

The Wichita Audubon Society is committed to providing nature education, promoting environmental conservation, and encouraging appreciation of the natural world. We promote our community's ability to enjoy the wildlife in general and birds in particular in our immediate area, the state and the country.

Response to:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTIONS 6.04.010 AND 6.04.025, OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF WICHITA, KANSAS, PERTAINING TO DEFINITIONS AND TRAPPING OF ABANDONED CATS.

We believe the current ordinance sections 6.04.010 and 6.04.025 as it deals with feral cats should remain in effect and that the suggested amending sections be rejected for several reasons. Domestic cats represent a non-native species and feral cats represent a real problem. Classifying feral cats (non-owned) as community cats removes any legal option that a citizen has to deal with such cats on their property. Furthermore, with the proposed ordinance amendments for community cats, individuals may provide food and shelter for feral cats in public areas which likely would lead to a greater number of cats in those areas. Citizens as whole enjoy watching wildlife which in the city is typically birds and small mammals. Much of watching wildlife is associated with the natural areas of city such as parks and public easements.

Cats in general and feral cats in particular impact small wildlife animals substantially. Recent studies have shown that cat predation has much greater impact on birds and small wildlife than previously estimated. Cat predation represents the single greatest source of anthropogenic mortality for U. S. birds and mammals. According the new study (Loss et al. 2014), cats kill between 1.4 billion to 3.7 billion birds and between 6.9 billion to 20.7 billion mammals annually with feral cats accounting for 69% of estimated bird predation. These estimates are greater than wildlife loss caused by vehicle collisions, collision with building windows, communication towers and pesticide deaths in birds. These data are sound: they were generated using data from previous studies (10 to 17 studies) and a recognized sampling procedure of the data was used to generate statistically valid estimates.

Further evidence that the proposed amending sections reflect concerns of one interest group rather than the community as a whole is that a greater burden is placed on complying citizens compared with those favoring establishing community cat provisions. Under amending ordinance proposal "community cats" are exempt from enforcement of vaccination and removal if they are problem. In contrast, cat owners comply with vaccination and keeping track of their cats and thereby incur costs not encumbered by sponsors of community cat population. Problem cats (feral cats) are exempt from any regulation as proposed by amended ordinance whereas dog owners with problem dogs are subject to several ordinances. Why are problem cats being treated differently than problem dogs?

We recommend that the interests of the general public be served better by not exempting problem cats by establishing the community cat proposals in the recommended amendments.