Department Approval (when required): _____

Date: _____

Approved:

Not Approved:

Tabled:

Other:

Agenda Item: _____