

## City may have solution, but are cats a problem?

Holy cats!  
Does the City Council really want to stir up this much trouble?  
Nothing important to do, like finding more water?  
So, to put an end to the supposed “cat problem,” council members propose to trap free-roaming cats and, unless they’re wearing a city tag, kill them after a few days.  
That seems like a pretty drastic program, but it is roughly the same as the way the city treats free-roaming dogs.  
But cats are not dogs. They can’t be kept in a fenced yard and don’t tolerate collars well. Some experts say collars are dangerous to felines, posing a threat of choking, though you do see some old cats wearing collars.  
But let’s back up a minute.  
What cat problem?  
Oberlin does have a fair number of feral cats, especially downtown. They lurk near the storm sewers and patrol the sidewalks at night. You seldom see them during the day.  
To our knowledge, though, there’ve been no reports of anyone being bitten, no health problems, no major issues at all with these cats.  
Some people say cats annoy them, leaving deposits in their gardens and killing wild birds. But one thing you’ll never see in downtown Oberlin is a rat, though they’re common anywhere you handle grain. McCook has them.  
If you probe, you learn that what Oberlin has may be a cat feeding problem. Four or five women, apparently put out food for stray cats, and that attracts enough felines to irritate the heck out of their neighbors.  
Responsible pet owners take care of their cats (and dogs), have them neutered, feed them and keep them close to home. Is the “problem” a few people who feed animals way in excess of the number allowed by law — but don’t take any responsibility for them, allowing them to breed and irritate those nearby.  
We’ve got no argument with any plan to re-

duce the numbers of feral cats. Animals living in the storm drains can’t have much quality of life anyway.  
Dumping large amounts of cat food outside is an invitation to skunks, mice, rats and other varmints to come to town.  
Maybe what the city needs to do is attack the root of the problem. Make it illegal to feed stray animals, just as it’s illegal to feed wildlife. Send someone to talk to the perpetrators. Ask them to stop. Keep after them, because all those cats are going to be hungry for a while.  
Sure, it’ll be hard to go talk to these women, who probably think they are doing the right thing. But compared to trapping and killing people’s pets, would going after the actual problem be so tough?  
Most cat owners wouldn’t mind buying a “cat tag” or having the required shots or having pets neutered. Keeping a collar on a cat can be a problem, though, and owners would be risking their cats’ lives every time they let them out.  
Enforcement would be another problem. This year, Oberlin has sold only about 135 dog licenses, maybe less. By one council estimate, that’s less than a quarter of the city’s canine population. “Dog-at-large” tickets run only one or two a month.  
And, as one city official points out, the city has no place to hold or treat cats if it does catch some.  
So, do we have a cat problem, or just an irritant?  
And if there is a problem, is the catch-and-kill routine the answer?  
Or should the city address the cat-feeding issue?  
We’ve already had one letter (see below) on this issue. To define the problem, we hope both cat lovers and cat haters, even cat feeders, will write — in a rational way — to address the issue before the council meets next month.  
What do you say? — *Steve Haynes*

## She just wants hers to be hot

Coffee. Some gotta have it. Some can’t stand it. There doesn’t seem to be a middle ground.  
It ranks pretty high at our house. After our “good mornings,” the first question of the day is, “Did you make coffee?” Whoever gets up first (and I admit, it’s usually Jim) is in charge of preparing our caffeine fix.  
We’re not coffee purists — we brew the preground stuff from the store. It doesn’t have to be fresh-ground beans for us to enjoy it. We drink the brand Senor Valdez grows, but a lesser known brand on sale can sway us.  
We really like the gourmet brands but will never pay the price. A special treat is a double latte at the local coffee emporium.  
We like our coffee with cream. Lots of it. It can be the powdered kind, half-’n-half, table cream, even the flavored kind, even heavy whipping cream. Just not milk. I would prefer to drink it black.  
Oh, that opens up another can of worms — or maybe another cup of coffee. Those that have been drinking the stuff since their mother put



**Out Back**  
By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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it in their baby bottle usually think “strong and black” is the only way. If a spoon doesn’t stand up by itself, it’s only fit for pansies. There seems to be some machismo undertones attached to the ability to consume coffee so strong you have to chew it.  
Jim and I have differing opinions on what makes the perfect cup of coffee. I happen to like it a little stronger than he.  
“You can always add water to make it a little weaker,” I told him.  
But, you know what? If he makes it, I’m gonna drink it.  
I’m just glad I can. So many people can’t tolerate the caffeine. Good or bad, I don’t know, but I can drink coffee right up until the time I turn out the lights and say, “Good night. The party’s over.”

That may change someday, but for now, I’ll have another cup. Make that four creamers, please.

### From the Bible

Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates; At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.  
*Deuteronomy 24:14, 15*



## ‘Unthinkable’ can happen

By LESLIE NOLETTE  
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I’m sure there are some of you who don’t know that April is Child Abuse Prevention month.  
Over the years, I’ve seen so many news broadcasts and newspaper articles on children, some as young as one month, being abused, or even murdered, by their mother, father or babysitter.  
“How awful to have to experience something like that,” I would say.  
You never think that something like that could ever happen to you ... until it does.  
We had dated for about six months, so I felt so comfortable with him. His family was so wonderful. He had been in the Army for 12 years and had no criminal record, not even a speeding ticket. I decided that he would be the one for me.  
One evening, I needed to go to the store to get milk and diapers for Justeen, who was 16 months old. She was sleeping and I didn’t want to disturb her. Justeen had been teething and having trouble sleeping through the night. He said it would be fine, that he would keep an eye on her. So I took my three older children with me to the store.  
The next thing I remember was being walked down the hallway to a “quiet room.” My boyfriend sat there, crying, with his face in his hands.  
“I’m sorry,” said the doctor. “We did everything we could.”  
“This can’t be happening,” I thought. “This has got to be a really bad dream.”  
I didn’t want to believe the doctor. I thought to myself, “It will be OK. We’ll take Justeen home. She’ll be better after some medicine.”  
That never happened. I didn’t get to take Justeen home. I never got to touch her or hold her before they took her away. She was evidence.  
I later found out, during sentencing, that he had shaken Justeen — “like a madman,” were his words in court — thrown her across the room, drowned her in the bathtub and then resuscitated her, just so that he could kill her again with a couch pillow, smothering her face.  
It was nine days before I saw Justeen again, lying on a morgue table with just a blanket covering her. I began to dress her. A long white, satin gown; white shoes and stockings; a headband to cover the heavy stitches, like rope, from the autopsy; finally, a gold cross around

## Opinion

### Tantrums can try adult

Children can be tough to deal with when they’re unhappy. It’s often easier to prevent tantrums than to deal with them once they get going.  
Try these tips from the Child Welfare Information Gateway website (www.childwelfare.gov):  
• Direct the child’s attention to something else.  
• Give the child a choice in small matters.  
• Stick to a daily routine that balances fun activities with enough rest and healthy food.  
• Anticipate when the child will be disappointed.  
• Praise the child when he or she shows self-control and expresses feelings with words.  
If you cannot prevent a tantrum, here are some tips for dealing with it:  
• Say what you expect from the child and have confidence that the child will behave.  
• Remain calm. You are a role model for the child.  
• Holding a younger child during a tantrum may help him or her feel more secure and calm down more quickly.  
• Take the child to a quiet place where he or she can calm down safely. Speak softly or play soft music.  
• Some children throw tantrums to seek attention. Try ignoring the tantrum, but pay attention to the child after he calms down.  
• Resist overreacting to tantrums and try to keep your sense of humor.  
When a child is having a floor-thumping tantrum, the most important thing you can do is remain calm and wait it out. Do not let the child’s behavior cause you to lose control, too.

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## City plan offends cat owner

To the Editor:

I hope ALL other responsible cat and pet owners are as upset as I am about last week’s headline, “City may decide to trap, kill cats,” and have guts enough to speak up.  
Why is it that every time you think the ultimate in stupidity has been reached, someone does something like this to prove you wrong?  
I will agree there is a stray cat problem in Oberlin, however, trapping people’s cats and killing them if the owner can’t be contacted because the cat isn’t wearing a collar is NOT the answer.  
As a responsible cat owner, neither I nor my cats should be penalized because some people are irresponsible enough to NOT spay or neuter their pets. ALL of my animals, cats and dogs, are not only spayed or neutered, but are up to date on all shots and have medical files at the vet’s office.  
I have two large black male cats who prefer to be outside and do not wear collars for reasons anyone with a quarter of a brain would know. My oldest cat, who will be 8 years old on May 1, did, at one time, have a city tag and a rabies tag on an \$8 collar but lost it all after only about three days. Besides, you do not put a collar on an outdoor cat unless you want to find your cat hanging in a

## Letter to the Editor

tree somewhere.  
I have been willing, for a long time, to tag my cats but was told several years ago by someone at the city office that “we don’t sell tags for cats because it is impractical.” So make up your minds.  
I am also willing to have my cats fitted with microchips.  
I realize by writing this letter, I have probably just put my cats on the City’s “hit list,” but someone needs to stand up and ask, “are these people for real?”  
The city needs to invest in a chip scanner if it decides to trap cats, because no responsible cat owner is going to put a collar on an outdoor cat.  
Trap and kill my cat because it isn’t wearing a collar and you can’t contact me? You better get ready for the fight of your life!  
A responsible pet owner,  
Bev Reiter, Oberlin

## Photo Policy

The Oberlin Herald wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.  
Please be sure to allow a couple of days’ notice so we can arrange to be there.  
Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.  
Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos,