

Dear Mayor Toeppe and Members of City Council,

Alley Cat Allies is reaching out to express our deep concerns about Ordinance §90.09, which is a feeding ban against cats in the Village of Swanton. We strongly recommend enacting a new ordinance to amend it and repeal this outdated, harmful measure. Instead, we urge the Village to support a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program for community cats—unowned cats who live outdoors.

Banning the feeding of cats outdoors is cruel, does not achieve its intended goal, and ultimately creates barriers to proven humane and effective approaches like TNR. In the Village of Swanton, the current feeding ban has raised concerns among community members and resulted in the needless penalization of local advocates who are simply performing a community service.

Alley Cat Allies is the leader of the global movement to protect and improve the lives of cats. As the leading advocacy organization for cats, we work with lawmakers, shelters, and the public toward humane, nonlethal, and effective laws and policies that serve the best interests of cats and the communities in which they live. We offer our expertise and resources to the Village of Swanton.

Feeding Bans Are Ineffective

Feeding bans do not work, punish both the cats and the compassionate people who care for them, and are not supported by science. Cutting off access to food sources to which cats have become accustomed is cruel and causes suffering, but it does not mean the cats will simply go away.

Cats are territorial and bonded to their surroundings. They will not disappear just 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. As a result, cats become more visible in the community, leading to increased calls to animal control.

Feeding bans are also very difficult to enforce since they are complaint-driven. They are punitive and tend to direct resources toward 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.

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Is the Only Humane, Effective Approach

The Village of Swanton should enact 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 has been 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.

Feeding bans 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. These laws are therefore counterproductive to the goal of addressing the community cat population.

Furthermore, feeding bans punish the compassionate people who are working the hardest to improve conditions for the cats and the community. Swanton 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 feeding ban. They and the cats deserve better.

Please Repeal Swanton's Feeding Ban

A feeding ban is not making cats outdoors in Swanton disappear. Instead, it is discouraging 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 Village of Swanton. We ask that you repeal this feeding ban and support TNR.

Alley Cat Allies offers support in policies that humanely and effectively address any 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