Mr. Mayor and Councillors

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak here today. My issue involves the Hamilton Animal Services eliminating the service of picking up stray and feral cats.

First I like to tell about my personal situation. I have a colony of cats that have taken up residence in my back porch and yard. My woodchips and shrubs are one giant litter box. They are spraying the front of the house, the back of the house and the car. The constant marking by the tom cats means I am unable to enjoy my backyard as it needs to be hosed down anytime I go outside. I can’t take my own two cats outside for fear of confrontation with strays or worrying about transference of disease. The majority of cats that started coming around were young mothers and kittens and then the tom cats moved in. My yard backs onto an alley which is a haven for them.

Last summer and into the fall I surrendered 15 strays and a pregnant cat on her second litter that year. Since this past January I have taken eight cats to Animal Control. One was desperately trying to come in my house as she was preparing to give birth. Luckily I caught her in time and transferred her up to Animal Services. Not one of these cats appears to have a home. In fact my neighbor can pinpoint which cats are offspring and which cats are related. At any given time I can have 6 kittens, mothers and tom cats sunning on the same chair.

Since January having removed eight kittens and cats including the pregnant female, six more have moved in to take their place. This is a natural occurrence with feral cats. That leaves me with two options. Spend the rest of my days trapping cats and driving up to Animal Control. Or leave the colony in place and watch them multiply from my kitchen window because I certainly won’t be able to enjoy my backyard.

As an animal lover and owner it’s hard enough for me to trap these cats, let alone drive up while they’re crying in the back seat. I know some of these cats won’t make it to rescue and will be euthanized, but as an Animal Control officer said to me once, a warm meal and a needle is much better than suffering endlessly in an alley.

The city of Calgary has installed a successful program with having mandatory licensing for cats. This pays for the services it occurs in dealing with strays. However, for now my only request is to put one of the Animal Control trucks that are sitting in the parking lot back on the road and offer a respectable service to your constituents. This may result in having to euthanize more felines. As unfortunate as that may be, I believe this is an indirect consequence because the City has turned a blind eye to this dilemma. Kitten season is fast approaching and it’s already too late to stop that. Couldn’t we work towards getting these kittens out of the alleys so they’re not having kittens themselves in a few months time? You don’t have to be a crazy cat person to appreciate the anguish these creatures experience every day through no fault of their own.
Two things can be accomplished simultaneously by reinstalling the service of stray pickups. The number of feral cats will decrease and you can assist your constituents of doing a service that should not be their responsibility. I hope this issue doesn’t end up on the bottom of the list because this problem doesn’t exist everywhere in Hamilton. If you don’t see this problem on a daily basis, it may seem trivial. But it is far worse than you can even imagine. This is only my story. There are countless others. I’m asking you to take some of the burden off of the taxpayers because the overpopulation of cats will never improve if the City of Hamilton doesn’t step in. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely

Elenor Horgan
Questions posed to the Hamilton Animal Services

Why did you eliminate the service for picking up stray cats?

a) We don’t have the manpower.

b) The public was complaining about the high rate of euthanasia among cats so when the pickup service was eliminated those numbers dropped.
Therefore we now are putting down fewer cats.

Do you have any procedures in place to control the stray cat population?

You can bring in strays to us Monday to Friday 8:30 am-4:30 pm and on Saturday and Sunday 10:00 am-2:00 pm.

There are several organizations that come in on a regular basis to rescue some of the cats. The Toronto Cat Rescue and Toronto Humane Society do regularly.

Doesn’t it seem a little backwards that another city is coming in to rescue our problem?

No answer.

If someone does not have a mode of transportation to get to Animal Services do you offer an alternative for bringing in strays?

No

How does one go about getting a feral involved with the Spay/Neuter Return Program in their area?

Contact the Hamilton/Burlington SPCA. The cost is 45.00 per cat. Once they are altered you are responsible to feed them and provide outside shelter for the rest of their natural life.
Hamilton Animal Services Shelter Numbers

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Decline in Service over the Past Year

Originally 8:30 am-4:30 pm
Then 8:30 am-2:30 pm
Then 8:00 am-12:00 pm
Then Eliminated

Just because there are fewer cats euthanized, it does not mean there are fewer cats. Bringing in smaller numbers looks good on paper but in actuality it is increasing the population at an alarming rate. Leaving these colonies in place is only hiding the problem. Animal services picks up injured and deceased cats. Why not help them while they are still alive?

Cats reach puberty on average between 4 to 9 months of age meaning a cat can have her first litter while she is still a kitten. The gestation period for a queen is 58 to 65 days. A cat generally has 4 to 6 kittens per litter. The average cat could have 3 litters per year. One female cat has the ability to produce about 12 kittens a year.