

## Oct 12, 2011 Cat Advocates Meeting

Meeting Details:

**Date: Wednesday October 12, 2011**

**Time: 6:00 - 8:30 PM**

**Where: San Jose Animal Care and Services (SJACS) Conference Room**

**Address: 2750 Monterey Road, San Jose, 95111**

**Organized by : Diana Grubbs and Denise Uriarte**

**Sponsored by: IAMS Corporation**

Diana Grubbs opened with a review of the past two years of meetings. The goal was to gather rescue people together to share information and work together on items of common interest. The first two topics of the first meeting in November 2009 were Feral Freedom and influencing cat-friendly legislation. Soon after the first meeting San Jose started the Feral Freedom program, thanks mainly to shelter manager Staycee Dains.

This is Diana and Denise's last meeting as organizers. Beth Ward from HSSV offered to organize the next meeting.

For the first time, the meeting had a sponsor - IAMS. Local Veterinary Account Manager for IAMS, Tiffany Helmich, attended to offer free kitten "kits" for rescues adopting kittens out, as well as special pricing on food and litter for rescuers. Rescues can contact Tiffany at [helmich.ta@pg.com](mailto:helmich.ta@pg.com) or (408) 728-0937. Her contact info will also be on the Cat Resource Center at [www.catcenter.org](http://www.catcenter.org).

### **Silicon Valley Animal Control Authority (SVACA) – Shelter Manager Michael Limper**

SVACA is a small government shelter serving three cities: Santa Clara, Monte Sereno, and Campbell. SVACA has a low cost spay/neuter clinic for residents of these three cities. They recently started accepting appointments for residents of other cities, with (1) a slightly higher cost, and (2) dog spay/neuter being limited to 4 eligible breeds: chihuahuas, chihuahua mixes, pit bulls, and pit bull mixes. They completed 680 low cost surgeries this past year. For getting feral cats fixed, they suggest using their Feral Freedom program, since planning to trap a feral is difficult, and the surgery days are limited.

SVACA receives about 1,200 animals per calendar year. They have a small staff and a great volunteer base. Because the live release rate for cats was low, they started a kitten foster program, especially for bottle babies. This year, they saved 200 kittens and 40 are in foster homes right now.

Their Feral Freedom program started one year ago, in October 2010, with surgeries paid for by other rescue groups. The first year was PFOF and this year is Town Cats.

SVACA's live release rate for cats went from 46% in fiscal year 2010 to 70% in 2011. This is mainly due to the Feral Freedom program and the expansion of their foster program. You may also check their website to review the Asilomar Accords-based statistics, which are sponsored by Maddie's Fund.

Their website: [www.svaca.com](http://www.svaca.com)

For questions, please call their main line at 408-764-0344. Dispatchers can answer most questions, but for questions they are unable to field, ask for Jennifer Mathers or Mike Limper.

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### **Palo Alto Animal Services (PAAS) - Shelter Manager Sandra Stadler**

PAAS serves Palo Alto, Mountain View, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills. They were the first shelter in the country to offer low cost spay/neuter for both pets and feral cats, and will accept appointments from residents of any city. They honor all types of vouchers, Santa Clara County, Palo Alto Humane Society, etc.

The intake is about 3,200-3,400 animals per year. Most are owner surrenders about 50/50 cats / dogs with very few feral cats. 86% dogs are returned back to their owner (RTO). 10-13% RTO for cats. Out of 280 incoming cats, 134 were adopted, 43 return to owner, and 131 were euthanized, mostly for illness or behavior problems. No kittens were euthanized in FY11.

When people bring in trapped cats for surrender, the staff educates them about TNR and urges them to try it. They sometimes offer to neuter these cats for free. PAAS does not currently plan a Feral Freedom program because there are few incoming feral cats, and staff would need to be educated and helped to come around to the idea.

Their website: [http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/pol/animal\\_services.asp](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/pol/animal_services.asp)  
For questions please contact Sandra Stadler at [Sandra.Stadler@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Sandra.Stadler@CityofPaloAlto.org) or (650) 496-5955. Email is the best way to reach her.

### **Update from Cat Resource Center (CRC) – Vice President Dana Linder**

The CRC has three main goals – to reply to public questions, to connect people who need help with appropriate resources (education, traps, food, experienced volunteers), and to connect volunteers with each other. The first two areas are very active, with over 1300 requests addressed in two years. CRC educates, loans traps, helps with colony food. But the third area has lagged. This was the original intention based on an idea from Rosi (Town Cats) to have volunteers work together more efficiently.

If more colony care givers register with the CRC (confidentially), then they could help support each other through vacation feeding, trapping assistance, found cat notification and information (alerting each other when someone is complaining about the cats in the area).

The CRC always welcomes all cat-knowledgeable volunteers who are willing to help reply to public questions – volunteer from home, a few hours when available.

Beth Ward suggested offering benefits to people who register. She will add this topic to the next meeting.

The CRC's website: [www.catcenter.org](http://www.catcenter.org)

### **Update from Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV) – Customer Service Manager Nichole Boudreau**

HSSV provides animal shelter services for Sunnyvale. They have a small Feral Freedom program. They focus on education and talk to all people who surrender cats in traps to encourage them to accept TNR. Also, they talk to all people who call in with questions, and work to promote TNR. Their Feral Freedom program started in April 2010, and they have returned 69 cats, 5 of which were repeats.

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As part of their educational focus, Diana held a seminar for the HSSV intake staff and the Sunnyvale animal control officers in June.

Nichole said she has seen a large change in culture since the Feral Freedom program has started. Trappers can come out of the shadows, and work with animal control. Together they can both work toward the common goal of fewer homeless cats.

HSSV customer service staff is trained to work with customers of all levels of cat knowledge. First, they listen to the customer to hear their concerns. Then they try to walk them through the logic of possible solutions. Customers have a wide variety of opinions about cats, and it is important to shift their thinking toward spay/neuter.

### Update from San Jose Animal Care and Services (SJACS) - Shelter Manager Staycee Dains

SJACS serves five cities: San Jose, Milpitas, Saratoga, Los Gatos, and Cupertino.

Feral Freedom started March 2010, which was a little more than half way through fiscal year 2009, and Staycee shared a hand out with shelter statistics for past two years.

Some statistics: June to July fiscal year

	2008 *	2009	2010	reduction 2008-10	2009-10	
Intake		19,492	18,776	18,229	6.5%	2.9%
Cats intake	11,428	10,528	9,549	16.4%	9.3%	
Cats euthanized	8,107	6,182	3,746	53.8%	39.4%	

\*before Feral Freedom

The positive changes are clearly seen in the numbers, but also dramatically noticed in the shelter staff. Because the euthanasia numbers and the intake numbers are lower, employees can now advocate for the animals, which is why they wanted to work in animal welfare in the first place.

Recently, they have seen more trappers using the Feral Freedom process instead of walk-in feral clinic. This is OK because the end goal is to get all cats spayed/neutered, and Staycee recognizes that trapping hundreds of cats over the years gets to be expensive. And everyone should have a chance to get their cats neutered in an easy process. One improvement she would like to see is having trappers pick up their own cats to ease the burden on volunteer drivers.

Staycee asked trappers to follow these steps:

- Surrender the cat.
- Get the cat's A number (this is the Animal number assigned to each surrendered animal).
- Email Staycee with the A number [staycee.dains@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:staycee.dains@sanjoseca.gov) She prefers email rather than a phone call.
- Staycee will expedite the surgery and tell you when to pick up the cat.
- Promptly pick up the cat on the available day. The shelter is full and prompt pick up will prevent overcrowding.

SJACS wants to TNR as many cats as possible through Feral Freedom, but there are cases where the cat is not healthy enough to live outside. They have a health exam checklist to determine this. For kittens, they will spay/neuter through Feral Freedom at the minimum age/weight of 4 months/4 pounds. They are often putting kittens through the program if they are over 3 pounds but this is not

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guaranteed, so it is important to be aware of the official 4 months/4 pounds requirement and to share this with the public. Because it is often difficult to determine the size of a cat in a trap, it is better to wait until the kitten is older: err on the conservative side. You can also weigh the trap before trapping, then weigh it again with your trapped kitten inside. Take the difference in the two values to see if the weight limit is met.

There will be links to websites, or documents, up on the CRC in the near future, depicting various kitten ages and characteristics, to help as a guide in determining age/weight of kittens in that “borderline” age group just around 4 months/4 pounds.

SJACS discontinued their foster kitten program because it had not been successful in the past. Instead, they work with rescue groups.

There is shift occurring throughout the U.S. regarding how to address issues with stray and feral cats. Staycee recommended watching this presentation from UC Davis shelter medicine program, titled “Community Cats: Alternatives to Shelter Intake”:

<http://uc-d.adobeconnect.com/p4fweec45d9/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal>

### **Santa Clara County Feral Freedom Programs Celebration**

The meeting wrapped up with a segment/celebration honoring the volunteers and shelter staff involved in the Feral Freedom programs in Santa Clara County.