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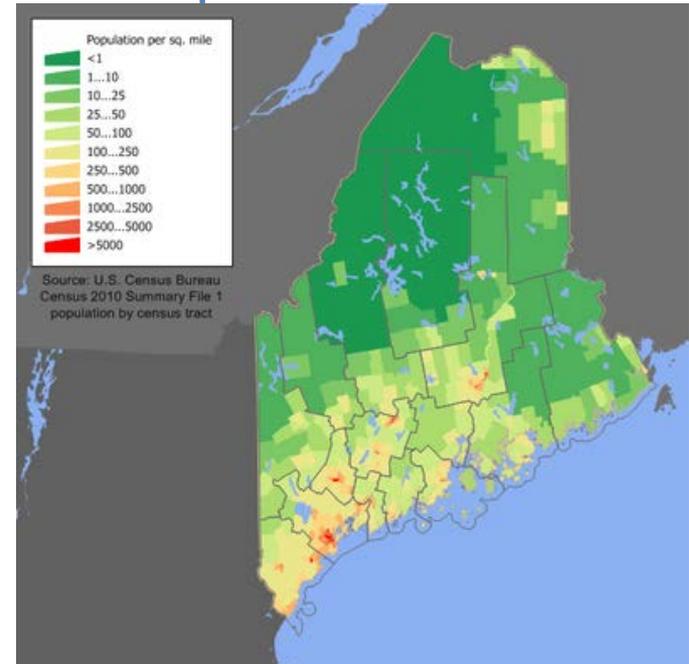
**A Maine Case Study:  
Free-Roaming Cat Interventions  
and Collaboration**

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## Maine Demographics

- Population- 1.3 million
- Households- 551,125
- Median Household Income- \$46,933
- Forests cover approximately 90% of the state
- Main industries- lobster, blueberries, potatoes, logging/paper, tourism
- Biggest City- Portland  
population 66,363
- Municipalities are required to have an Animal Control Officer and most contract with a private non-profit shelter for impoundment and animal care services.
- Harsh winters and robust coyote, fisher, bobcat and fox populations





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## ME Community Cat Project- Background

- Begun in 2010
- Three parts:
  - Year one: Survey of free-roaming cat interventions
  - Year two: Community Cat Meetings
  - Year three: Spay/neuter efforts and survey of cat ownership
- Funded by The Sewall Foundation, a Maine based philanthropic organization with interest in animal welfare, social services and conservation
- Cats identified as high priority area through a series of interviews and reports initiated by the Foundation, in addition to grant requests received

Elmina B. Sewall  
FOUNDATION



## ME Community Cat Project- Survey

- Three surveys were created for three categories of stakeholders to determine what was being done for free-roaming cats across the state
- Surveys mailed along with a letter of purpose to



191 Veterinary practices

85 Shelters and Rescue  
organizations

474 Municipalities/Animal Control

31% of surveys were returned,  
representing all counties in Maine, and a wide variety  
of rural and urban areas.

## Survey Results- Animal Control

- Majority of municipalities (58%) reported receiving zero or 1-5 free-roaming cat complaints in an average year. 11% reported receiving 20 or more complaints. Those reporting the higher number of calls were the larger municipalities.
- Majority of towns rely on shelters to handle cats. 53% indicated they will trap nuisance cats and turn them over to contracted shelters
- Most prevalent barriers identified by Animal Control are cost and lack of equipment or assistance



## Survey Results- Veterinarians

- 30% of responding veterinarians reported receiving more than 20 calls for free-roaming cat assistance per year.
- 81% of responding vets said they provide discounted sterilization services to shelters and rescues.
- For those that do not provide discounts, 45% reported that they had never been asked to help and another 50% responded that they were not set up to assist feral cats or did not have an effective local group to provide assistance to



## Survey Results- Shelters and Rescues

- Majority of shelters serve more than 1 municipality. Reports of free-roaming cat assistance requests were higher than among veterinarians and ACOs. 46% reported receiving more than 30 requests per year.
- Free-roaming cat interventions were varied- 26% reported providing TNR of some sort and caretaker assistance, 22% provided food to caretakers and 28% provided other services such as medical care, fostering and public education
- 28% of respondents assisted over 50 free-roaming cats in an average year and 40% indicated they assisted up to 10 free-roaming cats



## General Survey Conclusions



29 % of total respondents indicated that funding was their major challenge, while another 18% indicated a lack of volunteers as a major hurdle.

- Extrapolation from reported data indicates a lower population of free-roaming cats (approximately 30,000) in Maine than some published studies would predict.
- A significant number of veterinary practices in Maine provide discounted services to shelters and rescues, yet a number of animal welfare organizations cite lack of veterinary support as a major barrier
- Many shelters and rescues did not respond to the survey due to lack of relevant data collection, specifically differentiating free-roaming versus owned cats.

## Community Cat Meetings

- Due to the lack of communication identified in the survey, the next year highlighted building local relationships
- Community Cat Meetings were held that attempted to connect local ACOs, veterinarians and welfare organizations
- Focus was on building local responses to the local situation
- 12 meetings were held across the state, in rural, urban and remote areas with identified free-roaming cat interventions to build upon
- Attendees brainstormed resources and problems in the community and attempted to identify ways to help bridge the gap





## Capacity Building in Communities

- Participants had time to meet and discuss their ideas and limitations
- From these meetings, three new local efforts have started up in the midcoast, western foothills and eastern coastal region
- Other areas have expanded their spay/neuter programs and have included new coalition members
- Organized efforts are in a better place to begin applying for grants, and a number of local groups have received cat specific funding

## Cat Demographics Study

- Previous work had gathered no information on cat ownership trends in Maine
- Study was compiled with 22 questions, administered online, with a phone component
- Survey looked at cat ownership demographics and incidence of free-roaming cat feeding



The study had a random, representative sample of n=945 and was collected in the Fall of 2012.



## Key Findings

- One-half of households (53%) reported owning at least one cat.
- On average, cats have been living in their current home for 5 years, 8 months. Few cats (8%) have been living in their current home for less than 1 year and one-fifth (20%) have resided in their current home for 10 or more years.
- The majority of cats were obtained from a friend, neighbor or relative (34%) or adopted from a shelter or animal rescue operation (32%).
- A slightly higher percentage of cats are female (54%) versus male (45%).
- Most female cats (79%) have not given birth to any kittens.
- Nearly all cats (89%) have been spayed or neutered



## Key Findings Continued

- Cost (43%) is the primary reason why cats have not been spayed or neutered.
- More than two-thirds of cats (71%) have visited a veterinarian at least once in the past year.
- Three-fifths of cats (62%) do not wear any type of identification. Collars with tags (18%) are the most common type of identification, followed by microchips (11%).
- The majority of cats are indoor cats that never go outside (60%). That number increases to 65% when there is snow on the ground.
- In the past year, three-quarters (73%) of outdoor cats have caught at least one rodent, while one-half (51%) of outdoor cats have caught at least one bird.



## More Key Findings

- 83% of owners cite cat's boredom or desire to go outside as the top reason why they do not keep the cat indoors.
- Most respondents (85%) do not care for stray cats.
- Respondents who care for stray cats most often care for random outdoor cats (75%) versus barn cats or a managed colony.
- Few respondents feed at least one stray cat daily (13%) or weekly (10%) or have taken at least one stray cat to a veterinarian in the past year (8%).
- One-third of respondents (31%) believe feeding stray cats is harmful, while the majority (64%) does not.
- Over one-half of respondents who believe feeding stray cats is harmful are concerned that doing so will add to the overpopulation problem

## Education and Spay/Neuter Efforts

- Utilizing targeted messaging from the HSUS Gulf Coast S/N project, we will be airing TV and radio PSAs statewide, in addition to print ads highlighting local spay/neuter efforts
- Local efforts will be supported with small grants, educational material and marketing guidance
- Focus will be on expanding services to free-roaming cats, however, owned cats can be part of the spay/neuter effort as well





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WORLD SPAY DAY

2013



## Spay Day 2013

- Local efforts will be in conjunction with World Spay Day 2013, which highlights spay/neuter and occurs every February
- Due to unpredictable weather in February, Maine efforts happen anywhere from February through May
- Any group nationwide, including shelters, rescues, veterinarians or municipalities, can register to hold a Spay Day event and have access to promotional materials, grant eligibility, and much more.

## The HSUS's Future Work for Cats

- 2013 will focus on a new messaging campaign to convince people to keep their pet cats indoors or safely confined, get them spayed or neutered and wear a collar and visible ID
- We continue to encourage collaborative local efforts to address free-roaming cats with stakeholders from all sides including governments, animal welfare organizations and wildlife protection agencies
- New training and resources to assist communities in helping free-roaming cats



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