

Cats, Dogs, Safety, and the Environment
A Statement from the West Cove A Board of Directors
February 03, 2021

We have had some recent reports related to disruptive cat fights and a lost outdoor cat. These have raised some thoughts regarding pets, primarily cats and dogs, and our by-laws. Pets by common definition are a domesticated animal kept for pleasure rather than utility.

West Cove A is having a problem with a population of feral cats. There may be as many as six of them wandering through the area. Cats, domestic or feral, are superb hunters, particularly of small mammals and birds. They are responsible for environmental degradation on a level unmatched by other mammals, including extinction of small mammals and some birds on island communities. See some references on page 3.

In addition, as their population grows, they will inevitably attract, closer to our homes and our pets, some of the numerous predators that naturally exist in the woods of New Hampshire. Our forests host bears, bobcats, coyotes, fisher cats, foxes, and raccoons. Small dogs and outdoor cats may be placed at risk if they are allowed off leash when outside. Foxes and raccoons are natural reservoir hosts of rabies virus, so any attacks by these will require rabies post-exposure vaccinations for our pets and for any owners who may come to the aid of their pets. We remind you to keep your pet on a leash whenever outside and do not let it out unattended when it “does its business.” This is part of the rationale for our by-laws stipulating that a pet must be under its owner’s control at all times.

We know there are several owners in West Cove A who have outdoor cats. In addition to being out of the control of owners when being allowed outside unattended, outdoor cats contribute to the environmental degradation described above through their natural hunting activities. If they have not been neutered, they may also contribute to the population growth of feral cats. This is a tough neighborhood, given the variety of predators, for an outdoor cat. The Board was saddened to learn that a pet outdoor cat was recently reported missing. It has been missing for several weeks. What happened is anyone’s guess. We realize domestic cats are often allowed to roam free when in a country setting; however, WCA is not a single-family home country setting, it is community and owners must be cognizant of the rules which apply to all pets. Article V *Section 7 (c)* of the Bylaws clearly states in part “Pets shall not be permitted outside of Units unless they are accompanied by an adult person and carried or leashed.” This applies to both cats and dogs. If you currently have an outdoor cat, you must keep the cat on a leash when it is outdoors. We also urge that you retrain it to be an indoor cat. There are two references providing information on how to make the transition. If your next pet will be a cat, we must insist that it be an indoor cat.

In closing, please be aware of the challenges posed by outdoor and feral cats. DO NOT provide any food or shelter (e.g., hay or other windbreaks under your deck) for these cats. If you have a pet cat, it should be an indoor cat. If you have an outdoor cat, you must comply with the Bylaws by keeping it on a leash when it is outside and providing the Belleterre office with certifications

(available on the website) about its vaccinations and veterinary care. We ask that you have it neutered and suggest it should wear a collar and tags so 1) people know it is a pet if it runs off, and 2) wildlife has a better chance of escaping the cat's grasp. As always, owners are responsible for cleaning up after their pet's outdoor visit.

Some references, located by googling "cats as an environmental danger," and "how to train an outdoor cat to be an indoor cat" are on Page 3.

Thank for your compliance with the governing documents regarding both dogs and cats and, more importantly, your part in preserving our natural surroundings.

West Cove A Board of Directors

Paul, Carol and Liz

REFERENCES

CATS AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL DANGER

<https://daily.jstor.org/environmental-danger-outdoor-cats/>

The environmental dangers of feral cats. Free-ranging domestic cats are an environmental disaster. They may be the most destructive invasive species, the “single greatest source of anthropogenic mortality for U.S. birds and mammals” according to a study (pdf) co-authored by scientists at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

<https://phys.org/news/2015-03-environmental-impact-cats-native-wildlife.html>

The environmental impact of cats on native wildlife. The survey found that most veterinarians believe keeping [cats](#) inside at night would positively impact cat [welfare](#) and also benefit wildlife—because cats that are inside from before dusk to after dawn have reduced opportunities to hunt for native insects, reptiles and birds.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/feral-cats-kill-billions-of-small-critters-each-year-7814590/>

Feral cats kill billions of critters each year. Cats have earned a nasty reputation for themselves as blood thirsty killers of wildlife. They have been named among the top 100 worst invasive species (PDF) in the world.

<https://abcbirds.org/program/cats>

Cats and birds. American Bird Conservancy. Outdoor domestic cats are a recognized threat to global biodiversity. Cats have contributed to the extinction of 63 species of birds, mammals, and reptiles in the wild and continue to adversely impact a wide variety of other species, including those at risk of extinction, such as the Piping Plover.

https://www.nola.com/archive/article_eb5c5aae-d596-552f-995d-6dfbe87ce68f.html

Booming feral cat populations are a disaster. By tracking cat kills in mainland areas, scientists found that, after the American Robin, the animals most at risk from cats were mice, shrews, voles, squirrels, and rabbits.

HOW TO TRAIN AN OUTDOOR CAT TO BE AN INDOOR CAT

<https://cat-world.com/outdoor-cat-to-indoor-cat/>

How to turn an outdoor cat into an indoor cat. If your cat is used to going outdoors, it is going to take some time and patience to convert him into being an indoor cat. It is highly likely that he is going to protest, lots. Stand firm.

<https://catbehaviorassociates.com/making-an-outdoor-cat-into-an-indoor-cat/>

Turn an outdoor cat into an indoor cat. If you have decided your outdoor cat should now live indoors, you cannot just bring him/her in and let her have the of the house right away. The cat will need to get its bearings and you may need to do a little training before it goes exploring in every room.