



**Statement of FuRR, Feline Rescue & Rehome
on the Little Rock Cat Ordinance
January 29, 2009**

FuRR, Feline Rescue & Rehome, Arkansas' largest cat rescue and protection organization, opposes the proposed "Cat Ordinance" by the City of Little Rock, Little Rock Animal Services and their Advisory Committee. FuRR is supportive of the City's good intentions to help animals by reducing the number of healthy cats killed in the shelter annually. FuRR asks that the current proposed ordinance be tabled to allow for further considerations of alternative plans and examination of the unintended negative consequences of this ordinance.

FuRR board members and Little Rock citizens had their first opportunity to provide input regarding this ordinance at the public forum held on Wednesday, January 14, 2009. This time constraint makes it impossible for citizens and for us to fully participate, present a full report, including expert comments from national organizations and examples of other working programs across the nation.

FuRR has made efforts to meet with city officials so we can work towards developing policies and procedures that will truly help to improve the lives of cats while reducing the numbers of animals coming into the shelter system every year, and will not be punitive in nature to responsible cat owners and protect outdoor cats. FuRR welcomes the chance to help the city and citizens of Little Rock craft well written, meaningful and thoughtful animal policies and programs, and as well as possible, legislation.

Program/Ordinance Provisions

- **Dangerous cats**-FuRR supports efforts by Little Rock Animal Services (LRAS) to manage dangerous cat situations; FuRR opposes any law that affects an entire community and every animal in that community because of one animal. Cat management laws must consider the breed and not simply mirror current provisions regarding management of dangerous dogs; FuRR would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with LRAS to find alternative solutions in these rare cases.
- **Mandatory microchipping**-FuRR supports voluntary, subsidized microchipping of owned cats to ensure identification; FuRR opposes law that mandates microchipping of feral cats. Eartipping of feral cats is a safe and universally accepted method to identify a spayed or neutered and vaccinated feral cat. It is cost effective and prevents unnecessary trapping; FuRR supports subsidized and low-cost microchipping and would like to see that in an ordinance. Studies prove that when costs are not burdensome, people will voluntarily microchip.

- **Mandatory spay/neuter**-FuRR supports legislative and non-legislative measures that effectively ensure that all cats are spayed or neutered, particularly stray and feral cats; FuRR opposes a mandatory spay neuter ordinance because research shows that 77 to 87 percent of the 82 million cats living in U.S. households are spayed or neutered.¹ More than half the cat population in the U.S. is unowned (stray & feral) and less than three percent are neutered. Effective policies are needed to align with these facts. Mandatory spay/neuter legislation will not do this because you cannot punish non-existent cat owners in order to increase the neuter rate. FuRR supports subsidized and low-cost spay/neuter clinics and would like to see that included in the ordinance. Studies prove that when costs are not burdensome, people will voluntarily spay/neuter their cats, owned, strays and ferals.
- **NBA (Neuter Before Adoption)** State law AR 20-19-103 mandates that it is unlawful for any shelter or humane organization that receives public funds to release an animal that has not been sterilized to a new owner except when the owner signs a promise to have the animal spayed or neutered. FuRR supports “Neuter *Before* Adoption” for healthy cats and dogs 8 weeks and older so there will be no opportunity for those animals to not get spayed/neutered. Voucher systems have proven to be ineffective-a minimum of 20% of adopters do not get animals spayed or neutered before there is one litter born.

FuRR’s primary focus is spay/neuter of cats, particularly trap/neuter/return (TNR) of feral cats. TNR or feral cat colony management is not included in this ordinance. FuRR has, however, had a very good working relationship with LRAS in this area. There are more than 200 feral/stray cat (TNR) organizations in the U.S. and FuRR’s program is modeled on Alley Cat Allies, the nationally known and highly respected cat protection leader. Over the past 6 years, FuRR has built a fine reputation in Little Rock and earned the respect of animal welfare professionals and animal lovers all over the state. Through FuRR clinics and outreach efforts with clinics all over the state, low-cost and free spay/neuter services have been provided to more than 6000 cats, 57% owned cats and 45% of those in the city of Little Rock. FuRR handles over 3,000 (three thousand) calls from the public annually, 62% of those from Little Rock citizens.

FuRR recognizes the difficult task LRAS has to provide effective animal care and control to the citizens of Little Rock and still reduce the numbers of animals killed in the shelter every year. FuRR supports their efforts to explore solutions to this heartbreaking problem. Progressive thinking and sincere concern for the welfare and protection of our animals, has brought about positive change at LRAS. FuRR supports these changes and remains open to working with supporters of this ordinance to develop sound legislation that will put our community in a better position to handle the animals in our area through proactive programs, and end the needless killing of cats.

Feline Rescue and Rehome, Board of Directors

www.teamfurr.org

¹www.alleycat.org “Mandatory Cat Spay/Neuter: An Irrational Policy”
(<http://www.alleycat.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=240>)