



Toronto  
Feral Cat Coalition  
2017/2018  
REPORT

JOHN TORY  
MAYOR

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# *Proclamation*

## **Feral Cat Awareness Day**

**October 16, 2017**

WHEREAS Feral Cat Awareness Day is an opportunity to educate cat owners and caregivers about a number of resources available to them including the Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program and colony management in Toronto, to help control the feral and street cat populations.

Toronto Animal Services is a member of the Toronto Feral Cat Coalition and participates in the TNR program. Catching feral cats, spaying/neutering them and returning them to their colony is one of the ways Toronto Animal Services is helping to control their population.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Mayor John Tory, on behalf of Toronto City Council, do hereby proclaim **October 16, 2017** as "**Feral Cat Awareness Day**" in the City of Toronto.



John Tory  
Mayor of Toronto



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## Chair Report Letter

In 2017/18, the Toronto Feral Cat Coalition (the Coalition) continued to deliver exceptional services to residents of Toronto caring for feral cats.

- Coalition member group, Community Cats Toronto, trained 245 people on feral cat colony best practices through their Caretaker Workshop resulting in a total of 2,356 people trained in colony management since the beginning of the program. CCT was invited to provide training in Peterborough, Codrington and Oshawa, all of which are either reviewing or have implemented TNR in their communities.
- Over 1200 spayed or neutered cats were cared for by 14 volunteers at the Coalition's Recovery Centre in Scarborough.
- Over 3200 cats were spayed and neutered through Toronto Animal Services, Toronto Humane Society and Toronto Street Cats.
- Over 646 shelters were built by 170 Toronto Street Cats volunteers with a total of over 5700 built since the Coalition formed in 2010.
- The Coalition hosted visits from advocates and staff from Hamilton and New York City and fielded inquiries from four other municipalities across Canada.
- Over 5,000 Coalition brochures were distributed through the Toronto Public Library system and community events.
- Implemented a new software system to record colony data, support colony managers, and measure changes in individual and total number of colonies.

The Coalition strives to align services and communications in support of Toronto Animal Services' progressive policies addressing feral cats. Significant development was made when we took the necessary steps to align data collection. Implementing use of the cloud-based software, Cat Stats, not only means collective data is readily accessible, but also means communications among Coalition member groups can be streamlined.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank Toronto City Council for supporting the work of the Coalition and the residents and cats of Toronto.

### **Penny Cookson**

Director, Community Cats Toronto  
Chair, Toronto Feral Cat Coalition

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## Definitions

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**Feral cat**

a cat found in the City of Toronto that has no owner, is not socialized and is extremely fearful or resistant to humans.

**Stray cat**

a cat who has been abandoned but is socialized to humans.

**TNR program**

a trap-neuter-return (“TNR”) program that traps feral cats, sterilizes and attempts to return them to the locations where they were found.

**Caretaker**

residents who voluntarily care for the homeless outdoor cats in their neighborhoods.

**Colony**

a collective term, referring to a group of mostly or all feral cats in the City of Toronto that congregate as a unit.

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### NOTES

Cats in a neighbourhood are sometimes referred to as “community cats” or “free-roaming cats” and can be feral or stray.

A “free-roaming cat” is a cat not confined to a house or enclosure and can be feral, stray or owned.

“Feral” describes a behavioural characteristic, not biology.



## Purpose of the Organization

We are a coalition of municipal animal controls, humane organizations and rescue groups whose volunteers work collectively to improve the lives of feral and free-roaming cats through strategic TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return) programs and to address the numbers of homeless and feral cats living on the streets.

Our Vision is to be the most progressive and accomplished coalition in Canada by elevating the value of cats and by being a role model for other community coalitions.

Our mandate is to:

- Help reduce feral cat over-population in Toronto via TNR and accessible spay/neuter clinics in a coordinated manner;
- Educate and build awareness amongst cat owners and caregivers about the breadth of resources available for TNR and colony management in Toronto; and
- Support the ongoing welfare of Toronto's colonies.

The Coalition operates in accordance with Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 349, Animals, which provides Toronto Animal Services and Toronto residents with the legislative support necessary to care for lost and abandoned cats.

Coalition member groups include Toronto Animal Services, Toronto Humane Society, Community Cats Toronto, Toronto Cat Rescue, Toronto Street Cats, Annex Cat Rescue, Animal Alliance of Canada and the Ontario SPCA.



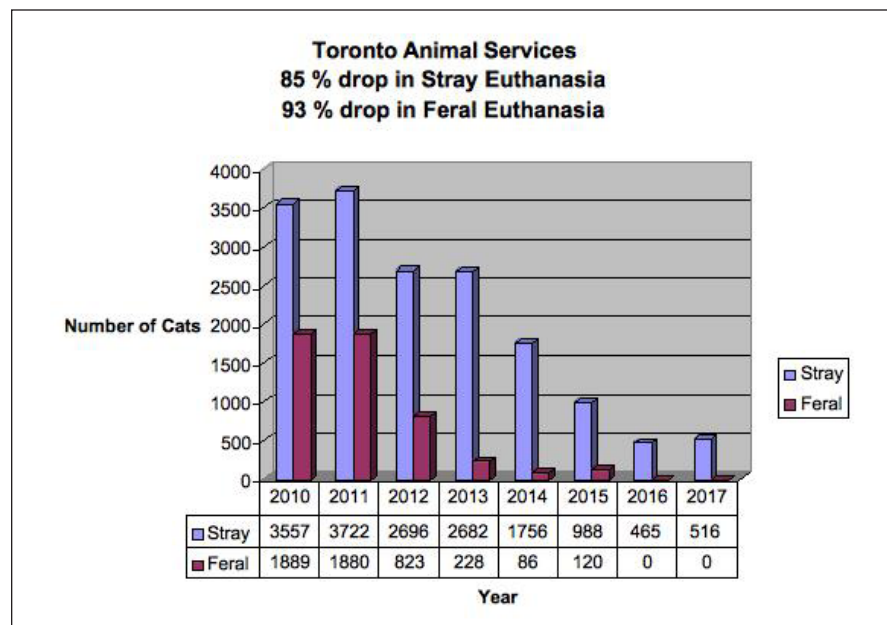
## Historical Context

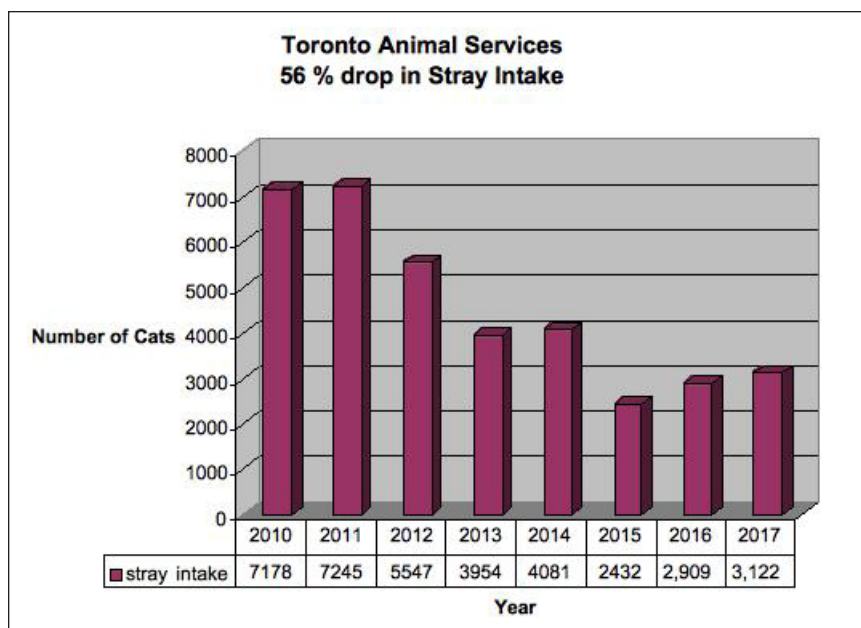
The City of Toronto's feral cat population was once estimated to be as high as 100,000.

In 2009 having secured much-needed funding for shelter renovations to TAS's East Shelter, Councilor Glenn De Baeremaeker stipulated that renovations would include a spay/neuter clinic for a feral cat trap-neuter-return (TNR) program. Organizations and individuals involved in cat rescue were invited by the City to a meeting and this was the beginning of the coordinated effort to assist colony caretakers – residents who volunteer their time and money to care for feral cats.

In 2010 the Toronto Feral Cat Coalition was formed. It was decided that in order to access free spay/neuter clinics, caretakers would first have to complete a 3-hour workshop about best practices, hosted by Community Cats Toronto, a group dedicated to education and colony data collection. Upon completing the course caretakers could make an appointment with the City's clinic. The clinic opened in August 2010. Soon after, Toronto Street Cats, a group of volunteer veterinarians operating out of the Toronto Humane Society, also began to offer free spay/neuter surgeries to certified caretakers. Clinics run by the Toronto Humane Society and the Ontario SPCA additionally provide free surgeries. Since 2010, the combined efforts of these clinics have sterilized well over 15,000 feral cats free of cost to caretakers.

Between 2010 and 2017, euthanasia of feral cats at City shelters decreased by over 90% and stray intake decreased by 56%. We believe, with the City's implementation of additional progressive policies and additional partnerships, these numbers will continue to drop.





## Recovery Centre

However, in pursuing our goals, we quickly learned that caretakers in Toronto needed more support, such as cat food and a warm, safe space to hold and recover trapped and sterilized cats. With many caretakers living in apartments or other situations with no room to keep a cat or multiple cats before and after surgery, our Coalition worked to find a solution.

In early December 2012, the Recovery Centre opened in a City of Toronto complex in Scarborough, close to the clinic at Toronto Animal Services' East Shelter. Here, volunteers from Coalition member group, Toronto Cat Rescue, manage a safe and healthy space for feral/stray cats to recover from their spay/neuter surgeries, prior to being returned to their colonies.

Toronto Cat Rescue volunteers handle the feeding and care of the cats. This adds a layer of safety for them and the cats and ensures proper sanitation protocols are being followed.

In addition to providing a safe and secure place for cats to recover, the Centre is also a place for caretaker support and for Coalition members to store supplies and materials pertaining to TNR programs and feral cats. The Centre manages a "trap bank" to provide traps to colony caretakers and trappers who do not have access to them otherwise and has volunteer-made overwintering shelters available for purchase.

The Centre is equipped with a loading dock, allowing large corporate donations of food to be accepted and redistributed to colony caretakers. In 2017/18 the Centre redistributed over 50,000 pounds of donated food.

Half of the Centre's operational budget is paid by Toronto Animal Services with the remainder covered by other Coalition member groups.

In 2017/18 the Centre admitted over 1200 cats, whose caretakers accessed the various free TNR clinics offered by Coalition member groups.



In accordance with the Coalition's mandate, member groups continue work on four specific areas of resource coordination explained below.

### Internal Communication and Data Analysis:

1. Implementation of cloud-based software: The coordinated use of Cat Stats will help to a certain degree, but the information from Cat Stats depends on the caretakers participating and regularly updating colony information, which is not a guarantee.
2. Measuring our success has been an ongoing challenge. Now that the coordination of our services has stabilized, we will be able to put more effort into measuring our impacts.

### Community Requests for Support:

3. The community identified gaps in service, prompting the Coalition to establish a Recovery Centre and a food procurement & distribution program. While use of the Recovery Centre has been steady and the Recovery Centre itself symbolizes a unique community partnership, we have yet to undertake an evaluation to identify potential cost savings or to explore expanding services and revenue opportunities.
4. Progress has been steady for some Coalition services, like food distribution, but stagnant in others, such as trapping assistance and transportation. Finding volunteers who can help with trapping and transportation has been an ongoing challenge for the Coalition. Were (volunteer) trappers and vehicles available, it is likely that our goal of maximizing the available spay/neuter clinics could be realized, allowing Coalition member groups collectively to spay/neuter 5000 feral and free-roaming cats per year.

## Goals and Measures

In 2019 we will work toward the following:

- to amalgamate and centralize completely our colony registration data, which is split between Toronto Animal Services and Community Cats Toronto;
- to survey caretakers currently registered through Cat Stats which will help to identify gaps in services;
- to access monthly call logs to the City to determine number and nature of complaints which will help to identify gaps in services;
- to solicit feedback from specific wards where TNR has taken place to know if TNR services provided have addressed community needs partially or completely;
- to compile financial data from TNR-related expenses to know true cost of efforts<sup>1</sup>; and
- to explore fully if collective ownership and use of a vehicle to be used for transportation services is feasible (including insurance arrangement, daily operation, and cost).

### **Recovery Centre use versus costs**

While the Recovery Centre has been operating for five years, the full costs remained unclear until only recently. Now that records have been corrected and bills have been settled, a proper evaluation can be conducted.

At a current approximate rate of \$36 per cat, we must consider if the goal of the Recovery Centre is achievable through alternate options or if the current cost is acceptable, sustainable and efficient. We can also explore if use of the Recovery Centre can offset other costs, such as storage.

Our goal is for the Recovery Centre to achieve financial stability in two years.

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<sup>1</sup> A conservative estimate of just four Coalition member groups (Community Cats Toronto, Toronto Cat Rescue, Toronto Street Cats and Animal Alliance of Canada): 13,187 volunteer hours valued at approximately \$167,988.

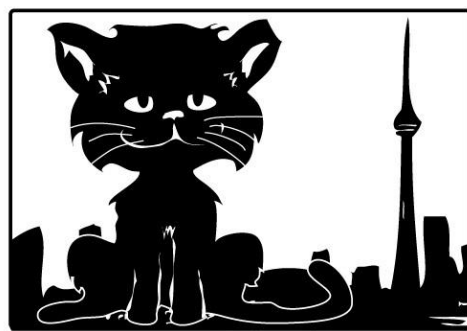
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## Conclusion

The City has implemented a number of bylaws and policies that have contributed to the significant and commendable decrease in the number of cats in the City's shelters and on the City's streets. *One particularly important contribution to this effort is the City's dedicated veterinary staff.* Having veterinarians on staff, and ones who are progressive and devoted, is one reason the City has been able to make so much progress in such a short timeframe.

The Toronto Feral Cat Coalition is enormously thankful and proud of the successful community programs and partnerships we have in Toronto. Our goals of reducing the feral cat population also reduce the suffering of ferals. Our goals also help to decrease unnecessary euthanasia in City shelters. We will endeavour to ensure that the City's success continues as a shining example to municipalities throughout Canada and within the communities we serve.

We would like to extend our thanks to Toronto City Council, Toronto City staff and the supporters and volunteers of all our Coalition member groups for making this work for the community possible.



**Toronto Feral Cat Coalition**

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