



## An Open Letter to the Community of Guelph

There's been a lot of commentary about the new cat licensing bylaw that took effect on January 1, 2018. The views surrounding the need and motivation behind cat licensing are varied, and we wanted to provide another voice to this conversation.

We are a coalition of groups with the goal of improving the welfare of cats and wild birds in Guelph. Our group includes the Guelph Humane Society, the Guelph Cat Population Task Force, Nature Guelph, Wild Birds Unlimited, the University of Guelph Arboretum, Wild Ontario and Nature Canada. (See <http://catsandbirds.ca/guelph>)

While the idea of cat licensing may be novel to many, numerous cities in Ontario of similar size to Guelph have bylaws that regulate cats, and most of those include licensing. A license is a pet's ticket home if it gets lost. Even indoor cats occasionally escape, and \$25 / year is a worthwhile investment to ensure that your cat is identified and can be returned safely if he/she strays from home.

Licensing cats improves the welfare of pet cats and helps reduce the unowned cat population. Look no further than the example of dogs – dog licensing has been commonplace for decades and with it there has been an increase in reclaim rates by owners and a reduction in dog overpopulation. Ensuring that lost pets are returned to their owners reduces the chances of those pets becoming permanently homeless. In reducing the amount of time lost cats spend lost, it helps keep cats safe from the many risks associated of being outside, including wildlife, and likewise keeps wildlife safe from them. Getting pets back to their owners promptly also relieves pressure on shelter crowding and helps ensure that cats get back to their families.

Most stray cats that are brought to the Guelph Humane Society have no identification, which makes reuniting them with their owner difficult. While the Guelph Humane Society (GHS) has an admirable reclaimed-by-owner rate compared to the national average, still only 15-20% of stray cats in Guelph are reclaimed by their owners. That means 4 out of 5 lost cats are left in the shelter, fed and cared for and eventually adopted to new owners.

The City has committed to spending \$5 of each \$25 fee on cat welfare programs, with the other \$20 helping to offset the City's animal services costs. The City's revenue from dog licensing has not been sufficient to cover the costs of sheltering and feeding stray animals, most of which are cats.

Cat licensing is a great step towards improving the welfare of the cats in our community. Not only is it your pet's ticket home, it supports an infrastructure that helps to ensure that stray animals in our community are provided shelter, food, and emergency vet care when needed. It will also help birds and wildlife, since the less time lost cats are left roaming outdoors, the less they will hunt and thereby affect our wild bird populations.

Licensing your cat is good for your cat, and for our community. Help improve the welfare of cats and birds in Guelph by getting your cat licensed.

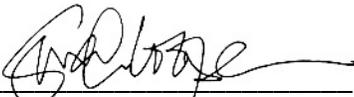
Sincerely,

  
Nature Guelph

  
Guelph Humane Society

  
Guelph Cat Population Task Force

  
Wild Birds Unlimited

  
Nature Canada

  
University of Guelph Arboretum