

ASSEMBLY, No. 3574
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
213th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JANUARY 13, 2009

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman DAWN MARIE ADDIEGO

District 8 (Burlington)

Assemblywoman JOAN M. VOSS

District 38 (Bergen)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblyman Rudder

SYNOPSIS

Creates Feral Cat Health Commission.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ACT creating the Feral Cat Health Commission to study the establishment of a Statewide trap, neuter, and release program to prevent and minimize disease associated with feral cats.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. a. There is established the “Feral Cat Health Commission.” The purpose of the commission shall be to conduct a study to examine the possibilities or opportunities for developing a Statewide trap, neuter, and release program, in order to prevent and minimize disease, especially rabies, associated with feral cats and protect the health of people and domesticated and wild animals in this State.

The commission shall make recommendations, including legislative and regulatory recommendations, regarding the potential impact of trap, neuter, and release programs for the purposes of vaccination and prevention of the spread of disease by feral cats, and the effectiveness of establishing a Statewide trap, neuter, and release program. The commission shall review recommendations concerning trap, neuter, and release programs made by the Animal Welfare Task Force, established in 2002 pursuant to Executive Order #23.

The study shall research the financial implications of a permanent, and of a temporary pilot, Statewide trap, neuter, and release program, and collaborative efforts by local, county, and advocacy organizations. The study shall include a discussion of the potential use of microchip identification, effective feral cat colony management practices, and the possible creation of intermunicipal or county commissions to manage feral cats.

b. The commission shall consist of seven members as follows:

(1) the State Public Health Veterinarian;

(2) the Commissioner of Health and Senior Services, or the commissioner’s designee;

(3) the Director of the Division of Animal Health, in the Department of Agriculture, or the director’s designee; and

(4) four members of the public appointed by the Governor, of whom one shall represent a county or local animal shelter or animal rescue group, one shall represent a trap, neuter, and release organization, one shall represent a local board of health, and one shall be a veterinarian.

c. The four members of the public shall be appointed by the Governor within 30 days after the date of enactment of this act.

d. Any vacancy in membership of the commission shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

e. Members of the commission shall serve without compensation, but the commission may, within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to it, reimburse its members for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the discharge of their official duties.

2. a. The Feral Cat Health Commission shall organize as soon as may be practicable after the appointment of its members, and shall select a chairperson from among its members and a secretary who need not be a member of the commission.

b. The commission shall meet regularly as it may determine, and shall also meet at the call of the chairperson of the commission or a majority of the membership.

c. A majority of the membership of the commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of commission business. Action may be taken and motions and resolutions adopted by the commission at any meeting thereof by the affirmative vote of a majority of the membership of the commission in attendance at the meeting.

d. The commission, within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to it, may employ such staff or experts and incur such traveling and other miscellaneous expenses as it may deem necessary in order to perform its duties pursuant to this act.

e. The commission shall be entitled to call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of such employees of any State, county, or municipal department, authority, board, bureau, commission, agency, or entity, or of Rutgers, The State University, or any other public institution of higher education in the State, as it may require and as may be available to it for the purpose of carrying out its duties under this act. The

commission shall also seek input from any officials, groups, or organizations which have successfully implemented a trap, neuter, and release program that has reduced feral cat populations and controlled disease incidence among feral cats.

f. If requested by the commission, the Department of Health and Senior Services shall provide primary staff support to the commission.

3. The Feral Cat Health Commission shall prepare and submit a final report, including its findings, conclusions, and recommendations, to the Governor and the Legislature, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), within one year after its organization. Copies of the report shall also be provided to the public upon request and free of charge, and the report shall be posted on the Internet website of the Department of Health and Senior Services.

4. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire on the 30th day after the commission submits its final report as prescribed in section 3 of the act.

STATEMENT

This bill would create the Feral Cat Health Commission to study and report on the possibilities or opportunities for developing a Statewide trap, neuter, and release (TNR) program, also known as a trap, neuter, and return program, to prevent and minimize disease, especially rabies, associated with feral cats and protect the health of people and domesticated and wild animals in this State.

The commission would make legislative and regulatory recommendations regarding the potential impact of TNR programs, for the purposes of vaccination and prevention of the spread of disease by feral cats, and the effectiveness of establishing a Statewide trap, neuter, and release program. The commission would also review recommendations concerning TNR programs made by the Animal Welfare Task Force, which was established in 2002 by Governor McGreevey pursuant to Executive Order #23. A final report was issued by the Animal Welfare Task Force in November 2004.

The study would research the financial implications of a permanent, and of a temporary pilot, Statewide trap, neuter, and release program, and collaborative efforts by local, county, and advocacy organizations. The study would also include a discussion of the potential use of microchip identification, effective feral cat colony management practices, and the possible creation of intermunicipal or county commissions to manage feral cats.

The commission would consist of seven members: (1) the State Public Health Veterinarian; (2) the Commissioner of Health and Senior Services, or the commissioner's designee; (3) the Director of the Division of Animal Health, in the Department of Agriculture, or the director's designee; and (4) four members of the public appointed by the Governor, of whom one would represent a county or local animal shelter or rescue group, one would represent a TNR organization, one would represent a local board of health, and one would be a veterinarian. If requested by the commission, the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) would provide primary staff support.

The commission would submit a final report, including its findings, conclusions, and recommendations, to the Governor and the Legislature, within one year after its organization, and copies of the report would be posted on the DHSS website.

TNR is a nonlethal health and population control method in which feral cat colonies are humanely trapped, vaccinated, and spayed or neutered by licensed veterinarians, and returned to the wild, or are adopted if possible. The TNR approach provides an opportunity to vaccinate feral cats and prevent diseases that would otherwise spread in feral cat colonies, or to other animals, including domesticated pets.