

Reasons why domestic cats should not be allowed to roam freely :

First, the Impact on the cats themselves

- Cats roaming freely outside are exposed to many hazards including vehicles, dogs, other cats, wildlife, humans wishing them harm, and the various diseases that they can contract from exposure to other animals.
- Cats left outside to roam freely face an average life expectancy of two to five years. In contrast, cats living within the home enjoy an average life expectancy of 12 ½ years. (Ontario SPCA)
- 15% of cats stray at least once during a five year period. (American Journal 'Animals' v.8(1); 2018 Jan)
- 25% of those cats that do stray are never found or returned to their guardians. (American Humane Society)
- 61% of cats in shelters in Canada in 2016 were strays that were brought in by the public. (Humane Canada)
- Nearly 160,000 cats in Canada were lost or abandoned and ended up in shelters in 2016. The actual number is probably much higher, considering that not all strays ever make it into a shelter. (Humane Canada)
- There are still a significant number of cats in Canada that are not spayed or neutered. A female cat can become pregnant when 5 months old. Each female can have 3 litters per year, with an average of 4 kittens per litter. Of those 12 kittens, app. 4 to 5 will be female. Considering that each of those females can go on to have 3 litters per year, it is easy to see that with each new generation of cats there can be a large growth in the population in a short period of time. There is already an overpopulation problem with cats in Canada. In 2016, over 20,000 cats were euthanized in animal shelters nationwide due to overcrowding and lack of resources (Canadian Federation of Humane Societies).

Personal Note : My wife and I have had 31 cats in total from 1985 to the present. This large number was due mainly to all of the strays that kept turning up in our acreage subdivision outside of Edmonton. Due to overcrowding at county pounds and the Edmonton Humane Society we ended up keeping the majority of those that we took in. Of these, 16 were allowed outside during the day to roam free in our yard and some lived in our barn due to overcrowding in our house. Of these 16, 1 was attacked and crippled by a neighbour's dog, 1 was killed by the same dog, 1 lost an eye in a fight with a stray cat, and 1 disappeared without a trace and was never found. Once we became more aware of the negative impacts of cats roaming freely and built a cat run (or cateo) we were able to safely let our cats who wanted to be outside stay in the cat run during the daytime in nice weather to get fresh air and stimulation and we didn't have any more injuries, deaths, or disappearances occur.

Second, the Impact on birds and other wildlife

- Predation by domestic cats is the number one direct, human-caused threat to birds in the United States and Canada. (American Bird Conservancy)
- Domestic cats are estimated to kill between 100 and 350 million birds per year in Canada (Avian Conservation and Ecology research paper – 2013)
- In the USA, outdoor cats kill approximately 2.4 billion birds every year. Although this number may seem unbelievable, it represents the combined impact of tens of millions of outdoor cats. (American Bird Conservancy)
- Songbird and other bird populations in Canada are already being severely affected by habitat loss, pesticides and contaminants, collision with buildings and vehicles, and the climate crisis that we are all facing. They do not need the extra stress on their populations imposed by invasive species and introduced predators like domestic cats.

Personal Note : Apart from the concern for the safety of our cats, the other reason we stopped letting them roam free and used the cat run instead was the heavy toll that they were taking on songbirds, squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, etc. Again, it is important to note that domestic cats are not natural predators to any of these animals. Some people will insist that outdoor cats are necessary for rodent control. In our personal experience, when living in the rural area outside of Edmonton, we did not notice any

difference in the number of mice we found in our house after we started using the cateo than when our cats were roaming freely outside.

Third, the Impact on neighbours

Not everyone, including lovers of cats, want to see neighbour's cats roaming onto their property, due to the fact that :

- Cats tend to use vegetable gardens and children's sand boxes as litterboxes. It goes without saying that this is not only a disgusting nuisance but can be a health hazard as well.
- Outdoor cats tend to spray (urinate, in other words) on various objects such as houses, vehicles, bicycles, etc, to mark their 'territory'. Metal objects like bicycle wheels, car wheels, or outdoor yard equipment such as lawnmowers or snowblowers that are sprayed on will tend to rust very quickly if they are not washed afterwards (speaking from personal experience).
- Outdoor cats that wander onto neighbour's properties cause distress to the neighbour's indoor cats who see the 'intruders' and rush from window to window in an attempt to chase them out of their territory. This stress induced from seeing intruders can lead to inappropriate behaviour like spraying on walls and furniture as they try to mark their territory. Once this type of behaviour begins it can be very hard to stop (again, speaking from personal experience).

Conclusions

Municipalities throughout Canada, including Sackville, have had animal control by-laws for many years to encourage responsible dog ownership and prevent nuisance to residents from dogs running at large. Many municipalities in Canada have more recently adopted responsible pet ownership by-laws pertaining to cats as well, including Montreal, Mississauga, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary, Creston, B.C., and County of Kings, N.S., to name a few. Closer to home, both the City of Moncton and the Town of Riverview have also taken the progressive step of revising their animal control by-laws to include provisions against cats roaming free.

It is beyond time that that the Town of Sackville follows the progressive lead of these other municipalities and revise its' animal control by-law. The Town of Riverview's by-law might serve as a good model for town staff to follow when revising our by-law. Riverview's by-law refers to 'resident owned' cats in the prohibition against cats roaming freely and leaves the control of stray and feral cats to local animal welfare groups like CA-R-MA (the Sackville Chapter of CA-R-MA already performs this service in Sackville).

Riverview also instituted a cat licence fee, which should offset any possible increase in animal control expense. The By-law enforcement officer for Riverview informed me that they did not see any significant change to their animal control budget when they revised their by-law. If Sackville's cat licensing fee structure followed the licensing structure for dogs, where a resident pays more for an unaltered dog than for a spayed or neutered dog, it would have the added benefit of encouraging residents to spay or neuter their cats, which would reduce the number of cats ending up in shelters and being euthanized.

I have spoken to Dan Fryer, the Executive Director of the Moncton SPCA, and Laura Ward of CA-R-MA Sackville, and they indicated that they would be happy to provide their input and discuss this issue with Town Councillors and Town Staff. Brian Bell, the Bylaw Enforcement officer for Riverview was very receptive to questions about their animal control by-law and would be a good source of information and advice as well when considering the requested change to our by-law.