



**COMMUNITY CATS  
IN ALLEGANY  
COUNTY**

# OVERVIEW

- What are community cats?
- Historical perspective
- Address concerns
- Our plan



# FREE-ROAMING COMMUNITY CATS

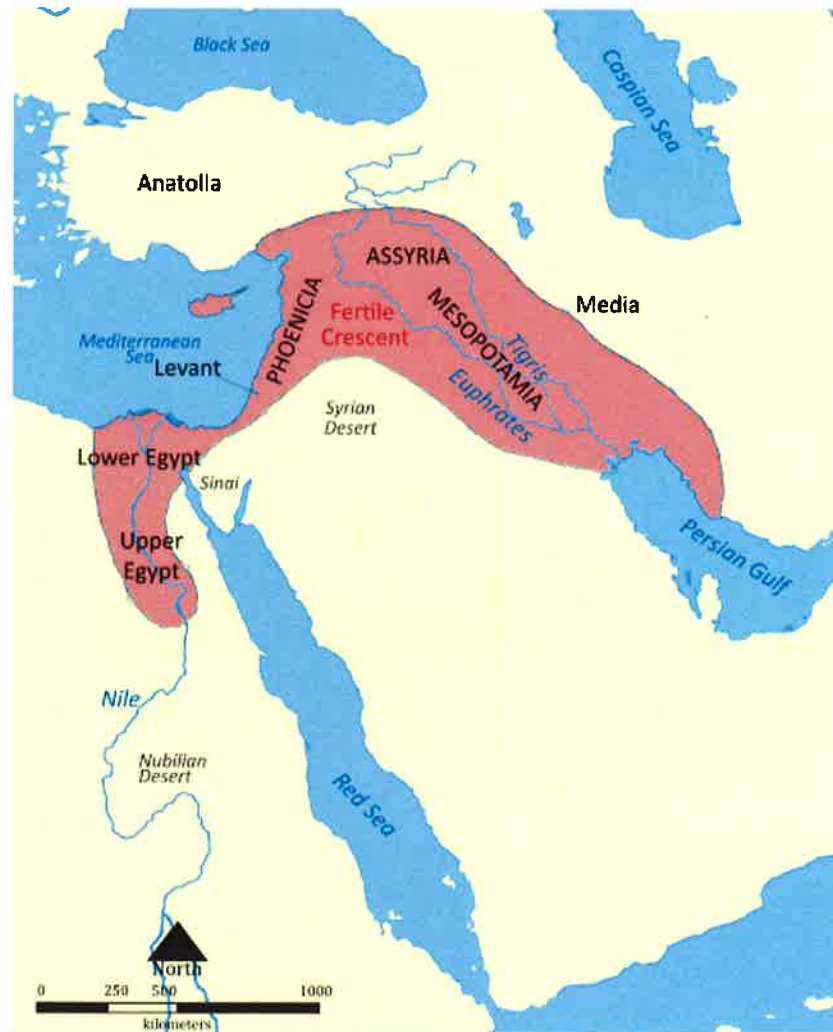
- Stray cat
  - Homeless pet cats
  - Socialized/friendly
  - Abandoned /Lost
  
- Feral cats
  - Untamed/evasive
  - Born in the wild
  - Stray cats turned wild



○ So where did all these cats come from, anyway?



# The Fertile Crescent









## *FELIS DOMESTICUS*

- First appeared at dawn of the Agricultural Revolution.
- Unlike dogs, horses and livestock, cats are the only species to domesticate themselves.
- Have been living outdoors on the periphery of human society for 8,000-10,000 years.





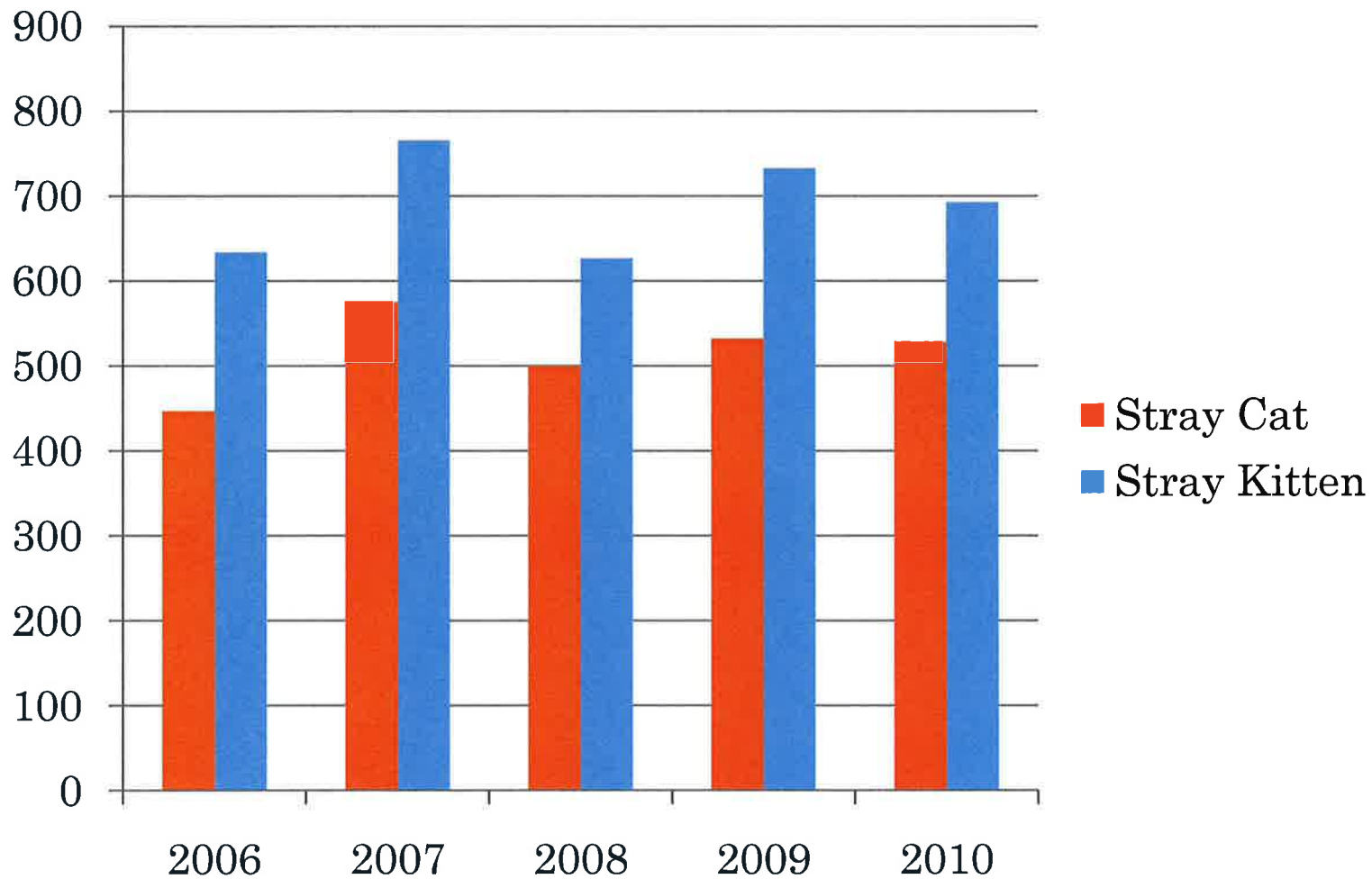








# STRAY CAT INTAKE NUMBERS, 2006-2010



# PUBLIC OPINION POLLS

- 2007 telephone survey (*Chu 2007 ACA Law & Policy Brief*)
- *What would you do about unowned cats in the street?*
  - 81% would leave the cats alone
  - 14% would trap and kill the cats
- *What if you knew the cats only lived for 2 years?*
  - 72% would still leave the cats alone
  - 21% would trap and kill the cats



“I DON’T MIND IF THE CAT  
LIVES HERE, BUT...”



# TRAP-NEUTER-RELEASE

- Goals
  - Non-lethal population reduction
  - Healthier and safer cats
  - Lower adverse impacts
  - Reduced public complaints
- Promotes “retention” in the community where cats live vs. pet “retention” in a home



## HOW IT WORKS

- Live-trapping
- Spay/neuter – Not just neuter!
- Ear tipping
- Rabies vaccination
- Euthanasia of ill cats
- *Maximize number of animals sterilized*



# CONCERNS

- Disease
- Cost
- Environmental impact



## DISEASE

- Rabies
- Toxoplasmosis
- Feline Leukemia/FIV



## RABIES

- Unlike dogs, there is no specific feline rabies virus. Any exposure in cats is secondary.
- According to a 2007 report by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, cats account for 4% of all positive tests statewide, none in Allegany County.
- Rabies incidence in Allegany County was roughly 1 per 10,000 residents.
- Positive results were either raccoons (5), skunks (2) or groundhog (1).



## RABIES, CONT.

- TNR reduces rabies risks by placing altered, vaccinated animals in circulation.
- Ear-tipping readily identifies cats who have had vaccines.
- Prevents a “carousel of potential infection”
- Scientific research shows even one year rabies vaccines provide protection at year four.
- Vaccinated cats can serve as a barrier between wildlife and human exposure.



## SO RABIES IS NO BIG DEAL!?!

- Rabies is statistically 100% fatal.
- Any potential exposure will be handled according to existing protocols.
- BUT...
- Is the public better served with vaccinated or unvaccinated cats?



# TOXOPLASMOSIS

- Considered to be a leading cause of death attributed to foodborne illness in the United States.
- Cats can become infected by eating anything contaminated with feces from another infected cat.
- However, people are highly unlikely to become infected from direct contact with their cats.
- People commonly become infected by eating undercooked or raw meat, or by inadvertently consuming contaminated soil on unwashed or undercooked vegetables.



## FELEUK/FIV

- Consider most common source of infections
  - FeLV: Infected mother cats to their kittens
  - FIV: Fighting among adult tom cats
- Neutering reduces the most common source of infection
- Herd health
  - Feral cat infection rates similar to outdoor pet cats



# COST

- Grant money is available
- Grant/Donation for cost-sharing
- Reductions in intake numbers means cost savings in daily care and maintenance.
- As population decreases, initial cost is spread across potential intake



## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- Cats are by definition non-native species.
- There is the potential for negative impacts on wildlife.
- SO....
- We must pursue options to reduce the number of cats in our community.



## THE BOTTOM LINE

- Cats have lived side by side with humans for several thousand years; no policy, plan or wire trap will be able to extinguish that impulse.
- If you keep doing what you've always done, you're going to get what you've always gotten.



## MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

No one thing is going to instantly solve our cat problems.

No approach we take can immediately undo a problem that has taken years to develop.

The one thing we cannot afford is inaction. The problem of cat overpopulation is here, whether we want it or not.



## THE BEST APPROACH

- Input from those directly affected.
- Open, honest dialogue about expectations and results.
- Open records-keeping.
- Flexibility – acknowledging when something isn't working and adapting.
- Mutual respect.
- Cooperation.



## WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

- We are not here to abandon you to your cat problems.
- Cats are our responsibility, so we must act in their best interest.



# QUESTIONS?



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