



SUNY Buffalo Law School

The State University of New York

Background and Summary of the SUNY Buffalo Animal Law Pro Bono Project Model Community Cat Ordinance July 2014 Version

SUNY Buffalo Law School launched its Animal Law Pro Bono Project in 2013. Since then, students, faculty, and pro bono lawyers have joined together to serve the unmet legal needs of municipalities and organizations working on behalf of animal interests.

The Project's "Model Community Cat Ordinance" presents a local law addressing feral and community cats; it supports the health and welfare of such cats while reducing certain problems that sometimes arise. A trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) program stabilizes existing feral and community cat populations and addresses potential disease concerns in the community. In the event TNVR is not an option, it clarifies that leaving community cats in place is the best alternative.

Summary of the Model Community Cat Ordinance

§ 1 "Purposes" – this section lays the groundwork as to why the ordinance is necessary and provides background as to what it has the potential to accomplish. Nothing in this section becomes enforceable law as it merely introduces the reader to the more formal parts of the text.

§ 2 "Definitions" – this section provides the formal definitions for the terms used in the ordinance. It allows for the unambiguous understanding of each important term, listing and defining the intended meaning of the word as used throughout the ordinance. Readers should reference this section as they are reading the ordinance to fully understand the complete text.

§ 3 "General Policy" – this section provides the working text of the law. It sets out the policy to be implemented and how it is to be accomplished. This is considered by many to be the most important section of an ordinance, as it lays how the law will work once passed.

§ 4 "Implementation" – this section provides how the ordinance will be administered once it is passed. It also lays out who will be responsible for ordinance oversight and enforcement.

§ 5 "Severability" – this section protects the ordinance from challenge by giving the court the ability to "sever" only one part of the ordinance and leave the rest standing.

§ 6 – This section identifies the procedure necessary to allow the ordinance to take effect immediately upon being passed.