

New Philadelphia approves trapping, neutering of feral cats

By Jon Baker

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NEW PHILADELPHIA Council has given permission to the Tuscarawas County TNR Project to begin trapping, neutering and returning feral cats in New Philadelphia.

“We’re very fortunate to have people in our community that are willing to step up and address this issue in a humane way that is good for everyone,” Law Director Marvin Fete said before council voted on the issue Monday. “We believe that this is going to — over a matter of years — significantly curtail the feral cat problem that is in our community.”

The organization’s founders, Sarah Keplinger and Marilyn Graef, have been trapping and neutering cats in Dover since last summer. They addressed council members before the vote.

Graef said the group wants to promote humane treatment of animals.

“TNR needs to be part of public policy,” she said. “It’s good for the animals, it’s good for the community. We want to get out in front of the problem before it overwhelms us.”

The organization traps the cats and then takes them to AlterClinic Animal Care in Canton, which charges \$38 to spay/neuter a cat.

Graef said the group focuses on helping people who have 15 to 20 cats so that it can have the greatest impact on reducing the cat population. But Tuscarawas County TNR can provide advice for people who have one or two cats that need trapped.

“We do not trap in the winter,” Keplinger said. “Males bounce right back, not a big deal. A female that is spayed, she needs time to recover in an environment that’s indoors. So we don’t ordinarily trap during the winter because the weather changes from day to day.”

The group trapped cats from one Dover colony last year. In the beginning, it had 25 cats. There are now only eight. Some have died, and the cats are not reproducing.

The TNR program has been in operation in several places around the country. New York City has a Feral Cat Initiative, and the Wayne County Humane Society in Wooster traps cats on a large scale twice a year. Usually, about 150 cats are trapped during one event.

“It does have a big impact on strays and an impact on their health,” said Carrie Andrew, director of the Wayne County Humane Society.

The Tuscarawas County TNR Project is accepting donations to help with its work. Donations can be sent to 5143 Blacksnake Hill Road NE, Dover, Ohio 44622.

With the money, the organization can help reduce the cost to a someone who is taking care of a large colony of cats. There is also money available to help people who can't pay for the trapping.

People who need help dealing with a large number of cats can call Keplinger at 330-340-6721.