

## COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

*For consideration at the Standing Committee meeting of City Council on April 16, 2025*

### 2. Catalyzing Support for Feline Control Services in Vancouver

Submitted by: Councillor Fry

#### WHEREAS

1. *Felis catus*, the small carnivorous mammal otherwise known as the house cat, was first domesticated around 7500 BC. Today, they are a popular pet numbering in the tens of thousands in the City of Vancouver. According to federal government statistics for pet ownership, Canadian households with cats slightly outnumber households with dogs at 50.9% to 49.1% respectively;
2. Cats are highly adaptable animals, and occurrences of lost, abandoned, or stray cats are an unfortunate reality in the urban environment. Prior to a successful trapping and sterilization program pioneered by Vancouver Orphan Kitten Rescue Association (VOKRA), there were nearly 10,000 feral cats living on the streets of Vancouver (2017)<sup>1</sup>;
3. Stray, abandoned, or feral cats can multiply rapidly, necessitating humane and ethical population control measures. Cats can get pregnant at five months, and can have up to three litters a year. Unchecked, feral cat colonies can significantly disrupt ecosystems and pose public health risks through predation and the spread of zoonotic diseases;
4. Some other local cities manage stray cats as part of their animal control budget and resourcing:
  - **Surrey** Animal Services catch, accept surrenders, impound, provide veterinary care, and rehome cats<sup>2</sup>;
  - **Burnaby** provides assistance catching stray animals, and contracts BCSPCA for animal care, surrender, shelter, and control services<sup>3</sup>;
  - **Coquitlam** mandates cat registration and identification through its Animal Care and Control By-law<sup>4</sup>, the city-run animal shelter impounds, cares for, and re-homes abandoned cats in Coquitlam and Pitt Meadows (through a special funding agreement);

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<sup>1</sup> How Vancouver solved its feral feline problem <https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/courier-archive/news/how-vancouver-solved-its-feral-feline-problem-3052527>

<sup>2</sup> Surrey Animal Resources Centre, Animal Responsibility Bylaw <https://www.surrey.ca/services-payments/animals/surrey-animal-resource-centre/about-shelter>

<sup>3</sup> City of Burnaby; Animal Control & Burnaby SPCA

<https://www.burnaby.ca/services-and-payments/pets-and-animals/animal-control-and-burnaby-sPCA>

<sup>4</sup> Coquitlam Animal Care and Control By-law No. 4240

<https://publicdocs.coquitlam.ca/coquitlamdoc/getdocIF.asp?doc=4572110>

5. Vancouver Animal Services (VAS) do not manage or control cats – feral, stray, surrendered, or otherwise – except for temporary shelter in emergency services involved cases (when someone is jailed or dies for example) which are subsequently surrendered to VOKRA. VAS do take lost cat reports from the public, and receives dead cats picked up by sanitation to check for microchips or tattoos before cremating the bodies. In 2023 VAS processed 272 lost cat reports and 64 deceased cats, in 2024 VAS processed 281 lost cat reports and 111 deceased cats.

Independently of the city, the BCSPCA in Vancouver provide surrender, rehoming, and microchip registration for cats, they generally don't trap, catch and impound stray cats, nor do they license cats;

6. Since 2000, Vancouver Orphan Kitten Rescue Association (VOKRA) has been providing humane services to control, spay/neuter, and re-home stray, abandoned, and feral cats. The volunteer-run not for profit charity includes a network of 550 foster homes and is one of the only providers of free spay/neuter for low-income cat-owners in Vancouver, as BCSPCA ceased their program last year;

7. In Vancouver, the number of surrendered or abandoned cats has increased dramatically since COVID and has been exacerbated by the lack of affordable pet-friendly housing. In the last year, 55% of all the cats VOKRA cared for were free roaming or abandoned. According to VOKRA's records, intakes from the City of Vancouver were:

- 386 cats in 2023: 175 strays, 180 surrenders, 30 low-income owner spay/neuter, and 1 transfer from Vancouver Animal Control;
- 366 cats in 2024: 219 strays, 79 surrenders, 64 low-income owner spay/neuter, and 4 transfers from Vancouver Animal Control;

8. The City of Vancouver currently supports VOKRA through a small Animal Welfare Grant (provided to organizations to offset costs of providing supplemental animal services to the City), for 2025, staff recommended \$2,610 for VOKRA to assist with the costs of spaying/neutering, vaccination, and microchipping of six cats. VOKRA gets 70% of its revenue through individual donations, on top of sponsorships and an annual \$44k gaming grant. The BCSPCA does not provide any supporting grants; and

9. VOKRA's average basic cost for intaking a cat is \$377.56 (2024) and includes deworming, vaccine, flea treatment, microchip and spay/neuter. It does not include food, litter, or veterinary care for illness or injuries. In recent years, significant expenditure escalations have resulted from increases to the cost of veterinary services and pet food. According to VOKRA's records, the care and medical costs (not including foster care or extra vet expenses) for cats taken in from the streets of Vancouver increased from \$66,073 in 2023 to \$82,685 in 2024, despite a reduction in total number of cats.

Even with discounted services from partner clinics, veterinary costs have increased by 32% in 2022 and an additional 25% in 2023. At the current rate of financial pressure, and without meaningful and timely intervention, there are serious concerns VOKRA may be unable to continue providing services. Without VOKRA, there would be no stray cat control in the City of Vancouver.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council direct staff to report back with considerations for regularized full or partial funding of feline control services in the City of Vancouver, either as a function of Vancouver Animal Services, or with an established reputable third party like VOKRA or the BCSPCA;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to report the extent and cost of feline control services currently provided by Vancouver Animal Services, VOKRA, and the BCSPCA in Vancouver.

- B. THAT Council direct staff to report back with considerations for definition and administration of feline control services in the Animal Control By-law No. 9150 for the purposes of carrying out the provisions of section 324 of the *Vancouver Charter*.
- C. THAT the Mayor formally recognizes and thanks VOKRA leadership and volunteers for their ongoing commitment to humane feline control services in the City of Vancouver since 2000.

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