

HFC Committee

From: Julie Ohashi <julie.ohashi@k12.hi.us>
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 1:07 PM
To: HFC Committee
Subject: Fwd: Written testimony for Friday, May 8th County Council Meeting

Hi there,

My testimony is not on file. Can you please explain why this wasn't included? It was submitted on time. I look forward to hearing from you.

~Julie

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Julie Ohashi** <julie.ohashi@k12.hi.us>
Date: Thu, May 7, 2020 at 8:59 AM
Subject: Written testimony for Friday, May 8th County Council Meeting
To: <county.clerk@mauicounty.us>

Proposed bill 6.04.041 reads "Feeding of feral animals prohibited. No person may feed or deliberately introduce any food material, substance or attractant directly to, or in the vicinity of, any feral animal." I am left to assume that this is a feeding ban on feral cats. If that is the case I would like to know it's intended purpose/goal. I would assume that it would be an attempt to curb feral cat populations, but this is not how that would work. Feeding bans against feral cats incorrectly assume that if people stop feeding feral cats, they will simply leave the area and the problem will be over. This is not the case.

Cats will not leave areas with feeding bans.

If a feeding ban is enacted, the cats often will stay in the area and find a new source of food. Cats are scavengers and will search to find food. Feeding bans actually create more nuisance behaviors than they eliminate. The bans encourage cats to search through garbage, fails to spay/neuter cats and leads to the spread of diseases. The cats will eat garbage, scraps, other animals, etc. Malnourished cats are more susceptible to diseases and parasites. Because feeding bans do not address reproduction at all, the malnourished cats will often give birth to sick kittens who will die at a young age. Tourists probably wouldn't enjoy the direct results of such cruel policies seeing plenty of sick/dying baby kittens all over the island.

Feeding bans do not address reproduction and nuisance behaviors.

The feeding bans make the practice of Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) almost impossible because the cat caretakers cannot lure the cats to the traps with wet food. They discourage TNR which is the only proven effective course of action for stabilizing/eventually decreasing the feral cat population. Studies as well as decades of hands-on experience prove that TNR programs work to end the breeding cycle (ultimately declining their numbers), improve the cats' health, and make them better neighbors by ending mating behaviors. 5 TNR ends these nuisance behaviors while also stopping reproduction. With a feeding ban in place, TNR is impossible to carry out, and the cats continue to have new litters of kittens. Feeding bans punish the very people who are working to improve conditions for the cats and for the community. Volunteers in Maui County spend their time and money, organize low-cost spay/neuter clinics, carry out TNR programs and organize foster programs for adoptable cats and kittens. These Good Samaritans are an asset to the community. Feeding bans force their work into secrecy. Compassion should not be criminalized but encouraged. Without cat caretakers feeding and TNRing cats, there would be many, many more cats in Maui County.

Feeding bans are not scientifically supported.

Attempts to eradicate feral cats by starvation fail because there are other food sources that are a by-product of urban and suburban environments. Feral cat populations' density and locations are not contingent on individuals intentionally providing food for the cats. 1, 2 Studies have shown that other sources of food are always available – including food scraps in household trash, tourist areas, and municipal garbage facilities. 3 Cats are territorial and bond to their surroundings. As scavengers, they can find food in garbage cans and dumpsters. Cats will not disappear simply because compassionate people can no longer legally feed them. Feeding bans can encourage cats to roam their areas to find food, making them more visible, which can actually increase calls to animal control. Managing a colony with a program that includes TNR and consistent, organized feeding discourages roaming because neutered males are no longer searching for mates/spraying, and there is decreased competition for dominance rank (less fight wounds/sick cats). 4 Cats who are fed on a regular schedule tend to stay in close proximity to their feeding stations. Feeders can also exercise control over the behavior of feral cats, by gradually moving their feeding stations into less-trafficked areas.

Feeding bans are difficult to enforce; compassionate people will continue to help the cats. They are also complaint-driven, and rapidly deteriorate into a situation of extreme cruelty, with no net benefit to the community. Feeding bans ignore the real problem—the lack of affordable spay/neuter services in the community. Feeding bans are punitive and tend to direct resources towards administrative tasks like enforcement and away from incentive-based programs that encourage spay/neuter. Ineffective ordinances, like feeding bans, are a waste of taxpayer dollars.

If this proposed ban on feeding feral animals is targeting feral cats as a potential solution to the overpopulation problem then there needs to be detailed analysis regarding alternative public policy for feral cat management; one that is actually based on science. As a citizen in Maui County I oppose feeding bans for feral cats because they are wholly ineffective, especially if the goal is to make the cats disappear. The council has the opportunity to join dozens of other progressive communities across the world in ensuring implementation of wide scale TNR programs as the solution to cat overpopulation. I encourage the council to reject punitive, ineffective ordinances and instead to embrace effective programs that are proven to work at stabilizing and eventually decreasing the feral cat population.

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 2. Liberg, Olaf, Mikael Sandell, Dominique Pontier, and Eugenia Natoli. "Density, Spatial Organization and Reproductive Tactics in the Domestic Cat and Other Felids." In *The Domestic Cat: The Biology of its Behaviour*, Second Edition, edited by Dennis C. Turner and Patrick Bateson, 119-148. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
 3. United States Environmental Protection Agency. "Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Facts and Figures for 2008." Environmental Protection Agency Web Site. <http://www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/msw2008rpt.pdf> (accessed May 13, 2010).
 4. Brown, Sarah Louise. "The Social Behaviour of Neutered Domestic Cats (*Felis Catus*)." PhD Diss., University of Southampton, 1993.
 5. Alley Cat Allies, Key Scientific Studies on Trap-Neuter-Return, <http://alleycat.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=667> (last visited May 24 2010).

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