

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

On the Positive Side

Do your part to help curb cat killing in Las Cruces

By Michel Meunier For the Sun-News

Posted: 06/25/2011 11:03:15 PM MDT

In the last few weeks, ACTion Programs for Animals (APA) has been getting lots of calls from people trying to find homes for newborn kittens and their mamas. We are not the only group being inundated with requests for assistance for cats.

If you are like me, you first get angry when you hear this because you know that our community's animal-welfare systems are currently failing cats. There are tons of cats running loose and procreating and there are tons of cats at our municipal animal shelter losing their lives by the hundreds each month. It's a never-ending cycle of birth, struggle and death. It is a senseless waste of taxpayer dollars and a senseless waste of life.

Right now, so many cats are entering the municipal shelter that 80 percent or more are being killed. The public should know that if a cat is trapped and sent to the shelter via Animal Control, chances are the cat will be deemed "feral" and be killed shortly after arriving at the shelter. I can't imagine many cats I know that would remain calm after being captured and left out in the open in a room with dozens of strange cats. Our mantra at APA is to only go to our municipal shelter as a last resort with unwanted animals, and this is especially true for cats.

In such a dire situation, it is hard to find the positive. If you are the guardian of a cat, especially one that goes outdoors, the most important step you can take right now is to microchip your cat if you have not already done so. The microchip will be your cat's saving grace should he or she end up at our shelter in a trap. Be sure you keep your microchip information up-to-date as well. When you change your phone number or move, contact your microchip company to make the change with them.

Consider also purchasing and installing cat fencing to keep your cat away from your neighbors and to protect him or her from the many dangers on the streets. Look up cat fencing options at www.deerbusters.com, www.purrfectfence.com, or go to the Alley Cat Allies website at www.alleycat.org and search for their instructions for a do-it-yourself cat fence you can put up with materials from your hardware store.

If you are a person irked by cats, there are steps to take and considerations to ponder before acting on your impulse, if you are thinking of trapping loose cats in your area and sending them off to their deaths. After all, once you get rid of that one or two, it won't be long before some new cats move into the area to start irking you all over again. That's part of the endless cycle of the catch-and-kill method. There are ways to deal with common nuisances; call us for advice or to put you in touch with a feral cat expert at (575) 644-0505.

If you are a person wanting to help cats in your area, consider trapping and fixing them instead of sending them off with Animal Control. While you work on the issue slowly but surely, look into purchasing some FeralStat, which is an affordable contraceptive you can feed cats to stop the mating while you have the cats spayed and neutered. Go to www.feralstat.com or call (860)399-0097.

The bottom line is we can each do something to help curb the killing of unwanted cats and prevent future litters. We can fight the current system instead of feeding cats into it as we are doing now. Some of us can also keep up the pressure to change our animal-welfare systems into ones that are more cat-savvy, humane and that offer effective methods of population control.

Michel Meunier is President and Director of ACTion Programs for Animals.