

Stray cats not a hit with village

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Resident's complaint about growing number of feral felines prompts officials to warning against feeding

The Village of Fredonia is under a feline invasion that must be thwarted, according to a Fredonia Avenue resident.

Carol Huber told the Village Board at a recent meeting that her neighborhood is being inundated with stray cats.

"It is horrendous. There are wild cats running all over," Huber said.

"They are spraying my home, and having a good old time yowling at night."

She said she used to try to catch the cats in live traps and take them to the Ozaukee Humane Society, but the task has become too overwhelming.

"The last time I put out the trap, I caught two cats and three raccoons that were after the bait," Huber said.

None of the cats she has seen roaming the neighborhood have collars, which she said suggests they aren't house cats out for a night on the town.

Huber said she knows of at least one neighbor who leaves food out for the feral cats.

Trustee Jill Bertram said she, too, is aware of the problem.

"There are people who feed them like they are pets," Bertram said.

Village Marshal Mike Davel told village officials his department has tried to do what it can to control the at-large feline population, but often without much success.

"When you see a stray dog, often all you have to do is open the door and they will come right into the squad car," Davel said.

"A feral cat won't do that. It will run the other way."

When asked about getting his department to intervene in the matter, Davel said he didn't think it was a violation of any village ordinance to leave food for stray cats.

Unlike dogs, the village does not issue cat licenses.

However, the village does set a pet limit for households. The ordinances allow up to three dogs, three cats or a total of five animals in any home.

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An exception is allowed for litters of puppies or kittens, which are allowed to stay in a home until they are 16 weeks old.

Scientists say the proliferation of at-large felines is taking its toll on nature. A recent study claims cats — whether they are strays or pets allowed to roam freely outdoors — kill more than one billion birds a year.

Officials noted there is a taxpayer cost in rounding up stray cats, too. The village is charged a \$35 boarding fee when taken to the Wisconsin Humane Society Shelter, along with a \$5 facility fee.

If the animal must be euthanized, there is an additional \$20 disposal fee.

Village President Chuck Lapicola said he would address the issue in the next village newsletter, asking residents to resist feeding the nuisance cats.