

State Program Lowers Pet Population at City Shelters, Leads to More Money for Feral Cat Sterilization

Feral cat programs receive grant money because a Connecticut agency was successful in reducing the number of animals brought into city shelters; the surplus of money is dispersed through grants.

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The success of a Connecticut state agency that was created to control animal population has led to a grant program aimed at reducing the feral cat population.

The Feral Cat Grant Program began last year (2006), which led to \$40,000 in grant contributions to nonprofit agencies. The grant money will be offered again this year, and organizers are now accepting applications from nonprofits in Connecticut.

The Animal Population Control Program (APCP), a division of the state's Department of Agriculture, was established in 1995 and since its inception, the animal euthanasia and impound rate at city facilities has significantly dropped, according to APCP Director Frank Ribaudo.

"Due to our program over the last 13 years, our population of pets has been going down ... Now our income is exceeding our outgo," he said, which has allowed the APCP to organize the grant program. "We put together a program to allot the money ... We gave out money as vouchers that go toward the vaccination and sterilization of pets so it couldn't be used for administrative costs."

Last year, 11 nonprofit groups in Connecticut split the \$40,000. This year, a higher number of applications are expected to roll in because more people know about the program, Ribaudo said.

"I'm putting a small committee together to help with the decision process [on how the APCP will choose grant recipients]," he said. "We're trying to do this fairly."

The vouchers are good for sterilization and two vaccinations, with an average worth of \$80 each. Approximately 500 cats were altered through the grant program last year, and Ribaudo said he projects the same number will be altered this year.