

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

It took a while, but registered cat colonies are now legal

By Frank Bryce

Special to the Sun-News

In December of 2013, the Doña Ana County Commissioners adopted a revision of the county's animal control ordinance.

Covering a range of improvements, the new ordinance includes the decriminalization of community cat colony management.

Before, many illegal outside cat groups had existed throughout the county.

The new provision allows for maintenance of outside cat groups with specific requirements for humane treatment of outside cats, for public safety and to reduce predation of wildlife.

The new ordinance took effect in January.

On Nov. 3, after an extended session, the Las Cruces City Council moved the city animal-control ordinance into a new enlightened era with a similarly written revision.

With some contentious discussion, strong attempts to substantially amend the city's proposed revision and the obvious desire to undertake changes in the near future, the council voted six to one in favor of accepting the ordinance as proposed with only a minor data-collection amendment. After more than six years of consideration and discussion, the actions by the city and county officials and our communities demonstrates a commitment to a more humane and safe environment.

Those who currently are active with outside cat groups can register as a community cat colony manager in cooperation with sponsoring animal advocacy organizations. Rabies vaccinations, spay or neuter, microchipping and ear tipping, along with colony cat information collection and records maintenance, are the responsibility of the colony manager. Cooperation between the colony manager, the sponsoring organization and animal control department will ensure compliance and appropriate resolution to any issues.

Community cat colony manager registrations for outside cat sites both in Doña Ana County and Las Cruces are being accepted by the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico. Resources for trapping, spaying or neutering, rabies vaccinations and microchipping are available. Cat colony management requirements for city and county are to be accomplished as quickly as is reasonable. Community cat colony managers are expected to be responsible for the costs of compliance as much as possible, though some funding may be available through donations and grants.

Persons desiring to participate as a community cat colony manager should contact HSSNM by phone at 575-523-8020 or 575-647-1416, by mail at P.O. Box 13826, Las Cruces, NM 88013, or email fvbryce@hotmail.com as early as possible for registration and complete information about the program. Without registration and compliance with the new ordinances, those maintaining outside cat groups will be in violation of the ordinances and can be cited, as well as having the cats removed.

HSSNM will be providing traps, transport and other assistance as needed and available. Due to the anticipated participation and estimated number of sites involved, additional volunteers are being sought. Interested volunteers or donors can contact HSSNM.

A fun way to help support HSSNM programs for animals is to purchase tickets to HSSNM and Black Box Theatre benefit play "A Tuna Christmas" for the 2:30 p.m. performance on Nov. 23, 430 N. Downtown Mall. Tickets are \$15 at the door or in advance by calling 575-523-8020 or by emailing jigilbert@zianet.com.

Frank Bryce is president of HSSNM at 575-523-8020.