



# Information Series

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## Cat Problems?

**B**ecause cats are often attached to people, people are usually the key to solving cat problems. If you don't know who owns the cat, but the cat is easy to touch or hold, or has a collar, ask the neighbors if they know who may own the cat. Solving a problem at the neighbor-to-neighbor level is always better.

**ABOUT TRAPPING:** Animal Services will rent a humane box trap to any citizen within our contracting jurisdictions, which are Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater & unincorporated Thurston County. The rental fee is \$10 for an initial 3 day rental, and \$4 for each extra day. Reduced rates are available for low-income seniors and disabled residents.

Ordinance for Thurston County, Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater currently states: "A pet animal shall not be trapped in any manner that subjects the animal to injury inherent in the mechanism of the trap. **A humane box trap may be set on a complainant's property for the purpose of trapping nuisance pet animals. Animals which are caught in such a trap must be returned to their owners or taken to Animal Services.** Injurious confinement or restraint of a pet animal is a misdemeanor."

We recommend that the trap be set with some sort of canned cat food other than tuna, which has an odor some owners consider "irresistible" to cats - you don't want to attract cats that do not normally come onto your property!

**STRAY (BUT TAME) CATS:** Local ordinances do not specifically require that cats remain on the owner's property, but they do require that cat owners take

responsibility for the damage or distress their pets may cause when on another person's property. The ordinances also require that cats be licensed, except cats living in unincorporated county, after January 1, 1997 so that the owner of the cat can be identified. Owners are encouraged to microchip their cats as additional identification. Tags may be lost.

A "nuisance pet animal" is defined by ordinance in Lacey, Olympia and Tumwater as one that: "1) damages or destroys landscaping or property of another person, including destruction of wildlife that has been purposefully attracted to private property; or 2) soils or defecates on public or private property other than the owner's, unless such waste is immediately removed and properly disposed of by the owner of the pet animal; or 3). causes unsanitary, dangerous or offensive conditions; or 4). is a female dog or cat in heat not confined within a structure to prevent access of male dogs or cats except for planned breeding; or...7) trespasses on private property and the property owner or tenant supplies a written complaint to Animal Services, and in the case of a cat, physically contains the cat." (5 and 6 do not apply to cats)

The ordinances further state: "An officer may impound any pet animal in violation of (this) Section. Upon impoundment, Animal Services is required (as soon as feasible) to notify the owner, if any owner is known, of the impoundment and the terms required for the pet animal's return. Notification shall include a description of their pet, the reason for impoundment, the general location where the animal was found, and the date it occurred."

"If the owner fails to reclaim the pet, it may be made available for adoption after 48

## Cat Problems, cont.

hours, unless the animal is unsuitable for adoption. If the pet is not reclaimed or adopted at the end of 96 hours, it may be euthanized."

**ORDINANCE:** A pet's "Owner" is defined by ordinance as any person who harbors, keeps, possesses or maintains a pet animal, or who encourages a pet animal to remain about their premises for a period of 14 consecutive days or more.

The ordinances state: "any person who harbors, keeps, maintains or has temporary custody of a pet animal shall be responsible for the behavior of the animal whether the person knowingly permits the behavior or not. Such person shall violate the terms of this chapter if...the person's pet animal constitutes a nuisance pet animal as defined. Nuisance pet animal is a class 4 infraction."

**CATS THAT ARE WILD:** People also come to the Shelter with situations in which a cat has been abandoned on or near their property, and has had kittens. Or they move onto property that has feral cats living on it. The mother cat may be semi-tame, but the kittens have grown up as wild animals. When the first litter reaches breeding age, problems begin. In these cases, the second generation cats are not pets, but by definition, belong to the property owner who has "harbored" the cat for a period probably in excess of the 14 day time period the ordinance notes. No one else is looking for these cats. These cats are not strays. These are animals that are nearly impossible to maintain humanely. Being in a cage is unbearable for them. They are dangerous to the staff at Animal Services because they are cornered in the cage, and any human approach is a threat they meet with claws and teeth. These are cats that we will euthanize immediately.



Some cats are quite aggressive, but have only recently come onto your property (or into your house), and may actually belong to someone in your neighborhood. Be sure to tell our staff if this is the case.

If you are attempting to trap-out a feral cat colony, let us know. It is necessary to have the property owner's permission to place the trap, and special arrangements may need to be made so we know who is involved.

**QUARANTINE:** Special provision is made for holding cats (even wild or feral cats) that have bitten. They must be quarantined for 10 days to observe any developing symptoms of rabies. Obviously, this long time period can be very hard on the cat, but can be vitally important to the person bitten. The point is, take every precaution you can to avoid injury, but be sure to let our officers know if you have been injured by the cat.

**NOTIFICATION:** We strongly recommend that the trap renter take time to notify the neighborhood that a problem exists, so cat owners have the opportunity to deal with their pet's behavior. Notification can be accomplished by posting in likely locations, delivering door to door, or including a note in a neighborhood newsletter, or mailing. The notice should state that the renter will be using a humane trap to assist in solving the problem. The neighborhood should also be aware that unidentified cats will be taken to the Animal Services Shelter for reclaim by the owner and that a fee is involved. There is a (minimum) \$25 fee for any reclaim, so there is an implied inconvenience and cost to the pet owner if the cat is reclaimed.

To rent a humane trap, please call Animal Services at (360) 352-2510. During the warm months there may be a 3-5 day waiting period, due to the number of people needing traps.