

## City Seeks Solutions to Cat Overpopulation

**Walla Walla, Washington struggles to control growing feline population.**

Walla Walla, Wash., is undecided on how to manage its overpopulation of stray and feral cats.

On Monday, May 1, the City Council held a work session on what to do with the city's growing homeless feline population, which is estimated at 2,000.

During the session, Sallie McCullough, the city's only animal control officer, said the feline problem has grown dramatically since she started with the city five years ago. At that time, she guessed she spent about 10 percent or less of her time responding to calls about problem cats. But now, she says that percentage ranges from 25 to 50 percent.

Walla Walla already has ordinances that set a limit of no more than three cats or dogs, combined, per home, and bans owners of three or more cats from letting them run free, but McCullough said the codes are largely unenforceable.

The possibility of a cat licensing requirement was introduced, but McCullough said that would be ineffectual because only about half of dogs in the city are licensed.

Of about 1,000 cats brought to the Blue Mountain Humane Society shelter every year, only one to three percent eventually are adopted or picked up by their owners, according to shelter data.

McCullough said she had no clear answer to the increasing population problem, but she suggested a combination of ordinances and trap, neuter and release programs.

The Council made no decision during Monday's session, but City Manager Duane Cole said staff will look into numerous measures, such as requiring that felines at the shelter be spayed or neutered upon being released to an owner, fining people that feed feral cats and enlisting volunteers to help with control measures. Posted: May 4, 2006, 5:00 a.m. EST