

Report on Responding to Stray or Abandoned Cats**Report Purpose**

To provide Council with a report on the opportunities to work with interested residents and business owners to address the issue of stray or abandoned cats in Strathcona County.

Recommendation

THAT Administration provide a business case for a pilot project on partnering with a non-profit organization to establish an animal shelter in Strathcona County for consideration during the 2022 Budget Process.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Goal 1 - Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents

Goal 8 - Foster an environment for safe communities

Report

In September 2019, Council directed Administration to provide a report on the implications of a cat bylaw that covers the urban area of Sherwood Park, and includes:

- Penalties for individuals found dumping cats in the rural areas;
- Information on the experiences of other municipalities in implementing such bylaws; and
- The costs associated with bringing forward a cat bylaw in Strathcona County.

In October 2020, RCMP Supports and Enforcement Services provided a presentation and report to Priorities Committee on the implications of a cat bylaw that covers the urban service area of Sherwood Park. The report included options for implementing a cat bylaw, including a full-scale, or partial scale implementation, or contracted services. In all three options, there would be an initial and ongoing cost for the implementation of a cat bylaw.

In November 2020, Council directed Administration to provide a report on opportunities for working with interested residents and business owners to address the issue of stray or abandoned cats in Strathcona County and that funding of up to \$25,000 be allocated from municipal reserves for this purpose.

On June 22, 2021, Roxx Strategic Management presented findings on the community support for the County to facilitate the management of stray and abandoned cats. The survey results demonstrated that there are existing non-profits, with experience and expertise, who are willing to work with Strathcona County to form a co-operative partnership to provide a shelter for drop off strays and unwanted cats. Community-based programming would encourage population control and the safe return or re-homing of pets. The enforcement of seeking and collecting strays with paid municipal staff may not be necessary at this time

Current Legislation

There are currently no municipal policies to address cat control or cat-related issues within the urban service area of Sherwood Park. The *Animal Control Bylaw 18-2011* is the most relevant means of enforcement. Under section 2.16 of the *Animal Control Bylaw*, a Nuisance means any fowl, poultry, livestock, or other animals, which by reason of accumulation of waste, trespass upon property, etc. and detract from the comfort, repose, health, peace or safety of persons or property within the boundary of the County. This section allows

Community Peace Officers (CPO) to address some cat issues; however, a complainant must be able to identify the cat and the owner of the cat. Issuing tickets is the only recourse in the current bylaw, and CPOs cannot take any animals into custody.

Strathcona County CPOs do not have authority under the *Animal Protection Act*.

Current Needs in Strathcona County

There have been some complaints from Strathcona County residents to Council and Administration regarding stray and abandoned cats, in both rural and urban locations. However, RCMP Supports and Enforcement Services receives a limited number of complaints regarding stray or abandoned cats each year. On average, there are an estimated 20 complaints regarding cats each year. The complaint situations involve an immediate need to provide shelter or re-home the cats, and cat on property complaints.

RCMP Supports and Enforcement Services has a standing arrangement with the Edmonton Humane Society for the care and custody of dogs that have been seized. This arrangement does not apply to stray or abandoned cats in the County.

Based on the review of the current needs and legislation, numerous conversations with other jurisdictions, and the findings presented by Roxx Strategic Management on June 22, 2021, Administration is recommending that Council is provided with a business case in Budget 2022 to potentially establish a local not for profit animal shelter as a first step in managing stray and abandoned cats.

Partnership with Non-Profit to Establish a Local Animal Shelter

Given the needs in the community, Administration is recommending a business case to outline the relationship with a non-profit organization to establish and operate a local animal shelter. Supporting a volunteer organization to operate a leased shelter space is a strategic first step in meeting the needs of residents with the management of stray and abandoned cats.

Anticipated Outcomes

- Address the immediate need of shelter for stray and abandoned cats.
- Begins the process of the responsible management of cats in Strathcona County.
- Provides a platform for the education of responsible cat and pet ownership.

Potential Risks

- Does not provide the County with enforcement measures further to the provincial legislation.

A local animal shelter run by a non-profit organization provides a mechanism to promote voluntary licensing, voluntary spay and neutering, and community education with the goal of responsible cat ownership in the County.

The shelter could be achieved through a short term (e.g. one to three-year) pilot project partnership agreement with a non-profit organization. Other municipalities, such as Camrose, have a similar structure in which the municipality provides funding for a leased shelter space. All remaining costs (staffing, volunteers, materials) would be handled by the non-profit through other grants, partnerships and local fundraising.

Next Steps

Should Council desire to proceed with developing a business plan for an animal shelter, Administration will conduct an analysis and consult with local organizations in this regard, including identifying buildings that may be suitable for this possibility, and an appropriate funding partnership structure.

Council and Committee History

June 22, 2021	Roxx Strategic Management presented the findings from their Pet Industry Survey.
November 24, 2020	THAT by the end of the second quarter of 2021, Administration provide a report on opportunities for working with interested residents and business owners to address the issue of stray or abandoned cats in Strathcona County and that funding of up to \$25,000 be allocated from municipal reserves for this purpose.
October 20, 2020	THAT the October 20, 2020 RCMP Supports and Enforcement Services report, Implications of a Cat Bylaw, be referred to Council for debate and discussion.
September 10, 2019	THAT Administration provide a report, by the end of Q3 2020, on the implications of a cat bylaw that covers the urban service area of Sherwood Park, and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Penalties for individuals found dumping cats in the rural areas;• Information on the experiences of other municipalities in implementing such bylaws; and• The costs associated with bringing forward a cat bylaw in Strathcona County.

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: n/a

Interdepartmental: Legislative and Legal Services

Master Plan/Framework: n/a

Alternatives**Bylaw Enactment**

Based on the report brought forward by Administration in October 2020 to Priorities Committee, there are three options for implementing a cat bylaw:

- Full scope bylaw: the County is responsible for licensing, enforcement, administration, and infrastructure of adoption and shelter facilities.
- Partial scope implementation: there is no licensing component to the bylaw, however the County has authority to capture and hold stray, lost, abandoned, or feral cats and issues fines to owners who have knowingly abandoned their pet. The County also builds a facility to hold cats pending transfer to a partner adoption agency or veterinary clinic.
- Contracted services: the County is responsible for implementation, administration, enforcement and licensing under a cat bylaw, and a contracted service provider operates the shelter program.

Licensing of cats is one effort towards the management of domestic cats in Strathcona County. The primary purpose of licensing is to encourage owners to take responsibility for

identifying their cat(s) and following the cat bylaw. An effective licencing program requires rules and processes to be clearly set out in the bylaw.

Anticipated Outcomes

- County responsible for all enforcement, administration and infrastructure.
- The bylaw creates a full program management with licensing as well as fines for violations

Potential Risks

- Does not address the immediate need of shelter for stray and abandoned cats.
- Ongoing annual operating costs may be significant, with some risk of annual increases.
- Achieving full compliance could be problematic, depending on citizen acceptance and understanding.

Enclosure

1 Response to Stray or Abandoned Cats Presentation