

Animal Welfare Advocates Fight For Neuter, Release Program

Members of Massachusetts-based Brockton Cat Coalition and other groups challenge a local housing authority.

The Brockton Cat Coalition, a 2-year-old Massachusetts humane group, and other animal welfare groups, are at odds with a local housing authority over the authority's opposition to a trap, neuter and return program at a housing complex. The situation began last month when the Brockton Housing Authority, which had hired a wildlife removal service to trap and remove the cats from the Belair Towers housing complex, suspended efforts last month after Massachusetts SPCA officials opposed the action. Then, at an April 11 meeting between the Brockton Housing Authority and officials from more than seven state humane groups, the groups urged the trap, neuter and return program to control feral felines at Belair Towers. Under neuter/return programs, feral cats are trapped, taken away to be sterilized and vaccinated, and then released into the same colony. Also at that meeting, Ward 7 Councilor Chris MacMillan, in whose ward Belair Towers is located, said the housing authority should try another method because your method is not working. MacMillan and others said removing and euthanizing the animals does not solve the problem because new feral cats typically move into the same spot. The housing authority cites disease as a concern, but animal experts have said that by vaccinating the feral cats, the risk of disease goes down after they are released. In an April 19 letter, the Brockton Housing Authority reiterated its position to deny a trap, neuter and return program at Belair, and Brockton Housing Authority Executive Director Richard Sergi said the issue is over. But on Saturday, April 29, a town hall meeting with Mayor James E. Harrington and city councilors was held on the matter, and discussion is expected to continue. Posted: May 1, 2006, 5:00 a.m. EST