



Cat abandonment and Over Population

Shelters across Newfoundland and Labrador struggle to deal with large populations of unwanted and abandoned cats. There are simply more cats that need homes than there are good homes. Communities struggle with colonies of feral (wild) cats. There are feral colonies in local waste disposal sites, and advertising media are flooded with "free to good home" ads from people wanting to place unwanted cats and kittens, kittens, kittens!!

This problem is not isolated to NL but is nation wide. It is estimated by the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies that 50% of cats admitted to shelters across Canada are destroyed because of lack of space and available homes.

Abandonment

Many unwanted cats are abandoned on roadsides, in waste disposal sites, or are simply left to fend for themselves when owners move away from home. Cat owners believe that cats are natural hunters and can survive on their own. They think that the abandoned cat's chance of survival is greater than being left at overcrowded shelters or they are more concerned with relieving themselves of their burden than of the welfare of the cat.

The truth is that the abandoned cat will lead a difficult life. It will suffer from predation from wild animals and dogs and from territorial conflict with other cats. It will fight disease, parasites, and hardships from weather and injury from residents that consider them a nuisance. House cats that are thrust into an environment where they have to interact and compete with other cats are terrified of conflict and their biggest struggle is competition with their own species over available resources and space. Bite injuries transmit deadly diseases like feline leukemia (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV). Wild prey host many parasites like worms and fleas that drain their bodies of valuable nutrients.

Reproduction

Reproduction contributes heavily to distress. Adult males continually fight for mating rights with available females resulting in many bite injuries. Females suffer the greatest loss however. They can be forced to mate with several males during a heat cycle. Females need more food which often is not available for developing or nursing kittens. Mortality rates are highest in pregnant cats and kittens. Surviving kittens

become feral because of lack of positive interaction with humans. Feral cats quickly multiply (one adult female cat can produce up to 1- 3 litters a year!) and cat colonies develop. Animal welfare and animal control organizations struggle to find humane solutions and resources to deal with the problem.