

## The Tuxedo Party's "Ten Things to Know about Cats in HRM"



1. There are 40,000-100,000 homeless cats in HRM, and the population continues to grow. The actual number is impossible to determine because stray/feral cats move around; many are terrified and live in the shadows. These cats live in miserable conditions and suffer greatly due to starvation, dehydration, disease, parasites, predation, and trauma. An affordable and accessible spay/neuter program is the critical first step in humanely controlling the feline population and preventing suffering.
2. HRM is one of only a few cities in Canada that does not have an affordable and accessible spay/neuter program. Even smaller cities, such as Regina, have a spay/neuter program to control the feline population. Within just months of implementation of such a program, shelters in Regina noticed a decrease in the number of cats. (Reality check - the cost to purchase and equip a mobile spay clinic, like they have in Regina, is less than what HRM has spent studying a stadium, of which there are no plans to build.)
3. Animal Control officers will pick up abandoned dogs, even abandoned snakes, but not cats. In fact, even though Animal Services is mandated to pick up injured and sick cats in most cases they do not.
4. The current budget for Animal Services in HRM is greater than \$500,000. That is a lot of money to pick up stray dogs. Why is there no money in this budget for cats? Do we know where the money goes?
5. HRM's largest animal shelters, the SPCA and Bide-A While, do not receive even a penny of operating funding from HRM. Yet Animal Services and City Councillors regularly refer the public to these shelters for help/services.
6. There are currently 12 small cat rescue organizations in HRM; they receive no funding. They work from their homes and with a network of volunteers. The groups operate through fundraising and private donations. The cats that they rehome are fully vet-checked, just like cats from established shelters.
7. In HRM veterinary clinics are privately owned businesses with large overhead expenses and payroll to meet in a difficult economy. While many provide discounted services to low income clients in emergency situations (rather than see an animal suffer), very few are able to offer a discount to cat rescue organizations and even fewer can afford to work with feral cats.
8. The creation of a "Domestic Pet Advisory Committee" would help to develop a practical and workable solution to the many pet issues that frequent the agenda at City Hall. This Committee should include members from city staff, Council, and the rescue community. No such committee exists now.
9. The attitude of City Council affects the way in which cats are treated in HRM. If Council were to lead by example (i.e. model respectful behaviour and value cats) then citizens' attitudes would change. City Council can send the right message – that cats are not disposable. Public education/awareness is another important step in ending the mistreatment of cats. A campaign of public service announcements which state that spaying/neutering is important and that domestic animal abandonment is wrong would be helpful and inexpensive.
10. There are no provisions for cats in the HRM Animal By-Laws. The By-Laws are also out-dated. For example, the By-Law states that if Animal Services picks up your family pet (even if it is an accidental escape), it will be killed after 72 hours if you do not claim it. It is archaic that in these modern times of no-kill shelters and humane methods of population control the clause to kill un-collected animals after only 72 hours still exists.