



Feral and Community Cat Overview and Potential Policy Considerations Update

Quality of Life, Arts, and Culture Committee

August 17, 2026

Paul Ramon

Director

DALLAS ANIMAL SERVICES

Amanda Earl

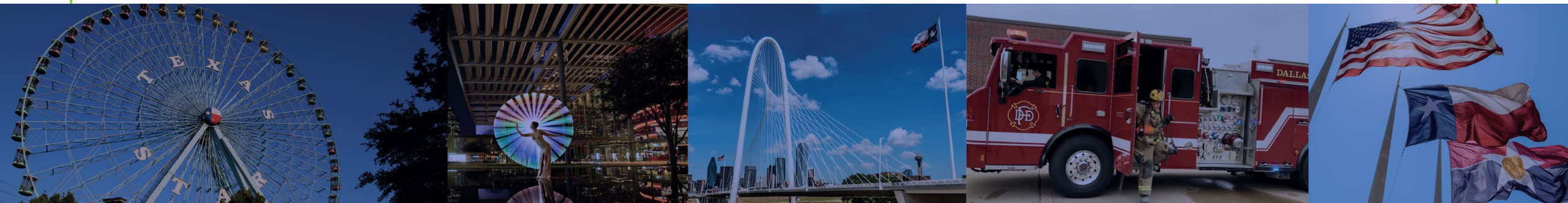
Assistant Director

DALLAS ANIMAL SERVICES

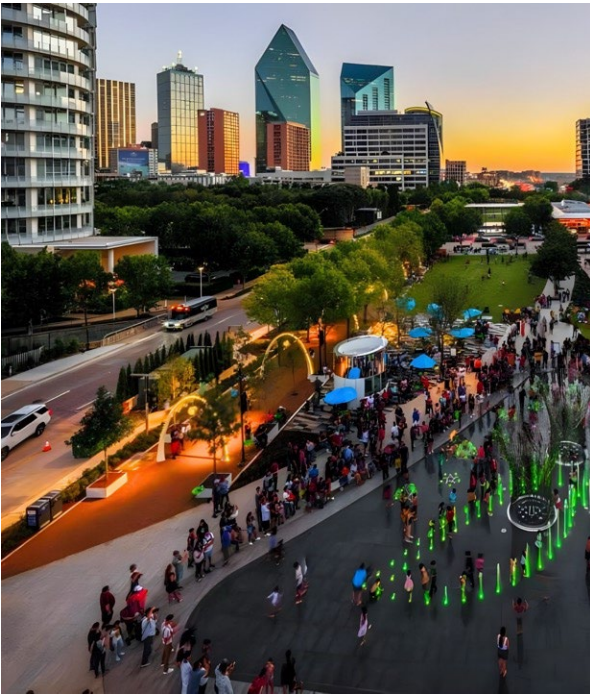
Victoria Chittam Bennett

Assistant Director

DALLAS ANIMAL SERVICES



Presentation Overview



- Purpose, Definitions & Background
- Service Request Data
- Community Concerns & Animal Advisory Commission (AAC) Feedback
- Other Cities
- Current City Code & Considerations
- Merits & Considerations
- Next Steps



Purpose, Definitions & Background

Purpose

The purpose of this presentation is to:

- Provide an understanding of Feral / Community Cats
- Explain the concerns and impacts
- Discuss Community Feedback
- Seek committee guidance on potential policy considerations

Definitions

Definitions:

- FERAL CAT - means any homeless, wild, or untamed cat.
- COMMUNITY CAT - means any free-roaming cat, regardless of socialization or sociability, cared for by one or more known or unknown residents of the immediate area.

Key Differences:

- **Socialization & Behavior:**
 - **Feral Cats:** Unsocialized, born in the wild, and fear humans. Typically, they remain hidden and avoid human contact.
 - **Community Cats:** A broader term that includes both unsocialized (feral) and free-roaming cats. Free-roaming cats may be friendly, meow for attention, and allow approach, while feral cats do not.



Background

Due to increased concerns expressed during numerous Animal Advisory Commission Meetings regarding Feral/Community Cats, Dallas Animal Services created and began tracking service requests (SRs) related to feral/community cats

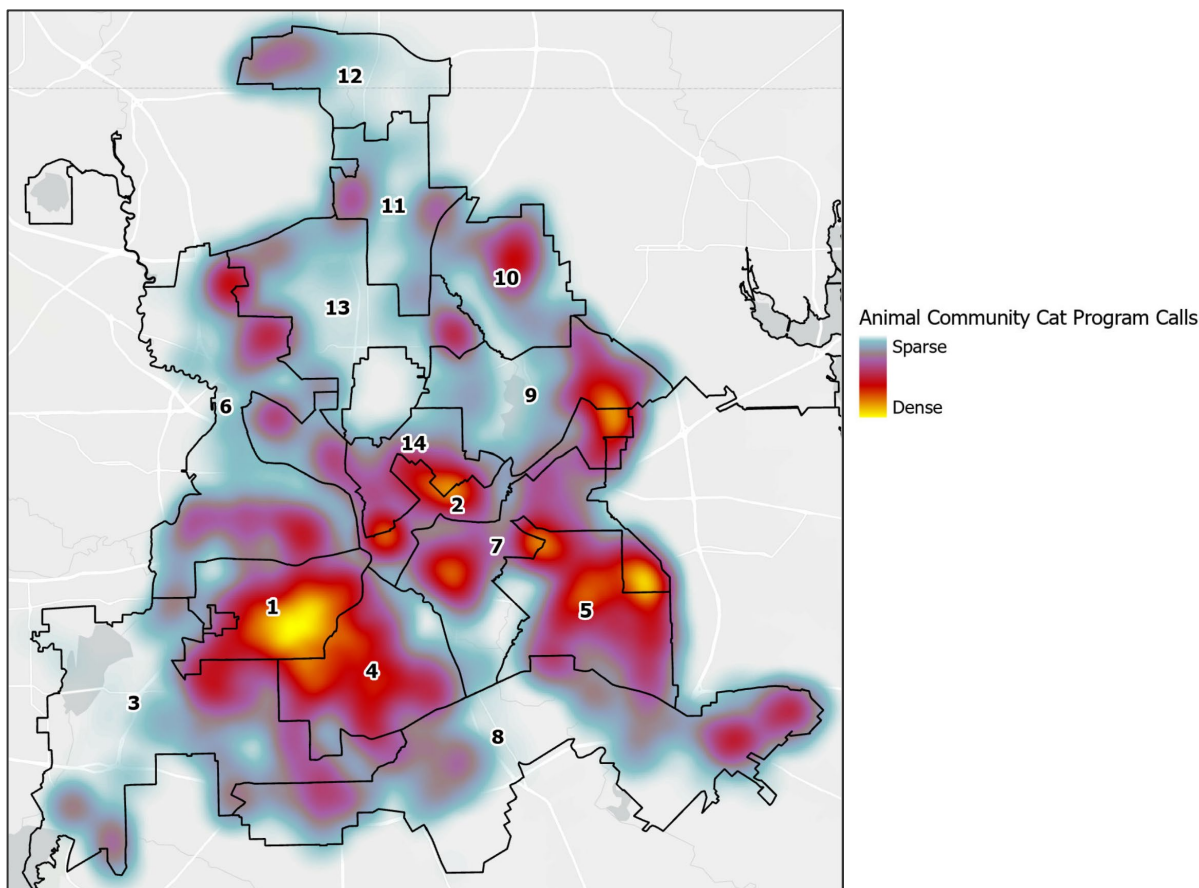
- A “Community Cat” SR type was created in August 2023
- Data from these requests informed the creation of a Community Cat Pilot Trap Neuter and Return (TNR) Program in Fiscal Year 2024-25
 - As part of this program, DAS created an internal response team (Team Tabby) to assist with the TNR efforts
 - In FY 24/25, Team Tabby completed 1,451 TNRs
 - ❑ 9K kitten births potentially prevented
 - ❑ Preventing over 5K neonate kitten intakes
 - ❑ Reduction in disease spread, including zoonotic diseases like rabies, intestinal parasites, etc.
 - ❑ Enhanced community partnerships



Service Request Data

Feral / Community Cat Data: *Service Requests*

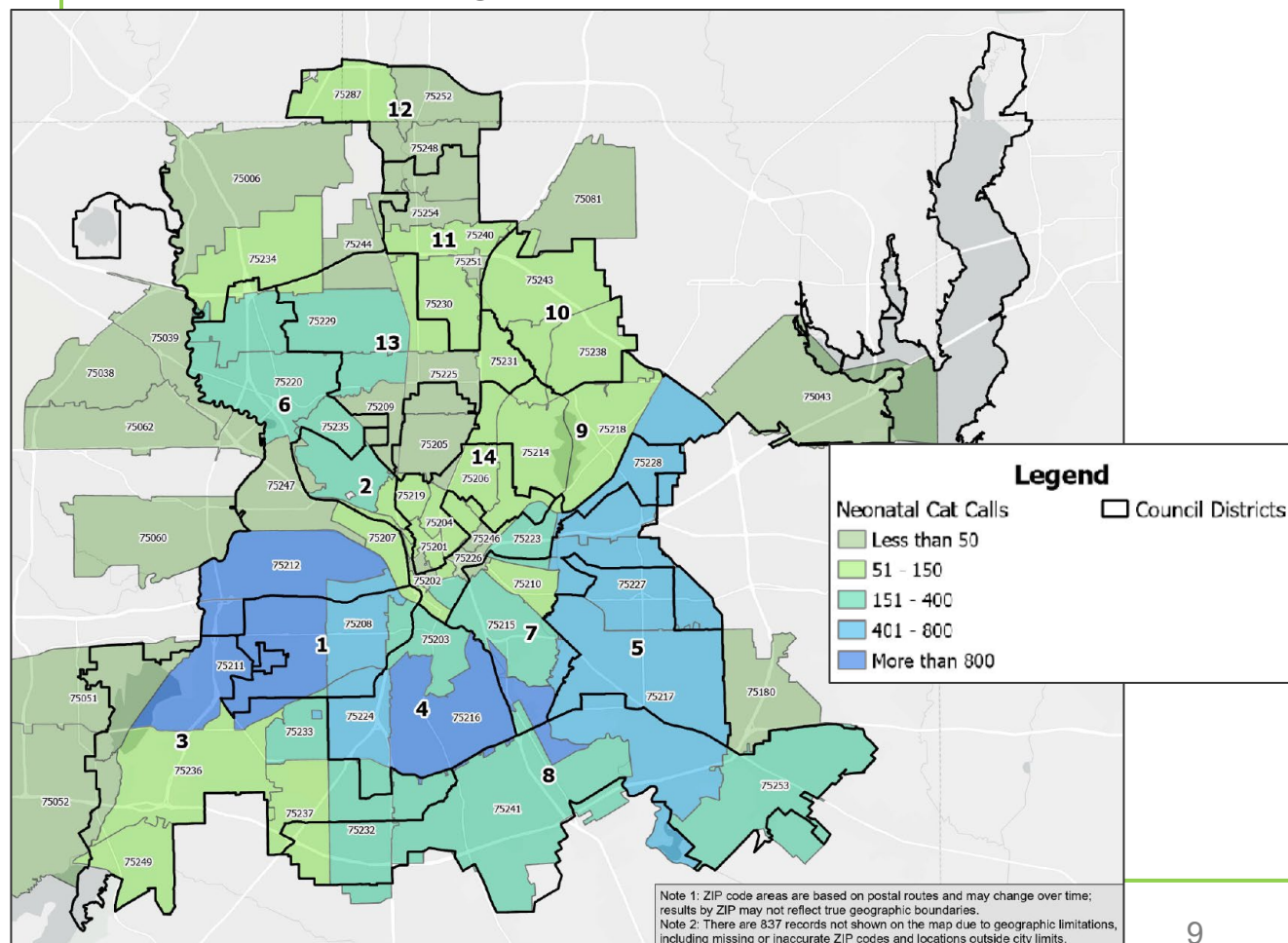
Between August 2023 and September 2025, **8,491** Feral/Community Cat SRs were submitted



Zip Codes with Most SRs	% of Total Comm Cat SRs	Council District(s) in Zip Code
75217	9.03%	5, 8, 7
75227	7.68%	7, 5
75216	6.69%	4, 7, 8
75228	6.35%	2, 9, 7
75211	6.15%	1, 3, 6
75208	4.71%	1, 6
75224	4.29%	4, 1, 3
75212	3.86%	6
75253	3.78%	8
75241	3.32%	8, 3

Feral / Community Cat Data: Neonatal Arrivals

Between August 2023 and September 2025, DAS received a total of **10,599** neonatal kittens



Zip Codes with Most SRs	% of Total Comm Cat SRs	Council District(s) in Zip Code
75211	10.72%	1, 3, 6
75212	9.32%	6
75216	6.83%	4, 7, 3, 8
75227	6.03%	7, 5
75208	5.64%	1, 6
75224	5.14%	4, 1, 3
75228	3.98%	9, 7
75241	3.87%	8, 3
75220	2.90%	6, 2
75253	2.56%	8

*Zip Code unknown for 10.28% of neonates

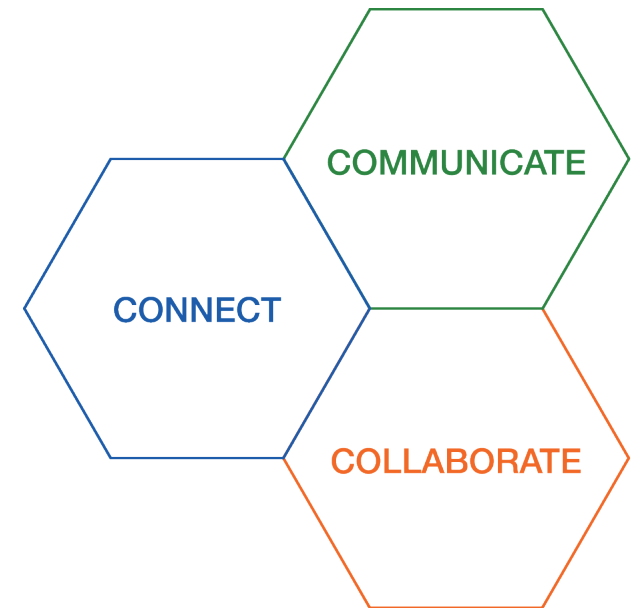


Community Concerns & AAC Feedback

Community Concerns

Feedback:

- Community members have raised concerns about feral/community cats, including quality-of-life, public health, and animal welfare issues
 - In April 2025, a community listening session was held in Bishop Arts to hear resident concerns
 - Following that meeting, DAS began reviewing state law, City Code, and approaches used by other municipalities in addressing feral/community cats
 - DAS has been working with the Animal Advisory Commissioners to coordinate further ongoing engagement discussions regarding all things DAS, to include feral/community cat concerns



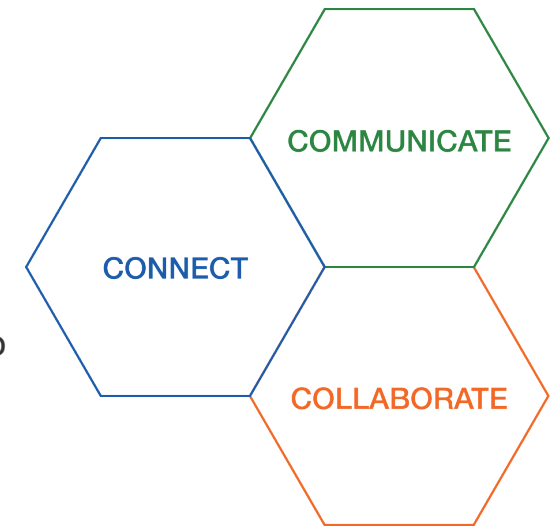
Community Listening Sessions

For the past, several months DAS has held several community meetings to engage about community concerns, pet owner responsibilities, available resources, and to gather input on feral/community cat concerns/policy considerations.

Areas of Concern provided by the community:

- Community feedback was supportive with some concerns:
 - Primary concerns focused on nuisance-related behaviors and the potential for caregivers to be cited for feeding community cats generally
 - Education and engagement
 - Additional resources for spay/neuter

DAS has presented the proposed amendments to the Animal Advisory Commission on two occasions, with the latest being the May 22nd briefing.

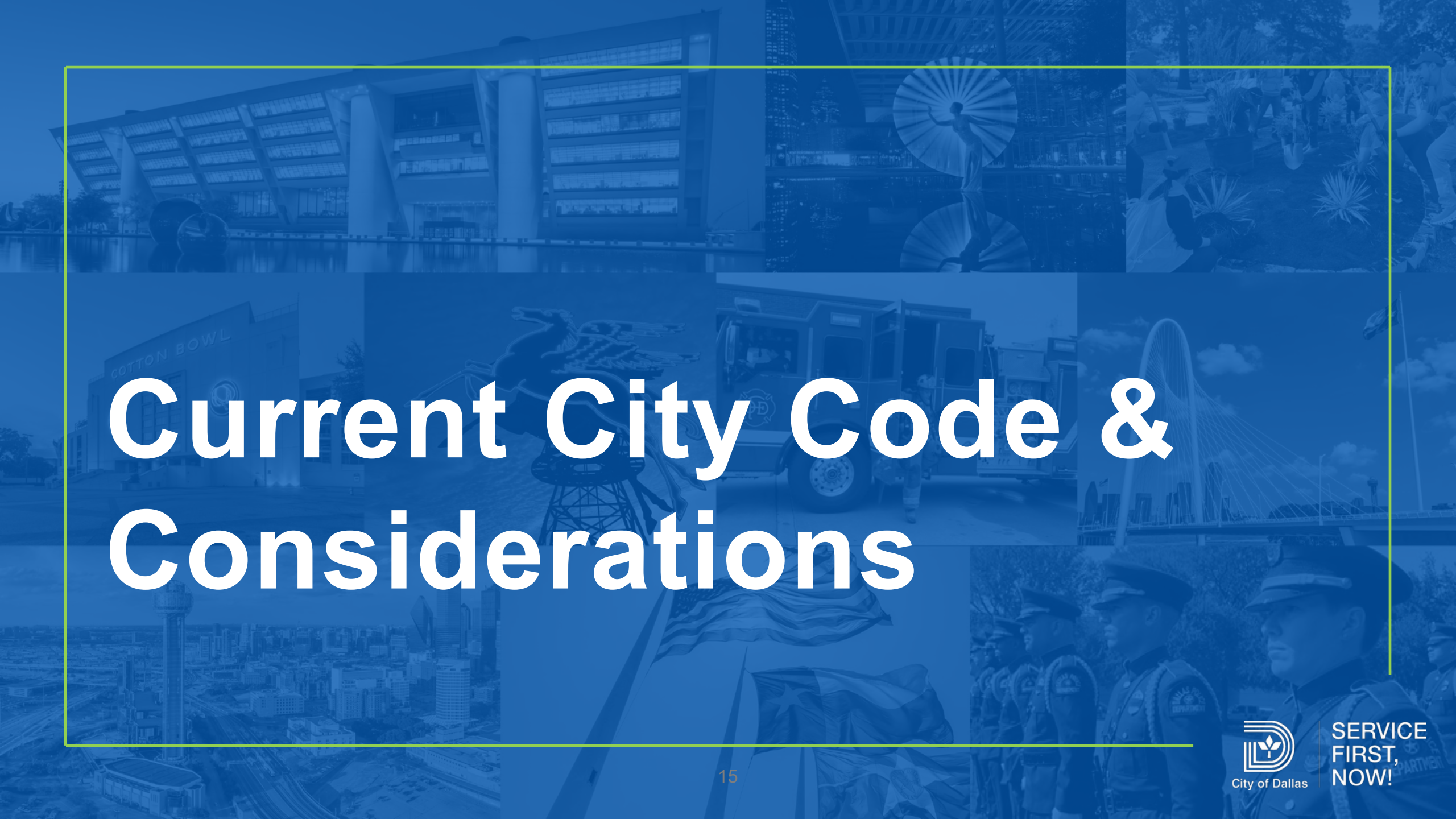




Other Cities

Other Cities

- **San Antonio, TX** - City TNR ordinance formally recognizes and regulates community cat colonies through caretaker permits, colony registration requirements, and protections for managed, ear-tipped cats while maintaining safeguards for public health and safety.
- **Fort Worth, TX** – Has a Feral & Stray Cat TNR Program in city code designed to reduce euthanasia and manage community cats humanely
- **Houston, TX** – Amended the policies to include provisions relevant to Trap-Neuter and Return (TNR) to include community cat care, along with how the city recognizes and addresses community cats under local law
- **Austin, TX** – Official Community Cat/TNR program is operated in partnership with the local humane society; recognized by the city as the approach to managing outdoor cats, used to support TNR / community cat care
- **Wylie, TX** – City ordinance sponsors a Trap-Neuter-Release Feral Cat Program with guidance on sterilization, vaccination, and feeding rules for colonies



Current City Code & Considerations

Current Code & Policy Considerations

Current City Code:

- **7-1.1 Definitions** Sec. (19) FERAL CAT means any homeless, wild, or untamed cat.
- **7-3.1 Loose Animals** Sec. (c) It is a defense to prosecution under Subsection (a) that the animal was:
 - (2) a feral cat participating in a trap, neuter, and return program approved by the director.
- **7-4.6 Limitation on the number of dogs and cats in dwelling units** Sec. (d) In determining the number of dogs or cats harbored on the premises of a dwelling unit under Subsections (b) and (c) of this section, the director shall not count any dog or cat under six months of age or any feral cat participating in a trap, neuter, and return program approved by the director.

Policy Considerations: Amend Chapter 7 ANIMALS to include:

- **7-1.1 Definitions**
 - Provide additional definitions for Community Cat; Community Cat Caregiver; Community Cat Colony, Ear-Tipped Cat and Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)
- **7-3.1 Loose Animals**
 - Sec. (c) Defense to prosecution (2)
 - To include Community Cat
- **7-3.3 Trapping Animals**
 - Add offenses for trapping of Feral/Community Cats for purposes of euthanasia or relocation; also include any defense to prosecution for these activities
 - Add a provision detailing the rights of property owners/occupants regarding trappers and caregivers
- **7-3.6 Community Cat Framework**
 - Detail the TNR standards for Community Cat management and requirements for Community Cats (sterilization, vaccinations, ear-tip, etc.)



Merits & Considerations

Merits: Community Cat Framework

- **Public Health Benefits:** Vaccinating cats against rabies during the process protects the community.
- **Population Control:** Effectively stabilizes and reduces outdoor cat populations over time by preventing new litters.
- **Improved Cat Welfare:** Sterilized cats live healthier lives, avoiding the stress of breeding and fighting.
- **Reduce Nuisance Behaviors:** Neutered cats stop yowling, fighting, and spraying, which alleviates complaints from residents.
- **Longterm Cost Savings:** Reduces costs associated with animal intake, care/housing, and potential euthanasia.

Challenges and Considerations

- **Wildlife Impact:** Free-roaming cats may continue to prey on birds and other small mammals.
- **Resource Demand:** Requires dedicated volunteers for trapping, veterinary partnerships, and clear communication/education about goals and outcomes.
- **Ineffective if Inconsistent:** To truly decrease the population, the cats in a colony must be sterilized; otherwise, the population persists.
- **Community Concerns:** Some residents may object to cats in their yards, regardless of their neutered status.
- **Not a "Quick Fix":** It takes time for the population to decline, and it may not fully eliminate cats in an area.



Next Steps

Next Steps:



Quality of Life, Arts and Culture

August 17, 2026
Consider
Committee
recommendations
and feedback on
next steps



Finalize Draft Ordinance

Incorporate
Committee,
Animal Advisory
Commission, and
Community input
into draft
ordinance
language



City Council Consideration

October 2026



Appendix

Community Cat Ordinance Draft Progress

5-4-26

ORDINANCE NO. _____

An ordinance amending Chapter 7, "Animals," of the Dallas City Code, by amending Sections 7-1.1 and 7-3.3; adding a new Section 7-3.6; providing regulations for the care of community cats; providing a penalty not to exceed \$500; providing a saving clause; providing a severability clause; and providing an effective date.

Now, Therefore,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DALLAS:

SECTION 1. That Section 7-1.1, "Definitions," of Article I, "General," of Chapter 7, "Animals," of the Dallas City Code, is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 7-1.1. DEFINITIONS.

- (1) **ADOPTER** means a person who adopts an animal from an animal shelter or an animal adoption agency.
- (2) **ADOPTION AGENCY** means an animal welfare organization or animal placement group approved by the director to take impounded dogs and cats from animal services for adoption to the public.
- (3) **ANIMAL** means any nonhuman vertebrate.
- (4) **ANIMAL SERVICES** means the department so designated by the director for the purpose of animal care and control and enforcement of this chapter.
- (5) **ANIMAL SERVICES OFFICER** means an employee of animal services whose duty it is to enforce the provisions of this chapter.
- (6) **ANIMAL SHELTER** means a city-owned and operated animal shelter facility established for the impoundment, quarantine, care, adoption, euthanasia, and other disposition of unwanted, loose, diseased, or vicious animals.
- (7) **ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION** means a non-profit organization incorporated under state law and exempt from federal taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal Internal Revenue Code, as amended, and whose principal purpose is the prevention of

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cruelty to animals and whose principal activity is to rescue sick, injured, abused, neglected, unwanted, abandoned, orphaned, lost, or displaced animals and to adopt them to good homes.

(8) **AUTHORIZED REGISTRAR** means a person issued written permission by the director to register dogs and cats in compliance with this chapter.

(9)(8-14) **BODILY INJURY** means physical pain, illness, or any impairment of physical condition.

(10)(9) **CHIEF OF POLICE** means the head of the police department of the city of Dallas or a designated representative.

(11) **COMMUNITY CAT** means any free-roaming cat, regardless of socialization or sociability, cared for by one or more known or unknown residents of the immediate area.

(12) **COMMUNITY CAT CAREGIVER** means an individual or organization that, without the intention of ownership, provides food, water, monitoring, or other care to a community cat or colony, exclusively in an outdoor setting, and works to have the cats sterilized, vaccinated, and ear-tipped.

(13) **COMMUNITY CAT COLONY** means a group of community cats living in one geographic area.

(14)(14) **COMPETITION CAT** means a pedigreed cat not used for breeding that:

(A) is of a breed recognized by and registered with an approved cat breed registry, such as the American Cat Fanciers Association, the Cat Fanciers' Association, the International Cat Association, or any other cat breed registry approved by the director; and

(B) competes in cat shows or other competition events sponsored by an approved cat breed registry.

(15)(14) **COMPETITION DOG** means a pedigreed dog not used for breeding that:

(A) is of a breed recognized by and registered with an approved dog breed registry, such as the American Kennel Club, the United Kennel Club, the American Dog Breeders Association, or any other dog breed registry approved by the director; and

(B) shows or competes in a confirmation, obedience, agility, carting, herding, protection, rally, sporting, working, or other event sponsored by an approved dog breed registry.

(16)(14) **CONTACT INFORMATION** means the owner's name, mailing address, telephone number, and electronic mail address, if any.

(17)(14) **CONVICTION** means a conviction in a federal court or a court of any state or foreign nation or political subdivision of a state or foreign nation that has not been reversed,

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Community Cat Ordinance Draft Progress

vacated, or pardoned. "Conviction" includes disposition of charges against a person by probation, deferred adjudication, or deferred disposition.

(18[44]) CURRENTLY VACCINATED means vaccinated against rabies by a licensed veterinarian, with a rabies vaccine licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and:

(A) not more than 12 months have elapsed since the animal's most recent vaccination date, if the most recent vaccination was with a one-year rabies vaccine or was the animal's initial vaccination; or

(B) not more than 36 months have elapsed since the animal's most recent vaccination date, if the most recent vaccination was with a three-year rabies vaccine and the animal is a dog or cat that has received at least two vaccinations.

(19[45]) DIRECTOR means the director of the department designated by the city manager to perform the duties assigned in this chapter or the director's authorized representative.

(20[46]) DOMESTIC ANIMAL means:

(A) a dog;

(B) a cat;

(C) a ferret;

(D) any bird, other than one in the Falconiforms or Strigiforms Order, that is commonly kept as a human's companion;

(E) any "pocket pet," such as a mouse, hamster, gerbil, guinea pig, or rabbit, that is commonly kept as a human's companion;

(F) any fish, such as a goldfish or tropical fish, that is commonly kept as a human's companion; and

(G) any non-venomous and non-constrictor reptile or amphibian that is commonly kept as a human's companion.

(21) EAR-TIPPED means a surgical process performed during neutering as part of the trap-neuter-return protocol overseen by a licensed veterinarian in which a one-quarter-inch diagonal cut is made to remove the point of a cat's ear, and is preferably, but not exclusively, on the cat's left ear, to identify the cat as being sterilized and lawfully vaccinated.

(22[47]) EUTHANASIA means to put an animal to death in a humane manner.

(23[48]) FENCED YARD means an area that is completely surrounded by a substantial fence of sufficient strength, height, construction, materials, and design as to prevent:

(A) any animal confined within from escaping; or

(B) the head of a dog confined within from extending over, under, or through the fence.

(24[49]) FERAL CAT means any homeless, wild, or untamed cat.

(25[20]) LICENSED VETERINARIAN means a person licensed to practice veterinary medicine within the United States, or an authorized representative under that person's direct supervision.

(26[24]) LIVESTOCK means any fowl, horse, mule, burro, ass, cattle, sheep, swine, goat, llama, emu, ostrich, or other common farm animal.

(27[22]) LOOSE means an unrestrained domestic animal or livestock that is outside the boundaries of the premises owned, leased, or legally occupied by the animal's owner.

(28[23]) MICROCHIP means a passive electronic device that is injected into an animal by means of a pre-packaged, sterilized implanting device for purposes of identification and/or the recovery of the animal by its owner.

(29[24]) ONE-YEAR RABIES VACCINE means a rabies vaccine labeled and licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as immunizing a dog, cat, or ferret against rabies for one year.

(30[25]) OWN means to have legal right of possession or to otherwise have care, custody, possession, or control of an animal.

(31[26]) OWNER means any person owning, harboring, or having care, custody, possession, or control of an animal. An occupant of any premises on which a dog or cat remains, or customarily returns to, is an owner for purposes of this chapter. If a person under the age of 17 years owns an animal, the parent, legal guardian, or head of the household is the owner for purposes of this chapter. There may be more than one owner for an animal.

(32[27]) PERMITTEE means a person issued a breeding permit under Section 7-4.11 of this chapter.

(33[28]) PERSON means an individual or group of individuals acting in concert, a firm, partnership, association, corporation, or other legal entity.

(34[29]) PET means a domestic animal to be kept as a human's companion.

(35[30]) PROHIBITED ANIMAL means:

Community Cat Ordinance Draft Progress

(A) a “dangerous wild animal” as that term is defined in Section 822.101 of the Texas Health and Safety Code, as amended;

(B) a margay, badger, wolf, dingo, elephant, hippopotamus, rhinoceros, non-human primate (other than a spider monkey or capuchin), crocodile, alligator, caiman, gavial, venomous amphibian or reptile, racer, boa (other than a red-tail boa), water snake, python (other than a ball python), hawk, eagle, vulture, and owl; and

(C) any hybrid of an animal listed in Paragraph (A) or (B) of this subsection (other than a dog-wolf hybrid).

(36[34]) PROPERLY FITTED means, with respect to a collar or harness used for a dog, a collar or harness that:

(A) does not impede the dog’s normal breathing or swallowing; and

(B) is attached to the dog in a manner that does not allow for escape and does not cause injury to the dog.

(37[32]) PROTECTIVE CUSTODY means the holding of an animal in a city animal shelter:

(A) due to the arrest, eviction, hospitalization, or death of the animal’s owner;

(B) pursuant to a court order; or

(C) at the request of a law enforcement agency.

(38[33]) REGULATED ANIMAL means any animal other than a prohibited animal, livestock, or domestic animal.

(39[34]) RETAIL PET STORE means a business that regularly sells animals for pet purposes to an ultimate owner. The term includes any owner, operator, agent, or employee of the business.

(40[35]) SERVICE ANIMAL means:

(A) any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, and assisting non-ambulatory persons by pulling a wheelchair or fetching dropped items; and

(B) any trained animal used by a governmental agency in police and rescue work.

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(41[36]) TETHER means restraining an animal or the act of chaining, tying, fastening, or otherwise securing an animal to a fixed point so that it can move or range only within certain limits.

(42[37]) TETHERING DEVICE means a cable, chain, cord, leash, rope, or other means of attaching an animal to a stationary object.

(43[38]) THREE-YEAR RABIES VACCINE means a rabies vaccine labeled and licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as immunizing a dog or cat against rabies for three years.

(44) TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN (TNR) means a nonlethal, humane alternative to deal with community cats which are humanely trapped, sterilized, vaccinated, ear-tipped, and returned to their original location in order to encourage the stabilization of the free-roaming cat population in the city.

SECTION 2. That Section 7-3.1, “Loose Animals,” of Article III, “Care and Treatment of Animals,” of Chapter 7, “Animals,” of the Dallas City Code, is amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 7-3.1. LOOSE ANIMALS.

(a) An owner commits an offense if the owner fails to restrain the animal, at all times:

(1) in a fenced yard;

(2) in an enclosed pen;

(3) in a structure; or

(4) by a tethering device, but only if the animal is in the owner’s immediate possession and accompanied by the animal’s owner, and, if the animal is a dog, the owner complies with the requirements in Section 7-4.7 of this chapter.

(b) An owner commits an offense if the owner restrains a domestic animal without providing the domestic animal access, at all times, to potable water and shelter which protects the domestic animal from direct sunlight, standing water, and extreme weather conditions, including conditions in which:

(1) the actual or effective outdoor temperature is below 32 degrees Fahrenheit;

(2) a heat advisory has been issued by a local or state authority or jurisdiction;

or

(3) a hurricane, tropical storm, or tornado warning has been issued for the jurisdiction by the National Weather Service.

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Community Cat Ordinance Draft Progress

(c) It is a defense to prosecution under Subsection (a) that the animal was:

(1) a dog in an off-leash site established under Section 32-6.1 of this code; or

(2) a community ~~feral~~ cat participating in a trap-neuter-return framework ~~program~~ approved by the director.

(d) It is a defense to prosecution under Subsection (b) that[-

~~(4)]~~ the domestic animal was

(1) a dog[-]

~~(A[2])~~ that ~~the dog~~ was restrained by a tethering device while in the owner's immediate possession and accompanied by the dog's owner; and

~~(B[4])~~ the owner was in compliance with the requirements in Section 7-4.7 of this chapter; or [-]

(2) a community cat."

SECTION 3. That Section 7-3.3, "Trapping Animals," of Article III, "Care and Treatment of Animals," of Chapter 7, "Animals," of the Dallas City Code, is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 7-3.3. TRAPPING ANIMALS.

(a) A person commits an offense if he uses, places, sets, or causes to be set in the city any steel jaw trap, spring trap with teeth or perforated edges on the holding mechanism, or any type of trap with a holding mechanism designed to reasonably ensure the cutting, slicing, tearing, or otherwise traumatizing of the entrapped animal.

(b) A person commits an offense if he traps a community cat for:

(1) euthanasia; or

(2) relocation.

(c) Community cat caregivers or other individuals may not trap cats on private property without the consent of the property owner or occupant.

(d) It is a defense to prosecution under Subsection (a) that the trap was:

(1) specifically designed and used to kill common rodents such as rats and mice, and the trap was not placed in a manner or location that would endanger other animals or humans; or

(2) specifically designed to kill and was used under the direction of the city public health officer, the city environmental health officer, or an agent of another governmental entity authorized by the director to trap in the city.

(e) It is a defense to prosecution under Subsection (b)(1) if euthanasia was:

(1) determined by a licensed veterinarian to be the best course of action for the community cat's quality of life; or

(2) approved by the director for health or public safety concerns.

(f) It is a defense to prosecution under Subsection (b)(2) if relocation was approved by the director for health or public safety concerns."

SECTION 4. That Article III, "Care and Treatment of Animals," of Chapter 7, "Animals," of the Dallas City Code, is amended by adding a new Section 7-3.6, "Community Cat Framework," to read as follows:

"SEC. 7-3.6. COMMUNITY CAT FRAMEWORK.

(a) The director shall develop and administer a trap-neuter-return (TNR) framework designed to reduce the number of feral and stray cats that are euthanized, to establish standards for the management of community cats, and to provide for the minimization and abatement of nuisances that may be caused by them.

(b) The director may collaborate with non-profit organizations, veterinary providers, and community cat caregivers to implement this framework.

(c) All cats participating in the community cat program must:

(1) be sterilized;

(2) be vaccinated against rabies (and other core diseases in accordance with current veterinary standards);

(3) be ear-tipped;

(4) meet the definition of a community cat; and

(5) be microchipped as a community cat.

Community Cat Ordinance Draft Progress

(d) Community cat caregivers are not considered the owners of community cats and are not subject to ownership limits or licensing requirements for cats participating in an approved trap-neuter-return framework, regardless of microchip implantation or registration.

(e) The director shall prioritize education, mediation, and non-lethal solutions to nuisance complaints related to community cats.

(f) Community cat caregivers will not be fined or penalized for maintaining colonies in accordance with this ordinance.

(g) A community cat or community cat colony poses a public nuisance if:

(1) the community cat or colony produces unreasonable noise as described in Section 30-2(3);

(2) the animal is continuously attempting to bite or scratch without approach or provocation;

(3) a community cat destroys or damages private property; or

(4) there is an accumulation of food waste, garbage, or debris leading to attraction of vermin or wild animals or unsanitary conditions or odors that negatively impact neighboring properties.

(h) The director may intervene if a community cat or community cat colony is creating a verified nuisance or public health risk, including authorizing and providing resources for the relocation of the cat or colony in coordination with caregivers.

SECTION 5. That a person violating a provision of this ordinance is, upon conviction, punishable by a fine not to exceed \$500.

SECTION 6. That Chapter 7 of the Dallas City Code shall remain in full force and effect, save and except as amended by this ordinance.

SECTION 7. That any act done or right vested or accrued, or any proceeding, suit, or prosecution had or commenced in any action before the amendment or repeal of any ordinance, or part thereof, shall not be affected or impaired by amendment or repeal of any ordinance, or part thereof, and shall be treated as still remaining in full force and effect for all intents and purposes as if the amended or repealed ordinance, or part thereof, had remained in force.

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SECTION 8. That the terms and provisions of this ordinance are severable and are governed by Section 1-4 of Chapter 1 of the Dallas City Code, as amended.

SECTION 9. That this ordinance shall take effect immediately from and after its passage and publication in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the City of Dallas, and it is accordingly so ordained.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

BERTRAM A. VANDENBERG, Interim City Attorney

By _____
Assistant City Attorney

Passed _____

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Feral and Community Cat Overview and Potential Policy Considerations Update

Quality of Life, Arts, and Culture Committee

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