

***PROPOSAL
TO THE TOWN OF MARKHAM
FROM***



***North Toronto Cat Rescue
(operating as Markham Community Cat Rescue)***

***Markham Community Cat Rescue proposes that a shelter for
abandoned, orphaned, abused and homeless cats and kittens
be established and maintained by the Markham Community Cat Rescue
in the Town of Markham.***

- The shelter would be separate and distinct, and would operate independently from any other animal shelters under the auspices of the Town of Markham.
- The shelter would be a “no-kill” facility, with euthanasia only to terminate severe or incurable suffering.
- The shelter would be funded by donations from corporations and private citizens.
- The shelter would be staffed by volunteers.
- The shelter would be responsible for ongoing education to the community.

Rationale

52% of Canadians own pets and, of these pet owners, 49% have cats. Therefore, approximately 25% of Canadians own cats. (Source: Canadian Federation of Humane Societies.)

Most people are unaware of the feline overpopulation problem because these cats remain hidden and do not scavenge for food during the day. Every year, hundreds of kittens are born in refuse-strewn dump sites, and behind restaurants, commercial and industrial plazas. These kittens grow up unwanted, suffering cruel lives and ultimately dying from starvation, freezing, poisoning, human cruelty, animal attacks, vehicle accidents, disease or parasites. According to the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, the average lifespan of cats that roam free outside is 2 to 5 years. (Indoor cats can live for at least 15 years, and many live to 20 years or more.)

Once they reach seven months, the un-spayed females and un-neutered males mate, resulting in a litter of approximately four to six kittens. Within six or seven months, the original male and female, along with their offspring, will mate again. According to the Ontario SPCA, one female cat, followed by her offspring, breeding for 7 years, will become 420,000 cats (see Appendix "A"). Although many of these will not survive the harsh circumstances of their lives, it is easy to see why we have such a huge overpopulation of stray cats. Cat colonies are developed through this procreation chain.

Formal statistics on the number of colonies in the Town of Markham and surrounding areas are limited due to the fact that it is individuals and small grass-roots community groups who watch for and provide the necessities of life to the individual colonies in their area. It is impossible to determine the number of stray cats in these colonies or, in fact, the number of colonies in existence. **Markham Community Cat Rescue** is aware of at least 7 colonies within five (5) kilometres of the Town of Markham municipal offices. With a very conservative estimate of 10-20 cats per colony, this would equate to 100-200 homeless cats within this small area. Wherever there is undeveloped land, areas of garbage, parkland or

ravines, whether or not there are sources of food, water and shelter, there is likely to be at least a small colony of cats.

Although cat colonies, as well as individual stray cats and kittens, are rampant, the same cannot be said of dogs.

Throughout North America, there is a great difference in attitudes between dog and cat ownership. Most dog owners take their commitment to their companion animals seriously. They spay and neuter, and are less likely to over-breed or dispose of their pets by abandoning them. They may surrender them to the humane society or the OSPCA, but they do not discard them without food, water or shelter. Unfortunately, some cat owners, have, and will, continue to view cats as disposable, enjoying them while they are kittens, but rejecting them once they go into heat or start spraying. We are not faced with packs of wild dogs, but we continue to be overwhelmed by colonies of stray cats.

While existing animal shelters provide adequate spaces for the care and adoption of dogs and other small animals, they do not have the resources to manage the stray cat population. According to a 2001 Ipsos-Reid survey, there are over 2,000,000 more cats than dogs in Canada. **Markham Community Cat Rescue** and other cat rescue organizations are concerned about the steadily increasing number of felines being born into appalling conditions.

Cats have lived as companions to humans for thousands of years. In domesticating these animals, we have sublimated their primal instincts, so that they are now completely dependent on human beings for their well-being. It is incumbent on us to provide them with the necessities of life, including shelter, food, medical care and love.

We propose that the Town of Markham would be well served by a separate cat shelter, dedicated to the well-being of these animals, with the ultimate goal being the successful adoption of each rescued cat or kitten. The shelter would be committed to providing a healthy, safe, nurturing environment, with dedicated volunteer staff, nutritious food, comfortable and safe shelter space, and excellent veterinary care, including the vaccination and spay/neuter of all shelter cats.

Population Control

Unfortunately, irresponsible cat owners have contributed to the over-population problem in a number of ways, including failing to spay/neuter, allowing cats to roam, and abandoning unwanted cats. Local, provincial and federal governments are also being called upon to deal with the ramifications of not only the irresponsible pet owners, but also other “well-intentioned” groups who offer “free kittens to a good home” irrespective of whether the new owner has the resources to carry the financial responsibility for the cats’ entire life span.

All of the strategies that have proved successful in reducing the problem of feline over-population involve the spay or neuter of as many cats as possible. Spaying and neutering are safe procedures and are usually done as out-patients in veterinary clinics.

Spaying a female before her first heat:

- Eliminates the risk of pregnancy.
- Protects her from risks of uterine, ovarian, and mammary cancers as well as the stresses of pregnancy.
- Reduces her frantic interest in the outdoors and reduces the chances that she'll wander far.
- Eliminates “behavioural” issues, such as marking the owner’s home with urine when she's in heat. Cats without the procedure become irritable and anxious during heat. They yowl or whine frequently, fight with other cats, and/or destroy objects in the house.

Neutering a male:

- Reduces his risk from numerous health problems such as prostate enlargement/cancer, testicular cancer and related infections.
- Lowers his urge to roam and to fight, and thus lowers chances of disease transmission or woundings.
- Inhibits “territorial” behaviour such as spraying and aggressive posturing.
- Eliminates the powerful odour of adult male cat urine.

The OSPCA's position statements indicate that they "recognize the great increase in the numbers of feral cats and recommend(s) their sterilization whenever possible."

Some might argue that one solution to the overpopulation problem would be to trap all of the cats in all of the colonies and euthanize them. In fact, every year almost 150,000 cats end up in humane societies across Canada. Approximately 60% of those cats are euthanized (Canadian Federation of Humane Societies). This goes against basic human values.

Canadians, on the whole, are strongly averse to the wholesale killing of defenceless animals. The federal government recognizes this position, stating that "Willfully neglecting or failing to provide suitable care for an animal, regardless of the animal's life stage or prognosis" constitutes an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada. Cats are not chattels or property, to be disposed of like a broken lamp or an old car. They do, in fact, enrich our lives, improve our health, and provide companionship and entertainment.

In actual fact, euthanizing large numbers of cats does not solve the problem; it merely provides a band-aid. Without education and the co-operation of committed owners, more cats will simply be "thrown away" and the euthanasia program will have to be continued indefinitely.

Alternatively, by re-educating the public, and providing appropriate supports, the expectation is that an increasing number of cats will be sterilized and the over-population problem will start to diminish.

In the long term, this will be less costly and more beneficial to the community.

A study by the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies found that while 30% of dogs in animal shelters are euthanized, the figure is 60% for cats. Over 120,000 cats are euthanized in Canadian animal shelters every year, with less than 5% of cats in shelters being reclaimed by owners.

The Town of Markham, in conjunction with *Markham Community Cat Rescue*, has the opportunity to enact a comprehensive plan of action to rectify a problem that we, ourselves, have created, and which would provide the benchmark in this area, developing a model for other towns and cities to follow.

Town of Markham By-Laws and Programs

With the municipal animal control by-law 2005-254, the Town of Markham acknowledges its responsibility to come up with a viable, cost effective and humane solution to the cat over-population problem.

The Town of Markham currently outsources its animal control services; however, the Town would benefit from a facility dedicated to the unique issues of the feline over-population problem.

Markham Community Cat Rescue would be pleased to provide a service that would meet these needs, and which, in turn, would ensure that Markham is at the cutting edge in its treatment of felines.

Markham Community Cat Rescue

North Toronto Cat Rescue (operating as Markham Community Cat Rescue) is a no-kill, non-profit, charitable organization (Registered Charity No. 83607 9673 RR0001), dedicated to ensuring the humane treatment of all cats and kittens in York Region. Focusing on the location and reduction of feral cat colonies, we trap, spay/neuter, provide veterinary care and a safe and nurturing environment, and arrange permanent, loving homes for hundreds of homeless cats. (We also accept public surrender of companion animals as space permits.)

Markham Community Cat Rescue is further committed to breaking the cycle of cat over-population through education and spay/neuter programs, and by promoting awareness of the value of the animals whose world we share. See our brochure attached as Appendix “B” and our website at <http://www.northtorontocatrescue.com/> for further details.

Our financial support and pet supplies come primarily from contributions by individuals. We continue to dedicate hundreds of hours of unpaid time to help rescue as many of these cats and kittens as we can. We are enhancing our infrastructure so that a number of us can eventually dedicate ourselves to this endeavour in a professional capacity full time.

We have an established board of directors who have been active in the development of policies and procedures that meet best practice standards. We have legal, bookkeeping, veterinary and small business support, as well as established connections with others in the pet care and rescue community. We have 13 years of active involvement in cat rescue and have successfully arranged adoptions for hundreds of cats and kittens.

Town of Markham Council Support Can Make This Project a Reality

Upon approval of this proposal by Council, the Town of Markham can support this project by:

- Identifying appropriate sites, including any properties owned by the Town of Markham which might be suitable for this purpose
- Assisting in re-zoning if required

A Win-Win Solution

Approval by The Town of Markham of this project would enhance its reputation as a community leader and place it in a unique position to provide a model for other municipalities to emulate.

The Town would also benefit from:

- Reduction in cat over-population and related health issues
- Enhance the Town's profile of integrity, accountability and commitment to the highest standard of feline care and control
- Venue for students to complete the community service requirements under the Board of Education

This initiative would also be a clear demonstration of the York Region Community Character profile which includes the tenets of respect, responsibility, honesty, integrity, compassion, courage, inclusiveness, fairness, optimism, perseverance and initiative. These characteristics fit in with the Feline Bill of Rights adopted by *Markham Community Cat Rescue*. (See Appendix “C”).

The committed team at *Markham Community Cat Rescue* understands the needs of stray and abandoned cats and kittens in the local community.

We provide all of the cats and kittens in our care with the necessary vaccinations and veterinary care, including spaying or neutering. We have a program in place that involves collecting these costs (initial boosters, deworming, rabies vaccination and spay/neuter) at the time of adoption, and take an active role in the first six months of the kittens’ lives to guide families through the process of becoming responsible pet owners.

Our adoption centre goals would include:

- Active rescue and adoption programs;
- Specialized facility created to address feline over-population;
- Reduction in the number of cat colonies;
- Limited number of felines in our adoption centre;
- Public education programs (including elementary and high schools);
- Effective use of adult volunteers in the community;
- Provide student volunteers with a venue for their community service requirements under the Board of Education;
- Community partnerships;
- Partner with existing organizations to handle cat overflows.

Our education initiatives include educating people about:

- animal care
- the benefits of spaying and neutering
- the need to keep cats indoors (with reference to current local by-laws)
- the pitfalls of and alternatives to declawing cats

- the benefits of vaccination and regular veterinary care to prevent disease
- the pros and cons of adopting multiple pets
- the green box program and cat waste and kitty litter disposal
- the need for a safe and protected environment for the animals, especially in homes where there are children and other pets.

Cats, like all animals, share our ecosystem, and demonstrating a concerned and concentrated effort to ensuring their health and well-being would be of fundamental concern to those aware of the precariousness of our environment and the need to protect all elements of the life cycle.

Details of the Project

Geographic parameters:

- Elgin Mills Road to the north
- Markham Road to the east
- Steeles Avenue to the south
- Yonge Street to the west

Ideally, the shelter would be a detached building in a high visibility corridor within the geographic parameters above.

The facility would be a minimum of 2,500 – 3,000 square feet, and would have a large number of windows for natural light. We would estimate that available parking for 10 vehicles would be adequate, and traffic would not be heavy at any given time.

The facility would provide space for approximately 80 felines and would contain a main adoption area as well as several isolation rooms for:

- Pregnant females, nursing mothers and their kittens
- Un-neutered males
- Pre-vetted rescued cats
- Contagious illnesses

The shelter would also contain a reception area, laundry facility, washroom and storage area.

The community would not be negatively impacted as all cats would remain indoors and are quiet by nature. Litter would be cleaned by volunteers twice daily and waste products would be disposed of in “green bins” in a separate, enclosed storage shed until weekly collection.

One of our goals is to establish a fundraising committee to enable the shelter to be funded on an ongoing basis through community donations.

Project Costs

The lease costs for the facility will be determined as a result of available, appropriately zoned property.

Our Executive Director and Operations Director would be responsible for the ongoing operations of the shelter, with assistance from volunteers. At the present time, the Executive Director and Operations Director are unpaid volunteer positions.

We would anticipate that food and litter would be donated (at least in part), including specialty food for ill cats or abandoned kittens.

Veterinary costs would be covered as much as possible from adoption fees and donations.

Once the shelter is established, we will submit requests for additional funding to various charitable organizations that provide direct assistance to animal welfare groups.

How the Organization will Measure Success

On an ongoing basis, the organization keeps records relating to:

- All financial transactions. Bookkeeping records are kept relating to the ongoing operation of the organization and an audit is performed by a Chartered Accountant at each year end. (Audited Financial Statements for the years 2005 and 2006 are available.)
- Number of cats rescued.
- Number of cats adopted.
- Veterinary procedures performed and expenses incurred.
- Educational programs provided to the public.
- Fundraising events and amounts raised.
- Volunteer hours (adult and student).

APPENDIX "A"

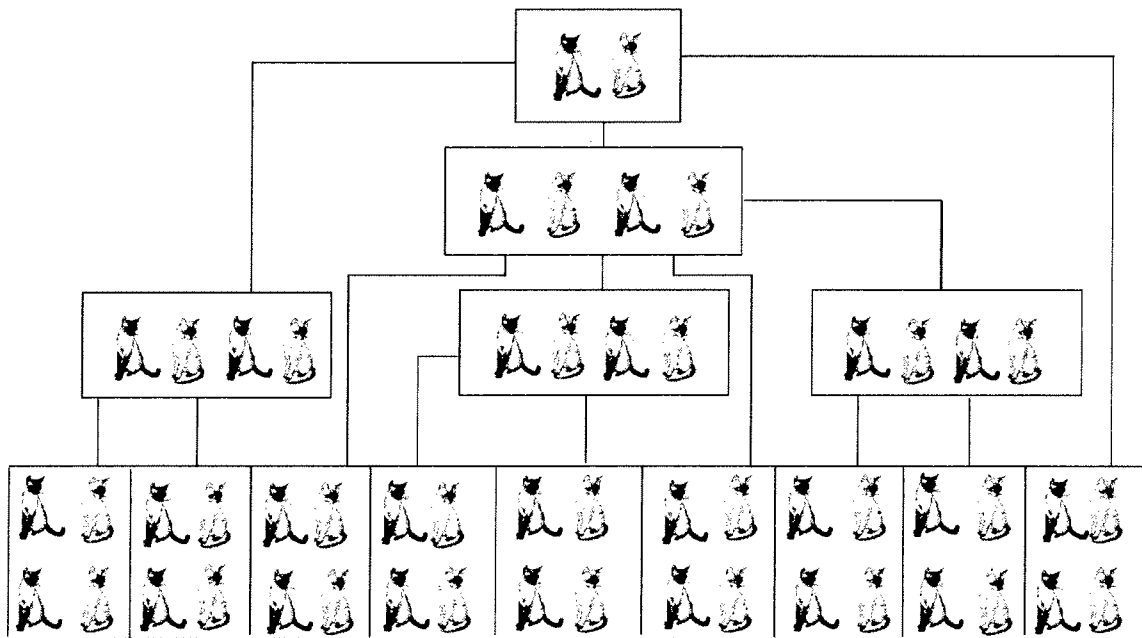
24-Month Cat Multiplication Chart

The following chart is a conservative estimate over a two year period.

It assumes two litters per year with only four kittens per litter.

Cats can have up to four litters per year with a maximum of 7 or 8 kittens per litter.

STOP THE POPULATION EXPLOSION



SPAY OR NEUTER YOUR PET

APPENDIX “B”

Original copies of the **North Toronto Cat Rescue** brochure will be provided to Council.

APPENDIX “C”

MARKHAM COMMUNITY CAT RESCUE

FELINE BILL OF RIGHTS

(adapted from other sources)

All Cats and kittens have....

- ***The right*** to be recognized as a unique and important species.
- ***The right*** to have their individual lives cherished and protected.
- ***The right*** to be free from cruelty and abuse.
- ***The right*** to receive aid and comfort, including nutritious food, clean water, warm and dry shelter, and supportive care.
- ***The right*** to a fair share of public resources for the care and treatment of companion animals.
- ***The right*** to be treated as equal members of the animal kingdom.
- ***The right*** to be represented accurately and humanely by those who speak on their behalf.
- ***The right*** to be full members of human families.
- ***The right*** to social interaction, praise, love and stimulation.
- ***The right*** to regular exercise and play.
- ***The right*** to quality health care.
- ***The right*** to receive proper training, guidance and correction based on understanding and compassion, rather than abuse.
- ***The right*** to live with dignity... and to die with dignity when the time comes, but not prematurely due to lack of resources.