



VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Marietta Borough Council
111 E. Market Street
Marietta, PA 17547

Dear Members of Council,

Alley Cat Allies is reaching out to express our concerns the proposed amendment to Chapter 96 of the Borough Code, which includes a registration requirement for cat caregivers and effectively acts as a feeding ban or restriction against cats by Marietta Borough. While the proposal may be well-intentioned, registration requirements actually penalize the people most willing to help cats and their community, and they prevent the only humane and effective approach to community cats (unowned cats who live outdoors): Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). We strongly recommend rejecting this provision and urge you to support TNR instead.

Alley Cat Allies is the leader of the global movement to protect and improve cats' lives. Through our cutting-edge programs and fearless advocacy, we champion the humane treatment of all cats and kittens. We work toward a world where every cat is valued and protected and every community and shelter has policies and programs to defend them.

Founded in 1990, Alley Cat Allies regularly works with lawmakers, animal shelters, and the public to change attitudes and advance lifesaving laws and policies that best serve the interests of cats. We offer the opportunity to provide our expertise and resources to Marietta Borough.

Registration Causes TNR Programs to Fail

Well-intentioned ordinances can cause more harm than help if they create regulations and restrictions and, subsequently, penalties and liabilities against community cat caregivers.

The most problematic TNR ordinance provision is mandatory registration. Mandatory registration means that community cat caregivers are legally obligated to register with animal control or another local government agency and include personal information about themselves and sometimes even the location of the cats they care for. For most people, this situation is far from ideal. A person who fails to register but continues to engage in TNR could be fined or even prosecuted for breaking the law.

Community cat caregivers are volunteers who open their hearts and wallets to care for cats. They are the core of an effective TNR program. It is critical for lawmakers to understand that community cat caregivers are NOT the owners of the cats. They do not

create or increase community cat populations. Instead, they are good Samaritans providing a compassionate community service, and are the people most often on the front lines ensuring cats are spayed or neutered and vaccinated.

Registration is not necessary for successful TNR programs. It is burdensome and time-consuming and will cause citizens to cut back on their incredibly important work to spay and neuter community cats. Community cat caregivers are generally apprehensive about revealing who they are and where the cats are located. Unfortunately, their fears are well-founded. Alley Cat Allies has documented numerous instances of caregivers being subjected to verbal harassment, physical coercion, job loss, and eviction, and instances of the cats, once located, being trapped and killed.

In this way, registration ordinances actually discourage TNR and punish the compassionate people who are working the hardest to improve conditions for the cats and the community. Marietta Borough residents who spend their own time and money to spay and neuter, conduct TNR, and organize foster programs for adoptable cats and kittens will be most targeted by a registration requirement. They and the cats deserve better.

Feeding Bans and Restrictions Are Ineffective

Feeding bans and restrictions, which are the inevitable result of a registration law, do not work, punish both the cats and the compassionate people who care for them, and are not supported by science. To cut off food from cats who are used to receiving regular meals is cruel in itself—but does not mean the cats will simply go away. Cats are territorial, bonded to their surroundings, and will not disappear simply because caring individuals can no longer legally feed them. Instead, these cats will roam further to find other food sources that are a byproduct of human habitation and activity.¹⁻² As a result, cats will become more visible in the community, which can lead to increased calls to animal control.

Feeding bans and restrictions are also very difficult to enforce since they are complaint-driven. They are punitive and tend to direct resources towards administrative tasks like enforcement and away from incentive-based programs that encourage sterilization. Ultimately, ineffective ordinances and policies, like feeding bans, are a waste of taxpayer dollars.

Feeding bans and restrictions interfere with TNR because organized feeding is a necessary part of the process. If caregivers are prohibited from feeding, trapping cats is far more difficult, which ultimately leads to fewer spays and neuters taking place. As a result, these laws are counterproductive to the goal of addressing the community cat population.

TNR is the Only Humane, Effective Approach

Marietta Borough should instead seek a humane and effective approach that improves both cats' lives and the community. TNR is the only answer. Through TNR, community cats are humanely trapped; brought to a veterinary clinic to be spayed or neutered, eartipped (the universal sign that a cat has been spayed or neutered through a TNR program), and vaccinated; and then returned to their original outdoor homes.

TNR is proven to stabilize community cat populations by stopping the cycle of reproduction; improve the cats' health through vaccinations; and benefit animal control agencies and shelters by reducing cat intake and calls of concern. Today, communities across the country have adopted TNR ordinances or policies, and advocates in thousands more communities worldwide are conducting grassroots, volunteer-led programs.

Please Reject Registration

Requiring caregivers to register will not make cats in the Marietta Borough disappear. Instead, it will discourage well-meaning people from improving their community by caring for cats and participating in TNR because they fear legal consequences. We urge you not to penalize the compassionate cat advocates of the Marietta Borough. We ask that you reject registration and truly support TNR instead.

Alley Cat Allies offers support in policies that humanely and effectively address problems or concerns you have. We are happy to provide any other information that would be helpful, and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Outreach Team

Alley Cat Allies

¹ Haspel and Calhoon, Home Ranges of Free-Ranging Cats (*Felis catus*) in Brooklyn, New York. *Canadian Journal of Zoology* Vol 178, 1989.

² Liberg, Olaf, Mikael Sandell, Dominique Pontier, and Eugenia Natoli. "Density, Spatial Organization and Reproductive Tactics in the Domestic Cat and Other Felids." In *The Domestic Cat: The Biology of its Behaviour*, Second Edition, edited by Dennis C. Turner and Patrick Bateson, 119-148. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

³ Zaunbrecher, K.L., D.V.M., & Smith, R.E., D.V.M., M.P.H. "Neutering of feral cats as an alternative to eradication programs." *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 203 no. 3 (1993).