




## City of Greenleaf

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### Memorandum

Date: 08 December 2023  
To: Residents (posted on City Website 08 Dec 2023)  
cc: Mayor, Council, Public Services Director, City Attorney, Police Chief  
From: Lee C. Belt, City Clerk  
RE: FERAL CATS PLAN 

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Greetings!

This memo outlines a plan for addressing feral cats in the City of Greenleaf, as authorized at the 07 December 2023 Council Meeting.

#### ASSESSMENT

Based largely on the 2010 University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension article "Feral Cats and Their Management", the following are identified as true:

- There are four classifications of the domestic or house cat (*Felis catus*):
  - *Indoor cats* that are owned, are tame, and are not allowed outside
  - *Limited-range cats* that are owned, are tame, and are allowed to roam with limited range outside within a confined / designated area
  - *Free-range cats* that are owned, may or may not be tame, and are allowed to roam freely outside without constraint by their owner
  - *Feral cats* are not owned, are not tame, and roam freely outside
- Feral cats may be defined as cats that are not pets with a responsible owner, are in a wild (not tame) state, and roam freely.

- Feral cats have a life expectancy of 3-5 years (compared to 15 years for owned cats), and have an average home range of 1.5 square miles.
- Feral cats pose a serious threat to native wildlife, particularly birds.
- Feral cats maintain predatory behavior on wildlife despite general feeding by humans.
- Feral cats also kill owned limited-range and free-range cats.
- Feral cats are not effective in controlling populations of undesirable pigeons, house mice, and Norway rats.
- Feral cats are invasive and pose a risk to public health and safety, through:
  - Aggressive behavior
  - Transmission of disease to humans and other cats, including cat scratch fever, plague, rabies, ringworm, salmonellosis, and toxoplasmosis
  - Being hosts of fleas and ticks that are known carriers of diseases that can be transmitted to humans
- Determining if a cat is feral or owned (lost, limited-range or free-range) can be difficult, as cats typically do not tolerate collars – Owners micro-chipping their cats is the solution to this issue.
- When local government chooses to require animal licensing of cats, such licensing is fulfilled by the owner of the cat. Thus, animal licensing is not applicable to un-owned feral cats.
- Idaho Code (IC) appears silent regarding cats, but IC Title 25 Chapter 35 (Animal Care) Section 14 (chapter construed not to interfere with normal or legal practices) under IC 25-3514(4) allows the humane destruction of animals that are diseased or disabled beyond recovery for any useful purpose, or for population control, and under IC 25-3314(8) allows destruction of predatory animals and vermin which injure or pose a threat to farm or privately owned animals or property when such is conducted in accordance with laws and rules covering such animals.

### BEST-PRACTICE ANALYSIS - Integrated Management

Based on the 2010 University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension "Feral Cats and Their Management", the following are potential components for an integrated management approach:

*Non-lethal (long-term management):*

- Encouragement of proper pet ownership for cats, including:
  - Keeping only as many owned cats as can be fed and provided care
  - Keeping owned cats indoors or contained and supervised outdoors so that they will be safe and can't harm wildlife (particularly birds)
  - Ensure that owned cats can be identified by use of micro-chips. This may be supplemented by use of collars with tags if tolerated by the cat.
  - Keep owned cats vaccinated
  - Spay/neuter owned cats to prevent unwanted breeding
- Habitat modification (remove easy food, water, shelter so feral cats leave)
  - Stop supplemental feeding/watering of feral cats
  - Remove leaky pipes and other water sources / pooled water areas
  - Good sanitation practices to discourage scrounging for food (i.e. garbage in dumpsters / totes / containers with lids secured)
  - Remove debris, junk, garbage piles, and tall weeds that provide shelter
  - Decrease hunting opportunities by controlling rodents through good sanitation, rodent-proof construction, trapping, and rodenticides, and by placing bird feeders and birdbaths in open areas at least 10 ft from foliage or objects from which cats can hide and hunt
  - Exclusion – Use fencing and netting to keep cats out of areas such as gardens and flowerbeds
- Frightening Devices – Most commercially available devices don't work. Dogs and motion-activated sprinklers can be effective.
- Repellents – Not effective.
- Fertility Control (trap-neuter-release) – Not effective. This conclusion is supported by:

- 2020 University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Science - "How Effective and Humane Is Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) for Feral Cats?"  
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/UW468.pdf>
- 2014 Texas Parks & Wildlife Issue Briefing Paper - "Management of feral cat colonies & Trap, Neuter, and Release (TNR) Programs"  
<https://tpwd.texas.gov/wildlife/birding/bird-city-texas/tpwdferalcatbriefingpaper.pdf>
- 2010 University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension - "Feral Cats and Their Management"  
<https://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/ec1781.pdf>

*Lethal (short-term management):*

Lethal action or euthanasia is appropriate in acute situations when feral cats are overabundant and causing significant negative impacts. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has defined several approved methods for humane euthanasia, including chemical injection and shooting. Detail regarding euthanasia, including link to AVMA guidelines, is available from the Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management (ICWDM) at:

<https://icwdm.org/management/euthanasia/>

<https://icwdm.org/management/shooting/shooting-as-euthanasia/>

Lethal action may be implemented in the city by:

- Trapping with euthanasia by the City / City's Agent
- Shooting in defense of person, persons, or property per GC 5-3-5(B). Appropriate caution and care should be exercised by residents that choose to exercise this option to mitigate any unintended consequences of their actions.

*Proposed Action Plan with Schedule follows on next page.*

PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

ACTION	BY	WHEN
Consideration of draft feral cats plan by Council for revision and approval	Council	07 Dec 2023
Posting the feral cats plan on the city website, and city facebook page	Clerk	Within 3 business days from approval of feral cats plan by Council
Staff development of a feral cats ordinance for presentation to Council	Clerk with assistance as needed	Before the next Council Meeting (Potentially before the 02 Jan 2024 Mtg if Council approves feral cat plan at the 07 Dec 2023 Mtg)
First reading of feral cats ordinance	Council	Next Council Mtg (Potentially 02 Jan 2024 Mtg)
Staff development of a request for proposals for trapping with euthanasia to abate feral cats	Clerk with assistance as needed	Before the next Council Meeting (Potentially before the 06 Feb 2024 Mtg)
Second reading of feral cats ordinance	Council	Next Council Mtg (Potentially 06 Feb 2024 Mtg)
Presentation of request for proposals (RFP) for trapping with euthanasia to abate feral cats for Council revision and approval	Clerk / Council	Next Council Mtg (Potentially 06 Feb 2024 Mtg)
Issuance of RFP for trapping with euthanasia to abate feral cats with proposals due and staff scoring for recommendation completed before next Council Meeting	Clerk with assistance as needed	Within 3 business days from approval by Council
Third reading of feral cats ordinance	Council	Next Council Mtg (Potentially 05 Mar 2024 Mtg)
Consideration of trapping with euthanasia to abate feral cats proposals received with staff scoring and recommendation, for award of contract	Council	Next Council Mtg (Potentially 05 Mar 2024 Mtg)
Feral cat ordinance published and in effect	Clerk	Within 30 calendar days from Council approval (Potentially before 05 Apr 2024)
Contract for trapping with euthanasia to abate feral cats signed and in effect	Mayor and Contractor	Timed to coincide with effective date of feral cat ordinance (Potentially before 05 Apr 2024)

## SUPPLEMENTAL - Potential Draft Ordinance Language Components

- The establishment of a new city code section under the animal control ordinance with purpose to mitigate and abate feral cats, including provisions as allowed by Idaho Code (IC) for: 1) The humane destruction of feral cats as animals that are diseased or disabled beyond recovery for any useful purpose, or for population control per IC 25-3514(4); and 2) Destruction of feral cats as predatory animals and vermin which injure or pose a threat to farm or privately owned animals or property when such is conducted in accordance with laws and rules covering such animals, per IC 25-3314(8).
- Definition of Feral Cats
- Determination that Feral Cats require mitigation due to status as a serious threat to native wildlife, and an invasive threat to public health and safety
- Definition of an Integrated Management approach including both non-lethal and humane euthanasia methodologies. Non-lethal Proper Pet Ownership as related to cats and Habitat Modification measures are encouraged as the primary focus and emphasis for long-term resolution that residents can choose to take to remove the need for short-term implementation of lethal measures in the Integrated Management approach to feral cats
- Prohibit supplemental feeding of cats with both criminal and civil penalties
- Reserved section for cat animal licenses, to be added if encouragement of Proper Pet Ownership as related to cats, Habitat Modification measures, and prohibition of supplemental feeding of cats prove insufficient and cat licensing is deemed necessary to: 1) Limit the number of owned cats; 2) Ensure that owned cats are vaccinated against rabies; and 3) Ensure that owned cats are micro-chipped for identification and return to owner
- Authorizing the Mayor to contract for trapping with euthanasia to abate feral cats, on an as-needed basis, with a request for proposals (RFP) process recommended
- Clarification that residents may use BB guns (air rifles 700+ fps with pointed pellets recommended) to eliminate feral cats from their property, and applicability of GC 5-3-5(B)(2) which allows an exemption for discharge of a firearm by, “A person acting in the lawful defense of person, persons or property, including acting in self-defense or in the defense of others as outlined in Idaho Code §19-201 through 19-205;” (shotguns with No. 6 shot or larger, or .22 caliber rifles recommended). Residents that choose to exercise these options remain responsible and liable for any damages or unintended consequences of their actions.
- Adjust nuisance code provisions to add feral cats as a reason for prohibiting debris, junk, garbage, tall weeds, etc., joining rodent harborage and fire hazard