



MEMORANDUM

Date: January 22, 2014

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator 

Re: **Pima Animal Care Center Community Cats Project Grant Application**

As an extension of the Board's direction to increase lifesaving efforts at the Pima Animal Care Center (PACC), shelter staff has applied for a three-year Community Cats Project grant from the national Best Friends Animal Society. PACC has been pre-identified from a very limited pool of potential applicants because of the shelter's persistent progress in improving its live-release rate.

The Community Cats Program essentially replaces euthanasia of feral cats, which have never been socialized to people, with trap/neuter/return services, commonly referred to as "TNR" in the animal welfare community. Under this technique, feral cats are trapped, surgically sterilized and then returned to their territory with a tipped ear, signaling the cat has already been sterilized and will not need to be trapped again.

The program includes sterilizing healthy, free-roaming cats brought into the shelter and then returning them to their habitat, while also proactively identifying "hot spot" areas and providing targeted colony management.

There are several reasons this is a preferred method of feral cat management. These cats have never been domesticated. Fearful of people, they are not likely to be adopted and are not likely to adapt to a family environment. As a result, PACC euthanizes approximately 1,600 feral cats annually. This management method will have the immediate effect of reducing euthanasia rates, which has been a heightened focus at PACC.

In Fiscal Year 2012/13, PACC's live release rate was 64 percent; up from 55 percent the previous year. Even so, PACC still euthanized approximately 7,000 animals, so there is capacity for improvement.

In fact, in the first six months of Fiscal Year 2013/14, PACC's live release rate is 74 percent. Reducing euthanasia of feral cats would further assist those efforts.

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This management method also has a longer-term advantage of immediately eliminating new litters of feral cats, thereby permanently reducing the feral cat population and eventually reducing the numbers of kittens and cats coming to the shelter in the first place.

Sterilization itself reduces nuisance behaviors; and since cats are territorial and protect their areas, they will prevent un-sterilized cats from moving in and growing a colony. In the rare cases of neighborhood conflict, the County can explore the feasibility of relocating cats, given open space holdings that include ranch properties that could benefit from natural rodent control.

A similar program has been successful in many other areas, including Albuquerque, New Mexico; where cat euthanasia rates have dropped dramatically at its Animal Welfare Department. The Best Friends Community Cats Program staff reports a save rate for cats approaching 90 percent in Albuquerque, with a sister program in San Antonio, Texas likewise reporting strong results.

Best Friends has indicated the awarded organization will be notified March 25 of its successful application, with the specific amount of funding to be determined based on a number of factors, including the amount of community cats in the area, the ability to decrease euthanasia rates and the likelihood of program success.

CHH/mjk

c: Jan Leshar, Deputy County Administrator for Medical and Health Services
Kim Janes, Manager, Pima Animal Care Center