

 <p>Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Section: Natural Resources</p>	<p>Procedure Title: Managing Uncontrolled Cats and Dogs</p> <p>Directive: NR-PCD-019</p> <p>Effective Date: 03/01/2019</p>
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Summary

Uncontrolled cats and dogs are a management concern at many state parks and historic sites. In addition to creating health and safety risks for staff and patrons, uncontrolled cats and dogs may prey on or harass native wildlife, including birds, small mammals and reptiles. This procedure outlines the steps for removing uncontrolled cats and dogs from OPRHP facilities.

These animals are not considered wildlife, therefore, existing OPRHP guidelines for managing wildlife do not apply, and the *Policy on the Use of a Firearm by an OPRHP Civilian Employee for Wildlife Management (NR-POL-007)* also does not apply.

This procedure also does not apply to dogs under the control of their owners/handlers who are nearby (see, OPRHP’s pet regulation at 9 NYCRR § 377.2) nor does it apply to dogs allowed to run off leash in approved OPRHP dog runs.

Finally, this procedure does not supersede Environmental Conservation Law §§ 11-0529(1)(2)(3), which authorize the State Park Police to humanely destroy a cat that is found hunting or killing a protected species of bird, or kill any dog pursuing or killing deer within a state park or other specified areas.

Procedure

Uncontrolled Cats

To protect state parks and historic sites from the risks associated with free roaming domestic cats or feral cats (cats), park, historic site and facility managers (collectively, facility managers) will:

- Maintain a list of local shelters, sanctuaries, rescue groups, Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SCPA) and veterinarians who will accept cats;
- Develop written contracts or informal verbal agreements with animal shelters, sanctuaries, rescue groups, SPCAs and veterinarians to facilitate the acceptance of

cats (note: the contracts may be simple purchase orders that have been pre-approved by the Regional Director and the Regional Business Office as noted below);

- Report to the State Park Police any owners who repeatedly allow their cats to roam uncontrolled; and
- Install the approved sign that prohibits abandonment and feeding of cats in parks, historic sites or other facilities.

Staff must:

- Not feed or provide shelter for any abandoned cat;
- Inspect and monitor facilities, including maintenance and storage areas, for the presence of cats, cat food or shelters; and
- Report any sightings of cats, cat food or shelters to their supervisor and the facility manager. This does not require reporting of cats that are on leashes or residing within vehicles or campers with patrons.

Whenever a facility manager receives a report of an uncontrolled cat on the premises, the facility manager will consult with the State Park Police and take steps to remove the cat from the premises in a humane manner as follows.

The cat may be humanely trapped by

- properly trained staff using appropriate personal protective gear,
- a private contractor,
- a private rescue group, or
- US Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (USDA-APHIS) wildlife services staff.

Cats should be live trapped by using a box trap. Hand capture with a catch pole is also acceptable. Use of spring, snare, leghold or other traps that may injure, maim or kill the animal are prohibited.

Once trapped or captured, the facility manager will determine if there is an owner. Owner information may be determined from an identification tag or via a microchip that could be scanned by a shelter or veterinarian. If the owner of the cat can be determined, the facility manager will direct staff to return the cat to the owner and inform the owner that it is illegal to abandon a cat in a park or historic site. Repeated instances of the same cat returning to the facility will be reported to the State Park Police.

If the owner of a cat cannot be determined, the State Park Police will be consulted and the cat will be taken to a shelter, sanctuary, rescue group or SCPA that accepts cats. These facilities or groups may require the cat be examined, spayed or neutered and vaccinated by a veterinarian prior to acceptance. If there is no facility or group available to accept the cat, it will be taken to a veterinarian's office where it may be humanely euthanized. (see, Agriculture and Markets Law § 374).

The facility manager may in consultation with the State Park Police authorize staff or an OPRHP volunteer or an OPRHP contractor to take the cat to a shelter, sanctuary, rescue group, SCPA or veterinarian and/or from a veterinarian's office to a shelter, sanctuary, rescue group or SCPA.

Feral Cat Colonies

Feral cat colonies present additional management issues because they may have caretakers from the local community. When a facility manager becomes aware of a feral cat colony, the Regional Office will be consulted and engaged to assist in contacting any potential caretakers. Caretakers will be informed that cats may not be abandoned in parks, historic sites or other facilities, that the feeding or sheltering of uncontrolled cats is not permitted, and that OPRHP intends to remove the cats from the premises. The caretakers may be provided an opportunity to trap or capture and remove the cats by a realistic deadline established by the Region. If there are no caretakers, or the caretakers do not remove the cats by the deadline, the cats will be removed in accordance with the procedure discussed above.

Uncontrolled Dogs

Facility managers will keep and maintain contact information for the local SPCA or dog or animal control officers, and staff will:

- Inform patrons with uncontrolled or off leash dogs of OPRHP regulations requiring that dogs be properly leashed, and
- Report any uncontrolled or off leash dog to the facility manager or the State Park Police.

When there is a report of an uncontrolled or off leash dog in a state park, historic site or other facility, the facility manager will arrange to have the dog removed from the premises in a humane and lawful manner. Where the owner of an uncontrolled or off leash dog is known and is a patron who continually refuses to keep their dog properly leashed, staff will report the owner to the State Park Police. If the owner cannot be determined, the facility manager will contact the State Park Police, the local SPCA or the local dog or animal control officer and assist them in removing and relocating the dog.

Potentially Diseased Cats or Dogs

Staff should not attempt to remove an uncontrolled or off-leash dog or cat if the animal exhibits symptoms of disease and will contact the Regional Health and Safety Manager before attempting removal. Pregnant staff shall not handle uncontrolled or off leash cats.

Costs

The Region may need to budget for the potential costs for removing and relocating cats and dogs and will consult with the Regional Director and the Regional Business Office in advance to determine how to pay for these costs (e.g., through purchase orders).

Forms

Signage Template – Do Not Abandon or Feed Cats

Other Related Information

SFT-POL-001, Occupational Health and Safety

History

03/01/2019 Procedure created and effective immediately.