

HFC Committee

From: sara tekula <spectekula@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 10:43 AM
To: HFC Committee
Subject: IN SUPPORT OF Feral Animal Feeding Ban

Aloha Kakou,

First, I would like to thank each of you, our esteemed and hard-working Council Members for your impeccable service to the Maui County community through this time of much change and economic uncertainty.

I am writing today to offer testimony IN SUPPORT of the Feral Animal Feeding Ban. I had planning on attending the live online session, however I have been called into a meeting with my executive director at The Merwin Conservancy, the nonprofit where I work as Director of Programs and Communications, and I'm not sure I'll be able to make it. *I will still try!*

Here's my testimony:

My name is Sara Tekula, and I've lived on Maui for 16 years, working in the nonprofit sector, as a community event organizer, and as a private consultant for many of Maui's local small business owners. I'm a mother, a wife of an accomplished land restoration leader, an educator at the University of Hawai'i, and I'm a CAT LOVER, lifelong responsible cat "owner." I support the Feral Animal Feeding Ban that is being considered before you today. I support the ban because I care about safeguarding as many animals as we possibly can, which include farm animals that are getting sick from contaminated feed, endangered species like our beloved native monk seals swimming and literally breathing in the contaminated runoff, the invaluable cultural and ecological marvel that is 'Iao Stream sending parasites downstream, our precious and evolutionarily brilliant native sea birds being eaten alive in their ground nests, pregnant women and especially their babies in utero entering high-risk situations if they come into contact with the parasite. It's no good, and by continually allowing the feeding of feral cats, we are making this parasite spread even further, doing damage that is far beyond what is seen by the naked eye.

EXAMPLE: Feral cats in our school and home gardens means we can pick up harmful parasites from their roaming through and defecating into the soil that make our food!

Toxoplasmosis (the parasite) is the real problem here, and making a collective commitment to address the problem is the first step.

In addition, there is much documentation that feral cats (even the ones who are fed by community members) live very tragic and painful lives. They not only spread the parasite amongst each other, but they also die very young (average life span is around 5 years), are unable to care for their babies (and the more we feed them, the more able they are to

breed), and are NOT cared for the way pets are. Feeding these cats, while seemingly a noble act of care, is actually badly hurting them AND other living things.

I SUPPORT CARING FOR CATS just like I support caring for the rest of Maui's community and ecological environment. Lack of funding and short-sighted of feral animals by the State and County has led to SO many problems in our environment and many, many sick people (more than show up in the data, unfortunately). The long-term solution is not local citizens dumping off food for these animals. **We need a REAL management solution. It is time to change course.**

I would be happy to speak to any of you further about this.

Thank you for your time,

**Sara Tekula
Makawao, HI**