



Paw Prints

December 2014

Issue 2

The Delaware Office of Animal Welfare Newsletter

Topics of Interest

The Spay and Neuter Performance Review

Committee's next meeting is January 28, 2015 at 2:30 p.m.

Details can be found on the public calendar:

<http://egov.delaware.gov/pmc/#agency157>



Publication of regulations for public comment:

Regulations concerning shelter standards, including euthanasia in animal shelters, will be posted for public comment on February 1, 2015. The public may view draft regulations after that date at <http://regulations.delaware.gov/>



The First State Paw Draw License Plate Contest winner will be announced on January 14, 2015!



The Delaware Office of Animal Welfare

Hetti Brown
Executive Director

Christina Motoyoshi
Deputy Director

Sauna McVey
Program Coordinator

Jane Walmsley
Delaware Animal Response Coordinator

Mark Tobin
Animal Welfare Enforcement Officer

Michael McCants
Administrative Specialist

Contact Us:

Visit our Web site:

<http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/oaw/oawhome.html>

Call 302-255-4620

Fax 302-255-4621

E-mail: DHSS_OAW@state.de.us

Jennifer Wooleyhand,
Newsletter Design

'TIS THE SEASON FOR PET SAFETY

As the holidays approach and temperatures fall, it's important to protect our pets from common—and not so common—hazards.

Just like people, pets who spend a lot or all of their time outdoors in winter can suffer from frostbite, hypothermia, and other life-threatening injuries. During the holidays, our indoor pets face a whole new set of risks! Mark Tobin, Animal Welfare Enforcement Officer for the Office of Animal Welfare, shares some helpful tips to keep your pets safe this season.



Cold Weather Tips:

- **Bring pets indoors** - This is the safest place for your pet during cold temperatures. Short-haired pets and very young or old pets should never be left outdoors in cold temperatures. All pets are at risk in cold temperatures, regardless of breed.
- **Protect outdoor pets from the elements** - If your pet must be outdoors, you must provide a dry, draft-free shelter from the elements. Housing should be appropriately sized for the animal and designed for animal sheltering. In Delaware, you must also provide moisture-resistant bedding that will help to retain body heat, such as straw or cedar shavings. It is a good idea to provide a water-proof flap over the doorway to protect pets from wind and rain.
- **Ensure access to water at all times** - Frequently check water bowls to ensure water is not frozen. If you typically use a metal watering bowl, replace it with plastic, as a pet's tongue can get stuck to metal in cold temperatures.
- **Additional food may be needed** - Since animals burn more calories in cold temperatures to stay warm, you may also need to increase the amount of food you provide. Check with your veterinarian about your pet's nutritional needs in cold weather.

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Cold Weather Tips *continued from page 1*

- **Protect the feet** – Potentially dangerous chemicals, such as salt or antifreeze, can burn and injure feet. Protecting your pet’s feet with booties or other pet-designed footwear can reduce injury. When your pet comes indoors, wipe his feet, legs, and stomach so he cannot get sick from licking harmful substances off himself.

If you see a pet that has been left outdoors in cold temperatures without proper shelter or protection from the elements, or without food or water, report it immediately to Delaware Animal Care and Control at 302-698-3006.

Holiday Safety Tips:



- **Know the edible dangers** – Many holiday plants, such as poinsettias, mistletoe, and holly, are dangerous for pets if ingested. The same is true for pine needles. Make sure these plants are kept out-of-reach from Fido or kitty. If you suspect that your pet has eaten something toxic, call your veterinarian and/or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center's 24-hour emergency hotline at 888-4-ANI-HELP.
- **If you celebrate with a Christmas tree, think of pet safety** – Anchoring your tree with string to the ceiling or other object can prevent it from falling on your pet. Never allow pets to drink the tree water, as it can be toxic to animals, especially if there is aspirin in the water (believed to keep trees fresher longer). Tinsel and ornaments can also be harmful if ingested, so place these items out of reach.
- **Holiday festivities can be stressful for pets.** Make sure your pet has a quiet, safe place to retreat to if she becomes overwhelmed.
- **No human food for pets** – Holiday foods and desserts can cause illnesses, vomiting, and diarrhea in pets. Do not let your guests feed your pets human food, especially bones.
- **Pet safety and fire safety go hand-in-hand** – Keep candles out of reach and use a screen in front of fireplaces to protect pets from injury and reduce the risk of a house fire.



PET OWNERS' GUIDE TO

Finding a LOST PET



You may think your pet could never become lost—but this unthinkable event happens to thousands of Americans each year. A lost pet is a heart-wrenching situation; you don't know if your pet is hurt, or scared, or worse. You just miss them, and want them back safely — as soon as possible. While the percentage of pets actually recovered once lost is dauntingly low, you can greatly increase your chances of being reunited with your own pet if you take a few moments to prepare for an unexpected separation.

First, do all you can to prevent being separated from your pet.

- **Spay or Neuter** – A pet is much less likely to roam or run away if spayed or neutered. Low-cost spay/neuter is available in Delaware. Visit de.gov/fixmypet for more information.
- **Other Tips** - Ensure windows have secure screens, always keep your dog on a leash unless in an enclosed area, keep fences in good repair, and do not leave a dog unattended in a car or tied to a post when you go into a store.

Prepare a Lost Pet Packet With:

- a clear photograph of your pet;
- a detailed description of your pet;
- local animal control contact information;
- dog license and rabies tag numbers;
- microchip information (identifying number and contact information for the company that issued the microchip);
- a copy of your pet's vaccination records; and,
- the contact information of local veterinarians and animal shelters within a 50-mile radius.

Prepare for a lost pet—but with a plan to bring them home:

- **Collar and ID Tag** - Be sure your cat (even indoor cats) or dog wears a collar with an ID tag that shows the phone number where you can be reached most quickly. A reflective, break-a-way or snag-free collar is best, and found in most pet supply stores.
- **Microchip** - Found pets are often scanned for a microchip—which greatly increases their chance of being reunited with their owner. Micro-chipping costs as little as \$25 dollars at many shelters or veterinarians' offices.
- **Register and Update Your Microchip** – Register the microchip with the issuer immediately. Update your information so if you move or change phone numbers, you can be reached easily.
- **Photos** - Have clear close-up and full-body photos of your pet to create LOST notice flyers or social media posts.
- **Contact Numbers** – Have the contact information of local animal control organizations and animal shelters.

If your pet does become lost:

- **React immediately!** Every minute takes your pet farther away from you.
- **Go door-to-door, seek help** from family, friends, and neighbors. Post flyers in busy areas, like shelters, vet offices, and stores.
- **Call the animal control organization and shelters** within a 50-mile radius to file a lost report. Check shelter and rescue group websites daily for found pet postings, and visit shelters often.
- **Place a "Lost Pet" ad** on Craigslist, newspapers, lost pet websites, and on Facebook. Check Found Pet sections.
- **Put out food**, water, and your pet's bed or an article of your clothing at the location where your pet was last seen.
- **A scared cat** may seek a quiet spot to hide, especially if unused to being outside. Check crawl spaces under your home and nearby homes, sheds, and garages. Cats know the sound of treats being offered; go out and make noise with the packaging.
- **Don't give up!** Pets can be found weeks, and even months later.

See more tips and links to resources at The Missing Pet Partnership www.missingpetpartnership.org and The Center for Lost Pets www.TheCenterForLostPets.com. For more information, visit the Delaware Animal Control and Shelter websites below.

Animal Control in Delaware

First State Animal Center and SPCA: www.fsac-sPCA.org
or call 302-698-3006.

Delaware Animal Shelters

Delaware SPCA: www.delsPCA.org

Delaware Humane Association: www.dehumane.org

Faithful Friends Animal Society : www.fithfulfriends.us

Looking Ahead:

The Future of Animal Control Services in Delaware



Recently published recommendations by the Office of Animal Welfare on Delaware animal control services outline a plan for consolidation, enhanced public service, and a model that will sustain through changing animal shelter environments.

Below is an excerpt from that report. To read the full report, visit <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/oaw/oawhome.html>

Background

Animal control management has changed significantly over the past several years. Prior to 2010, the responsibility of dog control enforcement fell to the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) and was a statewide, state-funded function. DNREC contracted with local non-profit agencies to carry out enforcement and sheltering responsibilities mandated by the Delaware Code and expected by the public. Those contracted agencies provided comprehensive animal control, including services for stray cats, nuisance wildlife, and stray livestock, and these services were in addition to animal cruelty enforcement the agencies were providing to the state at no cost.

In 2010, after a transitional phase, DNREC turned over dog control to each county. This transition was the result of several years of discussions among DNREC, state, and county officials. In the end, New Castle, Kent, and Sussex counties, as well as the City of Wilmington, assumed jurisdiction over dog control responsibilities outlined in Title 9, Chapter 9. Responsibility included, but was not limited to: picking up of dogs running at large, managing dog licenses, enforcing housing and care requirements, and managing the State Dog Control Panel.

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Challenges with the Current Model *Continued from page 4*

There are several reasons why the current animal services model in Delaware is unsustainable:

- **Limited market competition.** There is currently only one provider willing to bid on animal-related enforcement contracts in Delaware. This places the public in a vulnerable position during contract negotiations if the provider decides to end service at the end of a contract term.
- **Market instability threatens continuity in service.** Reliance on private entities to provide law enforcement causes the current model to be extremely unstable. As experienced by county, city, and state governments in recent years, the ability of the government to ensure public service hinges on the whims of changing Boards of Directors and management teams of private, non-profit organizations.
- **The public does not have adequate control over the quality of service or business practices of the contracted agency.** Because of a limited marketplace characterized by a contract-for-service model, there is little opportunity for recourse when business practices conflict with public expectations.
- **Public animal control services are incomplete.** Since 2010, while costs for services have increased, services have been cut. There are currently no services offered for injured or stray cats and stray livestock, and there are limited services for criminal animal cruelty enforcement.



Recommendations? Guiding Principles

To achieve an effective and sustainable animal control model, the following principles should be applied:

- Services should be clearly defined and delivered in a way that meets **broadly-recognized community expectations** for animal care and control.
- The animal control model should demonstrate **strong collaboration** between state, county, and city governments, as well as the non-profit animal welfare sector.
- The government should have **control over the quality of services** provided to its constituents and the power to effectively investigate and handle constituent complaints.
- The animal control structure should allow for **market competition**. A system that is hindered by a limited number of providers or that does not promote and allow market competition is not sustainable.

Solution

- The Office of Animal Welfare recommends the creation of a centralized animal control enforcement division within the Delaware Division of Public Health to carry out appropriate animal-related duties currently outlined in Title 9, Title 3, and Title 11 of the Delaware Code.
- Animal care and control enforcement services should be provided by certified officers and the cost for enforcement should be shared between New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties; the City of Wilmington; and the State of Delaware. Animal care and sheltering needs associated with the enforcement of Delaware animal care and control laws should be obtained, through contract, from local non-profit agencies with expertise in animal sheltering and care.

State Program **TARGETS** Animal Overpopulation and Euthanasia

Phones at the Office of Animal Welfare ring daily with people in search of spay and neuter services. We are thankful that so many Delawareans wish to spay or neuter these animals. The main goal of the Spay & Neuter Program is to reduce the overpopulation of cats and dogs in Delaware, and to eliminate space-based euthanasia in shelters.

More than 10,000 animals were spayed or neutered through the program since its launch in 2007. Without the program, thousands of unwanted litters may have been born, contributing to pet homelessness and euthanasia.

Hundreds of spay and neuter applications were processed in the five months since July 1, when the Spay & Neuter Program transitioned to the Delaware Division of Public Health's Office of Animal Welfare from the Delaware Department of Agriculture. We've also identified ways to better utilize Spay & Neuter Program funds to provide even more sterilization surgeries for animals not served by income-eligible clients.

The largest underserved population in Delaware is that of our community feline friends. In addition to offering 968 low-cost surgeries to pet cats since July, we've also provided free sterilization surgeries for more than 300 free-roaming cats that do not have an owner but are being cared for by good Samaritans.

We did this by partnering with non-profit rescue organizations who have the capacity to trap and transport cats to surgery providers, where each cat is sterilized, given a rabies vaccine, and then returned to its outdoor "home" to live out its life without future litters. To learn more about trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNR) efforts, read the article on page 7.

Our funding is not unlimited, and the Office of Animal Welfare is in search of donations and other funding sources. If you wish to donate to the Spay & Neuter Program in Delaware, you may submit a check or money order to: Office of Animal Welfare Spay & Neuter Program, 1901 N. DuPont Hwy., Carvel Building, New Castle, DE 19720. One hundred percent of your donation will be used to provide free or low-cost surgeries to animals in need. Thank you!

If you or someone you know wishes to apply to the Spay & Neuter Program, go to de.gov/fixmypet for all the details and to download an application. Those who know of a colony in need of a TNR program may call the Office of Animal Welfare at (302) 255-4620.

Spay and Neuter Program Fund

STATISTICS *

- Number of program surgery providers in Delaware: 38
- Number of non-profits that receive funds for spay/neuter: 31
- Number of Delaware citizens that have received assistance through the program: 9,333
- Number of animals approved for surgeries: 14,535
- Number of completed surgeries: 11,920

** from 2006 to current*



In a recent study by the University of Missouri, people who walked their dogs 20 minutes a day dropped an average of 14 pounds in a year. The people who walked with another person did not receive the same benefits.

Visit <https://www.petfinder.com/> to find your next walking companion at a shelter near you!

Delaware City Kitty Program Halts Cat Overpopulation

By Shauna McVey

About 230 cats in Delaware City went on veterinary getaways this summer, then returned to live out their lives in a community that welcomed them back—sans future litters.

Megan Titus started the Delaware City Kitty trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNR) program after attending the Humane Society of the United States “Rethinking the Cat” symposium in September 2013.

“The people in the town have been complaining about stray cats and saying somebody needs to do something about this,” she said. “I decided I would do something about this.”

Titus, who serves on the Delaware City Council and owns Pampered Pets Grooming Spa in the town, took her passion for having cats spayed and neutered and the knowledge she gained from the symposium to fellow council members.



Megan Titus, Delaware City councilwoman and owner of Pampered Pets Grooming, poses with Maylay and her kittens, who were part of the Delaware City Kitty TNR project. Titus fostered Maylay until she gave birth, and cared for the kittens until they were ready for adoption. Submitted photo.

“We passed an ordinance declaring TNR is the way Delaware City will handle community [feral] cats,” she said. “It’s a win-win situation. It can’t hurt the cats that are already here, and if you stop the multiplication, you’re going to stop the population explosion. The numbers will decrease and all the cats will be healthier.”



“...if you stop the multiplication, you’re going to stop the population explosion. The numbers will decrease and all the cats will be healthier.”

Titus said some of the cat overpopulation in Delaware City could be attributed to local renters who moved and left cats behind to procreate. She came up with the idea to ask landlords to require that all cats of renters be spayed or neutered (proven through a veterinarian letter), and was successful at getting five major landlords to agree.

With the ordinance passed, Titus scoured the town for information on the locations of community cats, who fed the cats and where, and created a map with names and phone numbers for the feeders. Then she applied for a grant through PetSmart Charities. “You do this prior to getting the grant so you know where the concentrations of cats are,” Titus said. “When you apply for a grant, you have to be very specific in answering the questions. You have to do a lot of research. That contributed to my success.”

Titus said PetSmart Charities awarded \$15,250 to provide spay and neuter surgeries for 250 cats through the Delaware Humane Association (DHA) and Forgotten Cats. PetSmart Charities uses a formula to estimate how many cats reside in a certain area. They also take into account the cost of each surgery based on where those surgeries will take place. She chose to work with Forgotten Cats, an organization dedicated to TNR, for the majority of the community cats. Pet cats were sterilized at the DHA so they could be returned to their owner the same day.

Forgotten Cats, which holds two high-volume spay and neuter clinics each week, provided traps and transported trapped cats daily to their clinic. The cats were then housed at their facility while the rest of the colony was trapped, which took days for some of the town’s colonies and weeks for others.

“If they got a trap on a Thursday and the next clinic isn’t until Monday, [the cats] are housed and fed up until Sunday night, which is a huge factor where you can trap all the time and the cats will be safe and sound,” Titus said. “They will keep them all together as a colony, then bring the whole colony back to you and let them loose.”

The DHA put a lot of the kittens up for adoption, which immediately reduced the number of cats in Delaware City. Those not appropriate for adoption programs were returned to the caretakers who will continue to care for them.

Titus said she is very grateful to PetSmart Charities, Delaware Humane Association and Forgotten Cats, and Dr. Courtney Manetti, who donated her services to perform an emergency caesarian section for one pregnant cat.

“With those organizations I was able to satisfy the public and do the feral colonies,” Titus said. “Without them, I would never have been able to accomplish this goal.”

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Tips for trapping *Continued from page 7*

Titus said one key to success is to have local residents who can speak with cat caretakers (those who feed free-roaming outdoor cats), to inform them of the process and ease their concerns. She said cats to be trapped cannot be fed for at least a day prior to the scheduled trapping so they are hungry enough to be lured into a trap for the food placed inside.

“Either the cat is going to be a little hungry for a day or so, or the cat population becomes so great that you can’t feed them all and they starve or they’re sick or dying,” she said. “Either they suffer a little bit now, or everybody is going to continue to suffer. It’s not going to hurt them not to eat for one day.”

Titus said she received the grant money June 13 and immediately got to work. Traps were set every morning and checked every evening. Traps with cats were transported to a climate-controlled shed at her home, where they were picked up by Forgotten Cats or taken to the DHA.



Peanut, who was part of the Delaware City Kitty TNR project, was born without bones in his ankle. Megan Titus worked with the Delaware Humane Association to find Peanut his forever home. Submitted photo

She said cats were trapped in quadrants and traps were set in each section until the traps were cat-free for about three days. Trappers then worked on another quadrant.

“With the help of Forgotten Cats, we were able to trap them close to each other so they couldn’t just go to another food source,” she said. “By July 13, I already had 177 cats and 10 kittens pending who were too small to get done.”

The trapping continued throughout the summer. Titus estimates 90 percent of the town’s free-roaming cats were sterilized. She is now working to trap cats “here and there.”

Unfortunately, Titus said, seven cats that were very sick and believed to be from a hoarding situation died during surgery.

“You have to prepare colony caretakers that very ill cats may pass away during or after surgery. There is just no way to medicate and hold feral cats until they are well,” she said. “They were all so, so sick. You don’t know how many die outside. You don’t see it.”

Titus said her semi-retired status allowed her the time to trap cats herself, but advises others to work with a team of trappers for most mass TNR programs.

She said smelly food should be placed inside set traps. Titus recommends tuna in oil because it keeps its smell or 9 Lives® canned cat food due to its affordability.

“You have to be hands on,” Titus explained. “You will need more than one person to be out there doing trapping, setting traps for people, picking them up and bringing them to a location where Forgotten Cats can pick them up. When a cat is in a trap, the others get upset and won’t get in a trap, so you want to remove that trap.”

Titus said space also needs to be provided to house kittens younger than eight weeks and pregnant cats until they’re able to be sterilized. She recommends working with an animal rescue or shelter organization.

“It has been a huge challenge and a huge goal that I have accomplished, and it makes me feel so good to be able to help people,” she said. “The people are so grateful. I think it’s a huge anxiety burden in their heart that they see those animals, and they can’t afford to get them fixed, and they know it’s just going to continue.”

Titus said a mass TNR program was a daunting idea until she went to the symposium, and discovered there are many organizations willing to help.

“Anybody can do it if they are willing to put in the time,” she said.

Titus advises that traps be closed overnight to prevent nocturnal wildlife from entering.

Skunks may still show up in the traps, she said, but she has a trick to releasing a skunk without causing it to spray: cut two eye holes in a flannel-backed tablecloth or blanket, hold it over oneself and approach the trap from the front. Next, lay the tablecloth or blanket over the trap, open the back door, and back away slowly. The skunk will exit quickly.



Focus: Improving Animal Cruelty Enforcement In Delaware



Protecting vulnerable populations is a fundamental role of public health and social service programs. It is also a cornerstone responsibility in the field of animal welfare, where the vulnerable cannot call for help or ask for protection. Cruelty toward animals has been linked with many other forms of violence, such as elder abuse, child maltreatment, and domestic violence. Educating children on humane animal handling and care, increasing public access to veterinary and pet wellness services, and improving the safety net for those in need are the most effective ways to prevent animal abuse.

Cruelty toward animals has been linked with many other forms of violence, such as elder abuse, child maltreatment, and domestic violence; those working on these issues have seen this overlap many times.

Officers respond to more than 600 animal cruelty calls a year involving dogs, cats, livestock, and exotic pets.

When animal cruelty does occur, we need to ensure that enforcement response is swift for the protection of animals and the public.

The Office of Animal Welfare (OAW) works closely with those on the front lines of animal cruelty enforcement, including cruelty officers, animal shelters, and prosecutors, to identify opportunities for improvement. The work started in early 2014, when members of the office met with agency leaders to outline the needs.

The largest need? Funding. Animal seized during cruelty investigations are provided with emergency and ongoing veterinary care, sheltering and nutritional care, and rehabilitation until the case resolves. This is very costly to the organizations providing service, especially when there are multiple animals involved, such as in dog fighting or animal hoarding cases. Delaware has a bond law, meaning that a person charged with animal cruelty is responsible for paying for the care of their pet until the case is resolved. We identified that the agencies were rarely reimbursed and when they were, it was at least 60 days after impoundment due to the way the law was written. The state responded to these needs by allocating \$100,000 of state funds to the Office of Animal Welfare for the support of cruelty enforcement. The Delaware General Assembly passed a law that allows shelters caring for victims of alleged cruelty to be reimbursed sooner for boarding and veterinary care.

The second largest need was more to achieve more successful prosecutions through improved communication and operational procedures between officers and prosecutors. Prosecutors may be responsible for hundreds of cases every week and while animal cruelty cases are very important to them, they consistently have to juggle many priorities. With feedback from prosecutors, the OAW identified steps that animal cruelty officers can take to enable effective prosecution, like aligning on case details before a warrant is written or decreasing timelines from warrant execution to report submission. The OAW is also working closely with leaders in animal cruelty enforcement to provide training to officers on report writing and other administrative areas to help as cases are transferred from officers to prosecutors.

Strong enforcement of animal cruelty laws is important in creating a humane community.