

## Group Asks to Save Petaluma's Feral Cats

**Save Our Ferals wants the California city to change policy of trapping and killing feral cats.**

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Feral cat advocates have asked the city of Petaluma, Calif., to revise a 2004 law that calls for the trapping and killing of untamed cats. Save Our Ferals instead wants the city to consider a trap, neuter and return policy, which would be organized and funded by a nonprofit group, the Santa Rosa (Calif.) Press Democrat reports.

The city adopted the current policy of trapping and killing feral cats in response to residents' complaints about the animals, including concerns about excess food left by caretakers that was attracting skunks and raccoons. The policy bans feral cats in city parks and requires animal control officers to trap those living in parks and within a half-mile of wetlands. Colonies registered with the city — those that are not considered a nuisance — are permitted to exist. Four such colonies currently are registered.

While animal control professionals said the policy has reduced the number of feral cats, they said a trap-neuter-return program could work, too. Petaluma's Animal Services Advisory Committee will review the current policy and the proposed changes at a meeting on July 9. "Cat advocates asked for it," said Nancee Tavares, the city's director of animal services. "And we want to work with them. I'd recommend it."

Pat Boyd, founder of Save Our Ferals, said her group would work with animal control officers to trap the feral cats, pay to have them spayed or neutered, then return them to the outdoors. Wildlife advocates, however — including Gerald Moore, chairman of the Petaluma Wetlands Alliance — remain concerned that the cats will impact endangered species in the area.

"The cats are very active predators," Moore said. "We don't want to see species decimated by the feral cat."

Boyd wonders whether the cats will actually threaten the endangered animals found in Petaluma. "It's a bunch of hogwash," she said. "They don't have the proof."