



Focus on Felines

City Ferrels promotes environmentally friendly felines

By Lisa Warren, Best Friends Network volunteer

City Ferrels manages several community cat colonies in California's Westchester, Culver City, Long Beach, Paramount and Norwalk counties. In addition to its adamant support of trap/neuter/return (TNR), the group is the primary advocate of the GREEN Cats advocacy campaign, spearheaded by Lee Martin.

The purpose of GREEN Cats is to educate the public, businesses and local governments that community (aka feral) cats are a benefit to communities and should be honored, respected and employed as the "green" solution to rodent control. "It's the centerpiece of City Ferrels," says Beverly Berwald, City Ferrels' founder.

The GREEN Cats campaign aims to transform the image of the feral cat from annoying nuisance to respected ally. Not only do these felines exterminate unwanted

rodents, their smell drives rodents away. Cats' method of rodent control trumps any method that uses dangerous chemicals and poisons, which harm our lands, oceans and other innocent animals.

"It is a proven fact that cats are unmatched when it comes to controlling rat infestations. The greening of any city must include [using] GREEN Cats as a protocol and removing 'pest control' poisons from our streets and businesses," says Martin. "It is time city hall acknowledges that the feral cat is a benefit and wonderful natural resource that protects the health of our communities and the environment at large."

The history of the cat speaks to their eco-friendliness. In the Middle Ages, the spread of the plague, a rodent-borne disease, coincided with the slaughtering of many cats during the Inquisition. Later, in the 1950s,

it became common for shopkeepers to keep cats to drive away rodents. Even now, the city council

of Rome, Italy, acknowledges feral cats as an official and important part of their ancient heritage. Recognizing the feral cat as an ally is not a new phenomenon, but rather one that must be revived.

In 2004, a police station in Los Angeles took the GREEN Cats motto seriously and had great success. The police station suffered from a bad rodent problem and brought in neutered feral cats from a local animal rescue. After acclimating the cats to the new environment by caging them temporarily in the basement — a process called grounding — the cats were let loose to do what they do best: scare away the rats. Soon after, the rats disappeared.

The mission of GREEN Cats cannot succeed without continued support for TNR. TNR stabilizes and ultimately reduces the feral cat population, allowing feral cats to live out their lives peacefully and in good health, while we benefit from their role as natural rodent exterminators.

To learn more, visit www.cityferrels.com.

To learn more about our Focus on Felines campaign, visit felines.bestfriends.org.

