

## Do feral cats, family pets really cause problems?

The City Council asked for some suggestions on the cat "problem" in Oberlin, so here goes:

• First, what problem? There are feral cats in town, but no evidence that they cause any real trouble.

One non-cat person said she was irritated by cats burying waste in her garden.

Does irritation justify a full-blown licensing drive, cat trapping, killing people's pets, causing an uproar?

Or does the city have some more important issues to deal with?

• Cat feeding does seem to cause some issues. Outdoor food sources allegedly draw dozens of cats, plus skunks that sneak in at night and might harbor things besides a bad smell.

If so, why not ban cat feeding. Encourage people to keep all pet food inside or in a pen, and talk to those who persist in feeding stray animals outdoors.

Anyone who feeds cats should take responsibility for their health, for their shots and for their actions in the neighborhood.

We sympathize with anyone living next door to a cat cafeteria, but think this problem could be dealt with.

• Cat licensing is tricky. Most people seem to feel collars are a danger to cats.

How would that be handled? With implants and scanners? Who would apply the implants? How would the city read them?

Otherwise, we see no problem with the fairness of licensing. With a third or less of the city's dogs licensed at present, though, you might question the city's ability to actually enforce a license requirement.

On the other hand, the present system does serve to reduce the problem of roaming dogs.

• Some will say equality demands that dogs and cats be treated the same, but they are not the same. Dogs can be tied or penned; cats can't.

And it's hard to treat things that aren't the same equally.

• Trap feral cats if there is a problem in some areas, such as downtown.

The animal control officer ought to be able to tell the pampered pets from scrawny, diseased feral cats. The ones that bite, hiss and snarl in the trap might be feral. The ones that let you pet them, pets. If in doubt, just let them go or put them up for adoption.

And this may be the best idea:

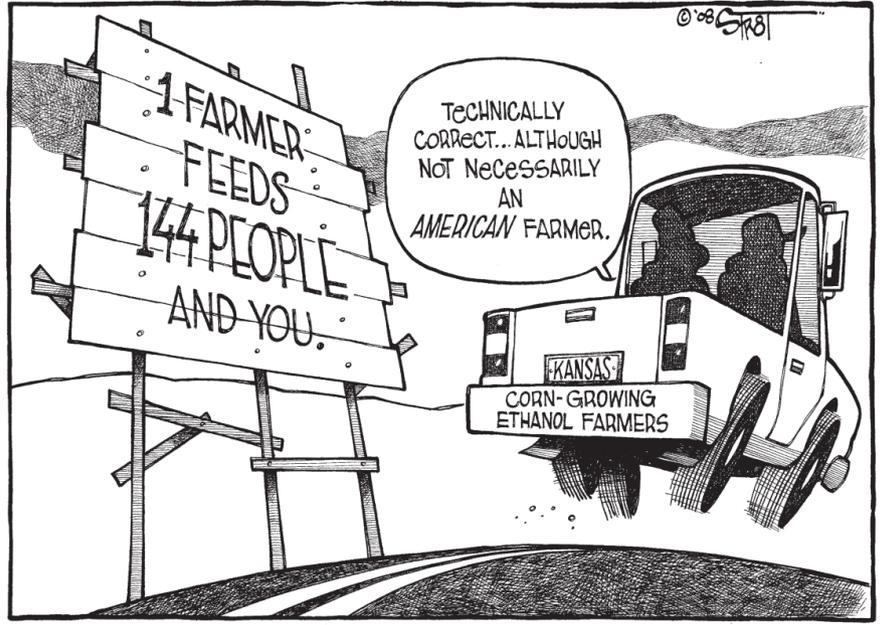
• Leave the cats alone. Don't invite rats and mice to take over, especially around the elevators, where grain and food for rodents abound.

Before making any decision, though, the council needs to listen to the public. So far, the voices being heard in public are against any kind of cat reduction. Those who speak only in private do not deserve to be given as much weight.

Then the council should act in a fair and compassionate manner.

By far the simplest response would seem to be to deal with the demonstrated problem of people who feed feral cats and skunks, encouraging population growth and concentrating cats in a few neighborhoods.

After that, the council might consider trapping, but only if a real problem exists, and only if pets can be released. — Steve Haynes



## 10 years, 520 columns later

It just dawned on me that I have been sharing my thoughts and my life via this column, for more than 10 years now.

That's about 520 columns. Who knew I had that much to say?

But then, I stop and think of my mom, who wrote her column for more than 65 years. That is almost 3,400 columns. Unless I get to be 116, I won't live long enough to write for 65 years. That's one record of hers I'll never break.

I might not even get this one written if a certain black cat named "Missy" doesn't quit bugging me. She insists on being petted and keeps pushing my hand from the keyboard with her nose. She jumps into my lap and steps on keys, making a long line of mmmmmmmmm-s before I can get her stopped.

I think she's just a little jealous and feeling neglected. Jim brought home a little fluff ball last week that we call "Puddin'." She is at least a half-sister to our other cat "Sammy," because they have the same mother. Tracking paternal lineage in farm cats is not very trustworthy.

The two mature cats act as if they are frightened of little Puddin, cowering and running the opposite



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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way when she comes toward them. At first I was afraid they might harm her, but now I know she dominates them.

Two other new additions to our little menagerie are a couple of baby calves. At first, our farmer/rancher friend didn't think he was going to have any "bum" calves this season. Then, overnight, he had one cow die and another that got down. That left two, pretty good-sized calves with no meal ticket.

Jim converted last year's baby-chick brooder house into a cozy, straw-filled lean-to for the calves. They immediately took to the bottles and seem to have adjusted to their new digs. By this time next week, we plan to have them drinking out of a bucket and eating calf crumbles. They will become our automatic grass mowers and fertil-

izer spreaders. What we lack are names. I think I'll take the digital camera out to the calf pen and get a picture to send to our granddaughters, Alexandria and Taylor. They have always helped us name calves in the past.

We'll see what names they can dream up without meeting the calves "in person."

### From the Bible

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. *Ezekiel 18:30*

## \$1 coins collected, not spent

The government is trying again to get people to use \$1 coins rather than printing more dollar bills, even though the last three attempts failed miserably.

The new dollar, featuring four U.S. presidents a year, is a noble effort to get people back to using coins, but probably will be no more popular for spending.

Americans cling to their coins, it seems, though a dollar today is worth just 15 cents in 1960 money.

Back in those days, we carried five sizes of coins in our pockets and pocketbooks: pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters and half dollars. The bulky silver dollar, even then, was little used, seen mostly at race tracks, casinos and the like, but you could get them at the bank.

The mint last issued big "silver" dollars around 1970, a "sandwich" coin like the quarter containing no silver and bearing a likeness of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Those never caught on, nor did the Susan B. Anthony "silver" dollar, a smaller coin designed for vending machines a decade later.

People didn't like the Anthony coins because they looked and felt too much like a quarter, experts said. Businesses had long since converted cash drawers to just four kinds of coins and claimed they had no place to put the dollars.

Never one to stand back from a challenge, despite repeated failure,



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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the Treasury Department came up with another attempt, the small-sized Sacagawea dollar, themed to the Lewis and Clark bicentennial and tinted gold.

Despite cash-drawer support from Wal-Mart, the results were pretty much the same. Bank vaults filled up with dollars which people wouldn't spend or carry.

This time, the mint took a hint from the wildly successful state quarter program and decided to issue a series of coins featuring all the presidents.

Of course, the government hopes that millions of people will collect the coins. That won't improve their circulation, but it will make money for the government — as the quarters have — as long as they can be purchased for less than face value.

Will Americans take to their new 15-cent coin?

You'd think so, given the low value of the dollar bill today, but history suggests otherwise.

Americans don't accept new coins or currency well. They reject-

ed the \$2 bill when proffered as an alternative to the lowly dollar, and never have accepted dollar coins, at least not in this century.

Heck, we won't give up the little penny, now worth just .15 of a cent in 1960 money, only a little more than the "mil" tokens once given in change by some stores.

Any suggestion to get rid of pennies meets with a chorus of jeers, but they're worth so little, you wonder why we bother. People seem to think they will be cheated if transactions take place in five-cent increments. And maybe they're right.

But why should the government spend billions making such a worthless coin?

And why won't we carry the convenient little dollars, worth less than the quarters many people grew up with?

Go figure. Seems like a waste of good paper printing all those \$1 bills to me, but Americans just don't seem to like change.

## Cats control mice and rats

To the Editor:

Cats do keep the rodent population down. Without outside cats, what will you do with the rats, mice and rabbits that will take over this town?

I have lived here for eight years and have yet to see a mouse or rat in my potting shed, storage shed, house or garage. I often find dead mice at the door or dropped at my feet, so I know it wouldn't take long for the problem to arise.

My cats go to the veterinarian every year for their checkups and shots or any illness that comes up. They are always home and put in by dusk, as I don't want them out when the skunks come out.

I am afraid to go out at night because of the skunks. At night, I see them in my yard or walking down the street. This is the problem that needs to be addressed.

All three of my cats have been hospitalized because of infected bites on their back sides when trying

### Letters to the Editor

to get away from something that is attacking them. What do you suppose might be doing that?

I don't leave food or water out, as my cats have a kitty door that allows them to come and go, so I pretty much know where they are. They are not strictly house cats and would go ballistic if they could not go outside. Besides, they are doing their job by keeping my area rodent free.

I have not had any complaints from anyone about my cats. In fact, my neighbors seem to enjoy having them around.

There are solutions besides killing the cats. Stray cats could be taken to the Humane Society.

Farmers will sometimes take stray cats to help with rodent control, or adopt a cat that would otherwise be killed in three days.

All three of my cats were cats in need of a home and would have probably died had I not taken them in and got them the medical care they needed. With love and a secure home, they have become the best pets I could hope for. Money well spent.

The remarks made by the City Council were inappropriate and arrogant: Just kill the cats, don't try to find a solution. That gave me an insight to the character of the people making these remarks.

I would go with a chip — never a collar. Cats on a leash? Get real.

Bottom line: leave us alone. We're doing just fine.

Roxie Pomeroy  
Boo-Boo, Chucky and Misty  
Oberlin

## What is your problem?

To the Editor:

Cats and all pets, well taken care of, are members of someone's family. I guess my concern about your concern about the problem you are having with cats is this: What is your problem? Let me ask you this:

1. Do these cats attack you at night? No, but I bet a rabid skunk or rat would in a heart beat.

2. Do they doo-doo in your yard? I doubt it, but I have seen a lot of dogs being walked by their owners on a leash doo-doo in other people's yard.

3. Do they eat your food? Only if you leave it out at night. Hello!!!

There is not a law, that I know of, in this town that says a person cannot have a pet, unless listed in

the city ordinance, as long as it is properly housed, penned, on a leash or whatever. You show me a law that says that I can't have my cats, then you can kill them.

Rose Riffle  
Bo, Missy, and Tabby  
Oberlin

## Cats understand, love you

To the Editor:

I agree with Bev Reiter, but my cats are dead, so I can't be the target of revenge.

My cats, which both died during the last couple of years, were 15-year-old calico sisters born from a tamed, then abandoned, feral cat. Their mother was tamed to the point she had her babies under my sister's bed.

My cats went out sometimes, but never strayed far. One night I was having a bad time, sitting in the dark crying, needing something. Mallory, my cat, climbed on my lap up to my face and purred. She gave me love and understanding as she rubbed my neck. I had to smile and I felt 100 percent better.

When we were growing up, we always had cats. My sister's cat paced at her bedside, worried about her when she was quite sick with

measles. I could write a book about the cats I've known, including a chapter when years ago an Oberlin "citizen" poisoned cats and dogs. He got our mother cat, who passed the poison through her milk, killing her and her litter of helpless kittens.

I love to tell the story about the cat that was freaked out by a big spider in his litter box. He managed to convey a clear message to his owners, who disposed of the spider. Or how about our mother cat who jumped on the back of a big bull dog that

had come into our yard to fight our dog. She used him like a pin cushion for three blocks, with him yelping all the way.

I feel sorry for people who haven't loved or been loved by a cat. Right now we have a little stray black cat who sleeps on our swing nearly every night. It asks for nothing but a place to rest for the night. If it was hungry, I'd feed it, so fine me!

A cat lover,  
Audrey Pavlicek  
Oberlin

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