

Humane Society says trapping feral cats is legal

To the Editor:

I would like to respond to the letter from Ms. Eileen Hutcheson published in the September 10 issue of the Tanner.

In her latter, Ms. Hutcheson claimed that the legality of trapping feral cats is in a "very gray area". However, Ms. Hutchinson has been assured by the Ontario Humane Society as well as by the police that trapping feral cats is perfectly legal. In fact, every day feral cats and other animals are humanely trapped by a number of organizations across the province, such as humane societies, other animal welfare groups, and some municipalities.

Ms. Hutcheson claims that the Upper Credit Humane Society works in secrecy. However, during the first of Ms. Hutcheson's several calls to the society, she was told everything about the program including where, why and how it is being done. Our understanding was that Ms. Hutcheson simply didn't agree with what she heard.

We ask people to keep in mind that the Upper Credit Humane Society is a small organization with a limited budget and a large area to cover. We do our best to let people know about our programs. For example, the humane society tries to have a booth at every major community event in Acton. Staffing

our booth are knowledgeable volunteers who can explain what the local humane society does for the animals in the community. The Upper Credit Humane Society also publishes a free newsletter several times a year and we're working on a web site that will contain up-to-date information on our activities. Most of the veterinarians in the area are aware of the work we do, as are many residents of Acton, some of whom have adopted pets from us or surrendered unwanted animals into our care. The telephone number of our organization is published locally and we have an answering machine if no one is available to take the call. We

hardly do our work in secret.

In regard to the feral cats in question. Life is not kind or gentle to feral cats. Their lives are usually short and often come to an end only after a period of suffering because of illness or injury. In addition, most feral females are almost constantly pregnant and the kittens that are born to them suffer terribly. Earlier this month the humane society picked up two 7-week-old feral kittens from Acton. According to the veterinarian's report on these poor creatures, they were infested with fleas and lice; both were comatose and in circulatory collapse/shock when admitted. Both kittens were lean and suffering from

severe dehydration.

Ms. Hutcheson wrote a letter to the head office of the humane society in which she stated, and I quote, "Now and then a sickly litter is born; they don't survive. Nature seems to take care of its overpopulation." From this I assume that Ms. Hutcheson feels that we should leave these unfortunates to suffer and die in agony. Frankly, I refuse to accept that. I cannot imagine anyone looking at a suffering animal, particularly an infant, and deciding to 'let nature take care of its own' when it is within his or her power to do something about it.

Several people, having read Ms. Hutcheson's letter,

have called the humane society and questioned how we can tell feral cats from pet cats that have strayed. The simple truth is that feral cats and owned cats are as different as night and day. While any cat might be excited or scared after being held in a humane trap, feral cats are as wild as any wild animal would be. If we have any doubt whatever that the cat in the trap is someone's pet rather than a feral, it is immediately released where it was trapped.

After a cat has been humanely trapped, it is taken to a veterinarian where professionals check its health and temperament and provide any necessary medical care. The cat is then held for a minimum of three days during which people regularly work with the animal to assess its health and temperament in greater detail. If, during this time, it is determined that the cat came from a home, and I should point out that that determination has never been made about any of the cats humanely trapped in the Acton area, the society makes every effort to return the cat to its owner.

Our humane traps are set only on private property and only after we have been convinced that there is a need to do so. Indeed, only a relatively few cats or kittens have been trapped in Acton and the surrounding area over the years. It averages out to about six each year. Some were so sickly that they had to be euthanized while a few were spayed or neutered and were adopted as barn cats. None of the adult cats were suitable house pets. Some kittens were saved and tamed to the point that they could be adopted as pets.

People who are concerned about what the Upper Credit Humane Society is doing regarding feral cats might try calling their local council member and requesting that the municipality take over the job. Failing that, the humane society would be glad to house the cats at the local animal control facility if council would allow us to do so.

Some local newspapers run humane society animal pictures and news as a free public service. The Upper Credit Humane Society would be pleased to provide the Tanner with pictures and local information on a regular basis. If you think that this service would be useful to the community, contact the Tanner and ask them to run it.

We accept that there are other humane ways to deal with feral cat colonies. A few hard working people in various communities throughout North America have actually managed to establish healthy feral cat colonies. It is hard work with few rewards except the knowledge that through you these animals will live longer, healthier lives. The Upper Credit Humane Society would be willing to provide financial assistance to any group ready to take on the responsibility of caring for a local feral colony. In order to qualify for

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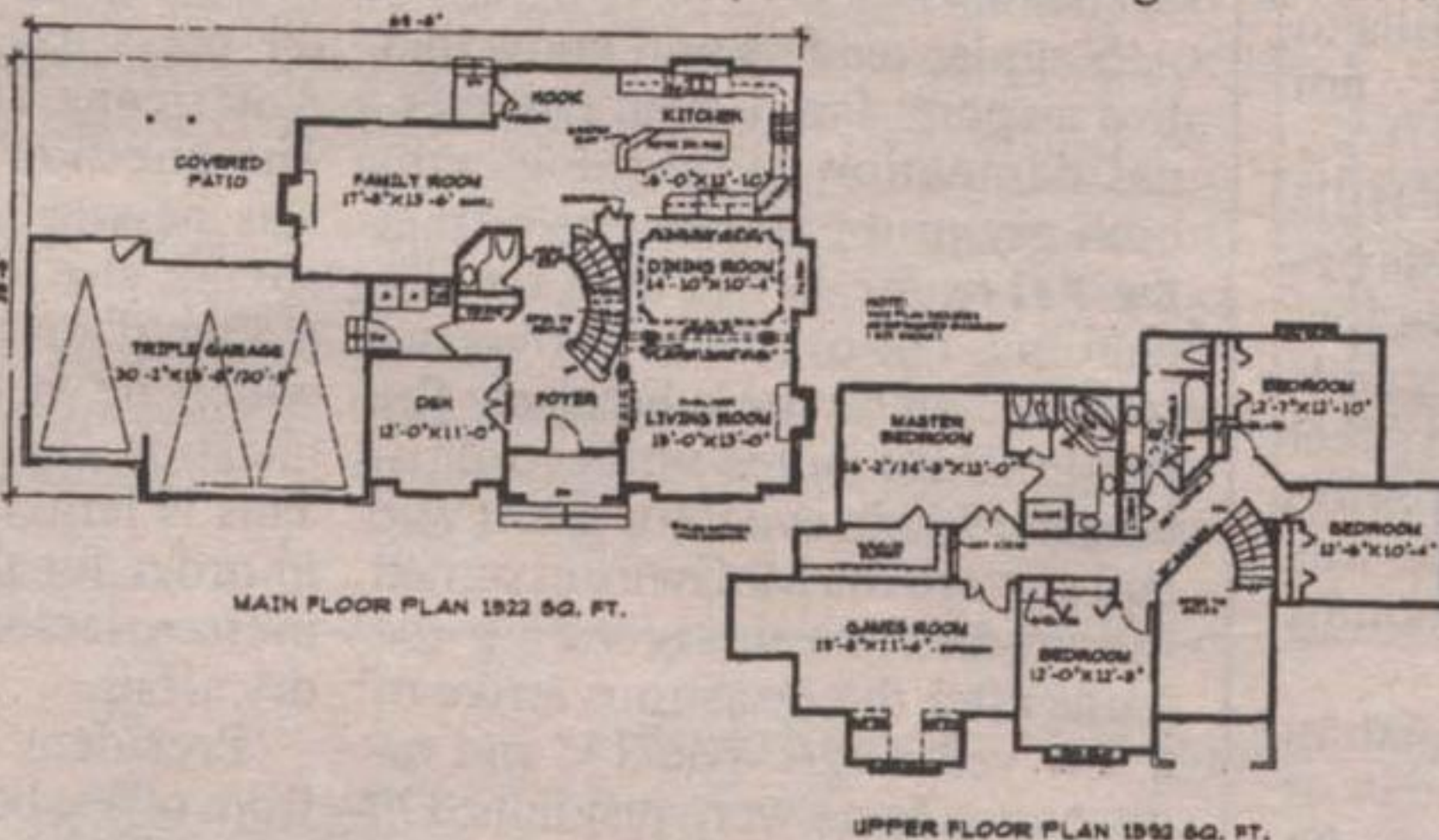


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