



Nebraska Circular Advocating Killing Cats Based on Poor Science, Best Friends Says

The authors of the six-page circular “Feral Cats and Their Management,” published by the University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension is biased and thinly veiled advocacy and instruction manual for the total extermination of unowned cats, according to Dr. Frank McMillan, DVM, ACVIM and director of well-being studies for Best Friends Animal Society.

Kanab, UT (Vocus/PRWEB) December 05, 2010 -- A recently published study by a university's extension office is misleading: It uses pseudo-science to advocate for the wholesale destruction of free-roaming cats, according to experts from the national animal welfare organization [Best Friends Animal Society](#).

Dr. Frank McMillan, DVM, ACVIM, and director of well-being studies for the Utah-based organization, says authors of the six-page circular “[Feral Cats and Their Management](#),” published by the University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension, use every known propaganda technique in discussing the issue.

“There is no possibility of objectivity if the authors are going to label the animal under discussion as a pest,” says McMillan. “The definition of pest is ‘an animal detrimental to humans or human concerns.’ The article is not only biased, but it is a thinly veiled advocacy and instruction manual for the total extermination of unowned cats.”

Holly Sizemore, senior manager at Best Friends Animal Society and a national cat expert, says that while the circular is deeply flawed, it does have one true statement. “The authors say that the public’s participation will play a pivotal role in the effective management of feral cats,” says Sizemore. “We couldn’t agree more with them on that point. The public will not tolerate the cruel methods advocated here to address controlling free-roaming cat populations, particularly when there is a humane solution.”

Three pages of the document go into great detail about methods of eradicating cats, such as aiming gunshots between a cat’s eyes, using padded jaw foothold traps, killing by carbon dioxide asphyxiation or chemical injection.

And equally odd, Sizemore says, “is the author’s assertion that predation by cats on birds has a U.S. economic impact of more than \$17 billion per year. This is apparently based on an estimated cost per bird of \$30 and on literature citing that bird watchers spend 40 cents per bird observed, hunters spend \$216 per bird shot, and bird rearers spend \$800 per bird released. So apparently the idea is that killing cats saves birds, so hunters can shoot them.”

Best Friends, along with many other animal welfare organizations, advocates using the more humane trap/neuter/return (TNR) method of controlling free-roaming cat populations.

“It has only been in the last 10 years that TNR has been established as the humane way to manage feral cats,” Sizemore says. “Increasing numbers of city and town governments have embraced this approach. These municipal governments don’t adopt TNR out of any warm, fuzzy motive. They adopt it because it is effective, saves money and increases public welfare.”

Sizemore says her organization calls the cats in question “community cats” because they range from recently

lost or abandoned house cats with the potential to be house pets again, to felines out on their own for a couple of years (who may or may not resocialize to people if given the chance), to the truly feral cats.

“We believe the solution for these cats rests with the community,” Sizemore says.

NOTE: The [video embedded](#) with this news release illustrates a recent successful collaboration between the owner of a New Jersey boardwalk, a local SPCA and Best Friends to help the cats living under the Asbury Park Boardwalk. Best Friends has successful collaborations with the City of Jacksonville, First Coast No More Homeless Pets and Jacksonville Humane Society in Florida; FixNation in Los Angeles, and scores of Utah communities through the Four Directions Community Cat Program and No More Homeless Pets in Utah.

Sizemore points out that the circular "focuses on the decline of bird populations as justification for killing cats, yet neatly ignores the number-one threat to birds: human civilization. Birds crashing into [windows](#), she says, accounts for just about double the avian deaths that are attributed to cats. When you add in hunting, high-voltage power lines, communication towers, and destruction of habitat, the result is a lot of birds killed without any feline involvement."

Sizemore says the blog [VoxFelina](#), in its response to the circular, cites several scientific studies that refute many of the points made by the University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension authors. For instance, in their contribution to *The Domestic Cat: The Biology of Its Behaviour*, Mike Fitzgerald and Dennis Turner write: “There are few if any studies, apart from island ones, that actually demonstrate that cats have reduced bird populations.”

The University of Nebraska document also includes inaccurate and misleading information, yet omits facts that detract from their agenda, McMillan adds. “For example,” he says, “they present what appears to be an alarming fact, that ‘cats are the most important species in the life cycle of the parasite responsible for toxoplasmosis, and most feral cats (62 percent to 80 percent) tested positive for toxoplasmosis.’

“What the authors leave out, however, because it would greatly diminish the alarm to the reader, is that the vast majority of animals, including humans, that test positive for toxoplasmosis aren’t currently infected with the organism,” McMillan says.

“The authors state that cats can transmit rabies to humans. What they don’t say, because it would completely debunk their claim, is that in the United States during the last year on record (2009) there were only four cases of rabies in humans reported to the National Centers for Disease Control. None of these cases involved cats.

“But if they included this information, the reader might not form such a bad impression of these cats,” McMillan says.

Sizemore says Best Friends Animal Society, other national animal-welfare organizations and thousands of people at the grassroots level know that TNR is the best and humane way to control feral cat populations. Furthermore:

1. TNR promotes public health by reducing the number of unvaccinated cats.
2. Sterilizing community cats alleviates nuisance propensities, thus reducing complaints from community members.
3. TNR programs often are supported financially by nonprofit organizations, foundations and charitable



individuals. They do not rely solely on taxpayers for funding.

4. Despite repeated assertions by TNR opponents, almost every cat in a colony can be trapped, sterilized and then managed by responsible caretakers.

For more information on Best Friends Animal Society's initiatives to help cats, visit the [Focus on Felines](#) campaign page or www.bestfriends.org.

About Best Friends Animal Society®:

Best Friends Animal Society is a nonprofit organization building no-kill programs and partnerships that will bring about a day when there are No More Homeless Pets®. The society's leading initiatives in animal care and community programs are coordinated from its Kanab, Utah, headquarters, the country's largest no-kill sanctuary. This work is made possible by the personal and financial support of a grassroots network of supporters and community partners across the nation.

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