

MAUI FOREST BIRD RECOVERY PROJECT

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March 11, 2020
Maui County Council
Healthy Families and Communities Committee

To Maui Council Committee for Healthy Families and Communities and Chair Riki Hokama,

Thank you for keeping the feral cat problem on Maui on your agendas. The feral cat problem on Maui is what I would like to submit testimony on today.

My name is Dr. Hanna Mounce and I am the Coordinator of Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project as well as an upcountry resident of 15 years, a mother of two, and a local small business owner. Cats are one of the most disastrous introductions that we have brought to this island. They are spreading disease to humans and wildlife. Cats are also one of the most efficient and effective predators on the planet. Maui County has the opportunity to reign in this human health and community risk. The first step is to treat cats as the pets that they are and adopt the same regulations and enforcements as we have for dogs. This will quickly remove owned animals from the landscape and allow the County to then see the depth of the issue with un-owned free ranging animals.

At the moment, County Animal Control officers tell residents that they must tolerate free ranging cats on their properties despite the health risks to themselves and their children and the large-scale depredation of native wildlife. There is no reason that residents should be forced to tolerate other people's pets pooping in their gardens and fighting on their porches. If these animals are owned, they should be treated and contained as such.

The County should mandate the same expectations as dogs and that all cats be licensed and microchipped. Cats must be kept indoors or on a leash. Licensed animals must be spayed or neutered. Furthermore, the County must enforce the County code addressing animals in County parks and stop the feeding and encouragement of feral animal establishments in areas where our kids play and that our wildlife lives.

At your last meeting on this subject, people suggested ideas for dealing with unowned at-large cats if they were to be removed from the landscape. The only way any such strategies can be implemented is if we first require cat owners to take responsibility for their own pets. Cats are healthier and happier when treated as the house pets that they are intended to be.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hanna Mounce', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Hanna Mounce

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RECEIVED AT HFC MEETING ON 3/10/20