Mason Cat Coalition Manages Strays

CATS, from Page 1

said Ziemba. “If the cats appeared to be at all socialized or we thought they could be, we found them homes.”

According to the Humane Society of the United States, a feral cat is a cat that has lived with little or no human contact and is not socialized. Feral cats typically cannot be re-socialized.

Cat owners, unable or unwilling to keep their cats, have abandoned their animals on Mason's forested property for many years. These cats, usually unaltered, then have kittens.

“The number of stray cats in the Mason area is almost entirely because of students who ‘temporarily’ have a cat for a pet, but then when they leave the area, the cat stays here,” said Vicki Kirby, president of the Humane Society of Fairfax County.

Mason Assistant Registrar for Student System Conversion and MCC organizer Colleen Bauer said that students are responsible for the majority of stray cats on campus.

“Students, faced with no place to keep their pet, will sometimes resort to releasing the pet on campus,” Bauer said.

According to the Office of Housing and Residential Life’s policies, “pets are prohibited in residence areas.” The “no pet” policy, however, seems to have gone unnoticed. Students hide cats and other pets during the school year in their dorms.

“Students keep pets on campus. Walk by the apartments and dorms, and you’ll eventually see a cat peering out of the windows,” Bauer said.

Clare Tumulty, a senior communication major, said that she knows many people with pets on campus. Tumulty’s friend in Liberty Square keeps a cat.

“She just thought it would be fun to have a pet at school,” Tumulty said.

Associate Director of Housing Kyle Robin said that students caught with animals on campus are held responsible and must correct the problem.

“We ask the students to resolve the issue, and administrative action may be taken against them,” Robin said.

Confused and often without resources, the students abandon the animal, thinking it will be fine on campus.

“Students leave for the holidays and find out the animal isn’t welcome at home,” Bauer said. “Every year when school lets out, we get a whole new crop of cats.”

With the addition of new volunteer time at area shelters or with rescue organizations such as ours.

Students with pets on campus not only violate school policy but also risk the life of their pet.

“Don’t risk having a pet that could get out and get lost, then get sick or injured or pregnant,” Bauer said. “If you have a pet now, please make sure it goes to a good home, like a friend who lives off campus or an animal rescue group.”

“Be responsible, and be loving,” Bauer said. “Abandoning an animal is not only unconscionable, it’s a crime.”

MCC will continue to work with administration and students in hopes of reducing the cat population at Mason until only a few feral cats remain.

Residential students with pets should contact the Humane Society of Fairfax County at (703) 385-PETS to find them homes. The Homeless Animals Rescue Team, a non-profit organization located in Fairfax Station, also takes in cats and dogs. Students should contact HART at (703) 691-HART. Contact Bauer at cbauer@gmu.edu with questions about MCC.