

features

CARING

Counting community cats

Individuals and groups work to provide food and shelter for their feline friends



Marla Somersall
Pet Talk

The Companion Animal Welfare Initiative regularly brings together organizations, officials and animal care professionals working for the protection and care of companion animals.

As such, it provides an excellent forum to address key issues of animal welfare on the island.

Community cats are un-owned cats that live outdoors in the community. They may be feral or somewhat friendly. Individuals and volunteer organizations have worked for years to provide food and shelter and manage community cat numbers that, in turn, helps improve the cats' health and welfare.

In 2015, several groups came together as the Cat Task Force to discuss the progress in caring for cats on P.E.I. Some key objectives were identified, namely to achieve and maintain a sustainable population; to promote humane care for the cats and to educate, promote and develop volunteers and resources.

A big first step was to gain an understanding of the existing population. Thanks to the dedication of key volunteers from Spay Aid, the Cat Action Team (C.A.T.), Keeping Cats Homed, and the P.E.I. Humane Society, we have obtained a clearer picture of cat populations across the province.

In 2016, working with veterinarians, CAT and the P.E.I. Humane Society each provided vaccinations and spay/neuter surgeries for over 800 cats. In total, over 2,000 cats were seen by these organizations. Of those, 707 cats were adopted out, and 903 were returned to the owner or the site they came in from.

Sadly, 30 of these cats died and 129 had to be humanely euthanized, primarily for health and some for safety reasons, such as attacking other animals or people. These numbers can be reduced if we are able to intervene with local populations and provide good care sooner.

By responding to the needs of different cat populations,



A feral cat rests on a bale of hay, one of the many cared for by the Cat Action Team.

P.E.I. CAT ACTION TEAM/SUBMITTED PHOTO



A feral cat appears on the roof of a custom-built shelter.

P.E.I. CAT ACTION TEAM/SUBMITTED PHOTO

NEED TO KNOW

Organizations that work together to improve the care of cats across P.E.I.:

- Cat Action Team cats-pei.ca/
- Keeping Cats Homed (Facebook)
- P.E.I. Humane Society peihumanesociety.com/
- SpayAid spayaidpei.com/

these cats may remain healthy and safe. With trap-neuter and return/relocate programs, we

are able to manage the numbers. Fewer cats are euthanized because we find the right home for them. Friendly cats and kittens may be placed for adoption, while semi-feral cats may remain in the community as barn or working cats. Colony caregivers, with assistance from dedicated CAT volunteers, manage colonies of cats, providing food and shelter and monitoring for communicable diseases.

See PROVIDING, B6

Happy Adoption



BREANNA MCCLOSKEY/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Bonnie, a Holland lop-eared rabbit, was adopted in 2016 and Presley was adopted in July. Their owner, Breanna McCloskey has this to say about the pair: "Bonnie was lonely after my last rabbit passed suddenly, but I was nervous about getting a new buddy for her. Bonnie and Presley hit it off instantly and have become the best of friends."

HEALTH

■ CARING

Providing comfort for needy cats

FROM A1

The Cat Task Force has brought together organizations with differing approaches and ideas regarding cat welfare to identify our common strengths and desired outcomes. An important goal is to locate community cat populations that are of concern, either due to

health issues or because they are deemed to be a nuisance, and to respond in the best way possible for the cats and the community.

By identifying resources that we currently have and sharing our expertise, we can work more efficiently. By identifying the needs, we can work as a collective to find needed

resources and build on the success we already have, to manage cat populations across P.E.I.

Marla Somersall is executive director of the P.E.I. Humane Society, one of the member groups of the P.E.I. Companion Animal Welfare Initiative (CAWI), the goal of which is to improve the welfare of owned and unowned companion ani-

mals on P.E.I. Animal Talk appears bi-monthly in The Guardian. CAWI includes the Cat Action Team, P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association, P.E.I. department of agriculture and forestry, P.E.I. 4-H, Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at AVC and SpayAid. For more information, see gov.pe.ca/agriculture/CAWI. Readers may send questions related to the well-being of owned and unowned companion animals to askcawi@gmail.com.

■ COMMUNITY