



July 31, 2014

The Honorable Sharon Bronson, Chair  
Members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors  
Tucson, AZ 85701

**2 pages via e-mail: [cob\\_mail@pima.gov](mailto:cob_mail@pima.gov)**

Dear Chair Bronson and Members of the Board:

We hope you are well. Our office is hearing from Pima County—area citizens who are worried about a push to use county taxpayer funds on a program to trap, neuter, and re-abandon homeless cats—both friendly and frightened—outdoors to fend for themselves. **This dangerous policy would cause animal suffering and an eventual increase in animal-control-related taxpayer costs, and we respectfully urge you to oppose it.**

PETA is an animal-protection organization, so the proposed policy deeply concerns us because it would undoubtedly lead to animal suffering and an increase in the number of free-roaming cats who procreate outdoors in Pima County. That aside, in your role as public officials, we urge you to consider the liability involved. Not only will denying effective assistance to taxpayers who wish for the removal of homeless cats on their properties condemn animals to short, miserable lives (and deaths) on the streets, such a policy is also in direct conflict with the mission of animal care and control authorities and public health agencies.

According to the National Association of Public Health Veterinarians, "no evidence exists that maintained cat colonies adequately reduce human public health risks or appropriately address their impact on pets or native wildlife. Several reports suggest that support of 'managed cat colonies' may increase the public's likelihood of abandoning unwanted pets in lieu of more responsible options." A case in point is Arizona's Phoenix College's recent decision to end its trap-neuter-re-abandon program for cats after approximately eight years because "[i]nstead of stabilizing the population, it has doubled, creating an unhealthy situation for the cats and the community."<sup>1</sup>

A study published in the peer-reviewed public health journal *Zoonoses and Public Health*<sup>2</sup> found that "[f]ree-roaming cat populations have been identified as a significant public health threat and are a source for several zoonotic diseases, including rabies, toxoplasmosis, cutaneous larval migrans because of various nematode parasites, plague, tularemia and murine typhus" and that "free-roaming cats account for the most cases of human rabies exposure among domestic animals and account for approximately 1/3 of rabies postexposure prophylaxis treatments in humans in the United States."

It's also of serious consequence that roaming cats terrorize and kill countless birds and other wildlife who are not equipped to deal with such predators. A recent *New York Times* article reports that feral cats cause the majority of cat-caused wildlife deaths in the U.S., an astounding "2.4 billion birds and 12.3 billion mammals a year, most of them native mammals like shrews, chipmunks and voles rather than introduced pests like the

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<sup>1</sup>Scott, Eugene, "Phoenix College Ending Feral-Cat Program, to Remove Animals," 7 Feb. 14, AZCentral.com: [http://www.azcentral.com/community/phoenix/articles/20140129phoenix-college-ending-feral-cat-program.html?nclink\\_check=1](http://www.azcentral.com/community/phoenix/articles/20140129phoenix-college-ending-feral-cat-program.html?nclink_check=1)

<sup>2</sup>R.W. Gerhold and D.A. Jessup, "Zoonotic Diseases Associated With Free-Roaming Cats," 16 March, 2012 <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/681002-zoonotic-diseases-associated-with-free-roaming.html>

Norway rat."<sup>3</sup> The American Bird Conservancy reports that "[c]at predation is one of the reasons why one in three American bird species are in decline."

Allowing the presence and growth of colonies of homeless cats doesn't just endanger wildlife and public health. It also sends a dangerous—and wrong—message to the public, because it implies that cats can and do thrive outdoors without daily attention, parasite prevention, regular veterinary medical care, adequate and safe shelter, and more. **Nothing could be more untrue.**

We receive countless reports of incidents in which cats—"managed" or not—suffer and die horribly because they must fend for themselves outdoors. PETA's caseworkers routinely handle cruelty cases involving outdoor cats who have been poisoned, shot, mutilated, tortured, set afire, skinned alive, or killed in other cruel ways, often by property owners or neighbors who just didn't want the cats there, regardless of the cats' reproductive and/or vaccination status. A gruesome case in point involves five or six feral cats who were regularly fed by a woman in Chandler, Ariz., and who died from possible poisoning. A number of cats had reportedly developed symptoms associated with poisoning, "including disorientation and loss of balance. . . . Their back legs would stop working," the feeder's niece said, "and we'd soon find them dead."<sup>4</sup> In Tucson last summer, a cat allowed outdoors without supervision died after being shot in the face with a pellet gun by an unknown assailant.<sup>5</sup> And in Mesa in 2012, three cats were found dead and "mutilated almost beyond recognition."<sup>6</sup> A surveillance camera captured one of the cats being snatched from her property by an unknown man.

### **Cats are not safe outdoors.**

PETA stands ready to help in any way needed to aid the county in passing proven effective ordinances and programs to address the overpopulation crisis in your community. I can be reached at 443-320-1277 or [TeresaC@peta.org](mailto:TeresaC@peta.org).

Thank you for all your hard work for the citizens of Pima County.

Yours truly,



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<sup>3</sup>Natalie Angier, "That Cuddly Kitty Is Deadlier Than You Think," 29 Jan. 2013, New York Times:

<[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/30/science/that-cuddly-kitty-of-yours-is-a-killer.html?\\_r=4&](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/30/science/that-cuddly-kitty-of-yours-is-a-killer.html?_r=4&)>

<sup>4</sup>Brand, Natalie. "Chandler Family Worried About Poisoned Cats," 15 Apr. 2014, AZFamily.com:  
<<http://www.azfamily.com/home/Chandler-family-worried-about-poisoned-cats-255440291.html>>

<sup>5</sup>McNamara, Tom. "Eastside Family's Cat Shot and Killed," 4 June 2013, KVOA.com:

<<http://www.kvoa.com/news/eastside-family-s-cat-shot-and-killed/>>

<sup>6</sup>Bodinet, Steve. "Cats in Mesa Being Tortured and Killed." 20 Aug. 2012, AZFamily.com:

<<http://www.azfamily.com/news/Cats-in-Mesa-being-tortured-and-killed-168077736.html>>