



Cats need our help ... this is the help they need!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Companion Animal Industry Rallies Together to Tackle Cat Overpopulation Crisis

2011 is declared 'The Year of the Cat'—launching a nation-wide campaign to encourage people to treat cats like dogs

YOUR CITY, PROVINCE, 5 JANUARY 2011: *Conversations about the cat crisis in Canada that started at the International and Regional Summits for Urban Animal Strategies have evolved into an unprecedented national campaign to tackle the cat overpopulation crisis and raise the social status and value of cats in our communities.*

At the 2009 Summits for Urban Animal Strategies (SUAS), Dr. Elizabeth O'Brien, one of only four Board Certified Feline Specialists in Canada, was one of the featured speakers. She showcased a successful Year of the Cat education campaign created by the Hamilton-Burlington SPCA. Enthused by the support she received at the SUAS and the Regional Summits, Dr. O'Brien agreed to become the spokesperson for a national Care for Cats committee. The Year of the Cat campaign is the committee's first project. Coincidentally, 2011 is officially the Vietnamese Year of the Cat.

The Care for Cats initiative is being organized under the direction of a volunteer Advisory Council with representatives from all four sectors of the companion animal industry. (See below.) It is being financially supported by Petsecure Pet Insurance, PetSmart Charities Canada and PetLynx Corporation. Community collaborators such as shelters, animal services, vet clinics, and retailers will be delivering educational messages and events across Canada in a unified fashion to gain the most impact.

Many people do not realize it but - when it comes to cat overpopulation and the resulting burden on animal shelters, municipalities and communities - Canada is in crisis," explains Dr. O'Brien. "The nation's animal shelters are overflowing with abandoned, lost and feral cats. Every year tens of thousands of healthy cats and kittens are euthanized because there are not enough homes for all of these cats."

Care for Cats has built its public educational campaign based on solid facts. The 2008 Business of Urban Animals Survey (BUAS), commissioned by PetLynx Corporation for the SUAS, provided statistical proof of what people working in animal shelters and veterinary hospitals have known for decades: cats are not generally valued as much as dogs. In almost every category covered by this survey, dogs received better care than cats.

The study revealed that more than 8.5 million cats are warming the sofas of 36 per cent of Canadian households. The disappointing news is that half of them did not receive regular veterinary care in the past 12 months and less than 25 per cent have permanent identification, such as tattoos or microchips. Forty-one per cent either haven't been vaccinated in the last four years or have never been vaccinated at all.

Sadly, it also appears that the 21 per cent of cat owners with unaltered cats don't appear to understand (or care) that there is an alarming cat overpopulation problem in North America. Fifty-four per cent of people who owned cats that were not currently spayed or neutered reported that they were "unlikely" to have their cats altered in the coming year.

The Year of the Cat campaign will facilitate the delivery of several national events in 2011 including:

- May — *The PURfect month for a cat awareness campaign and an adopt-a-thon*
- Sept. 23 - Oct. 2 — *National Cat ID Week focusing on permanent identification, licensing and registration*
- December — *Helping for Fur-ever homes adopt-a-thon*

"The message we need to get to the public is not only about the importance of spaying and neutering cats as a means of population control," concludes O'Brien, "we also have to try to change attitudes about the intrinsic value of cats in our

society. In a nutshell, we need people to start treating cats like dogs! We invite anyone interested in cats and creating healthy communities to visit our website and get involved in the Year of the Cat campaign."

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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CARE FOR CATS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

ANIMAL WELFARE

- Canadian Federation of Humane Societies
- Ontario SPCA
- SCAT Street Cat Rescue Program, Saskatoon, SK
- Pierre's Alley Cat Society, Halifax, NS
- Calgary Humane Society, Calgary, AB
- Meow Foundation, Calgary, AB

ANIMAL CONTROL & LEGISLATIVE ENFORCEMENT

- City of Calgary Animal & Bylaw Services
- Toronto Animal Services

ANIMAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

- Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
- The Cat Clinic, Hamilton, ON
- Diane Frank DVM, DABVP, University of Montreal, Montreal, QC
- Hugh Chiscolm DVM Halifax, NS
- Liz O'Brien DVM, DABVP (feline), Hamilton, ON
- Margie Scherk DVM, DABVP (feline), Vancouver, BC
- Susan Little DVM, DABVP (feline), Ottawa, ON
- Diane McKelvey DVM, DABVP (feline), Kamloops, BC
- Alice Crook, DVM Atlantic Veterinary College, Charlottetown, PEI
- Anne Marie Carey, DVM Atlantic Veterinary College, Charlottetown, PEI

ANIMAL SERVICES

- Canadian Cat Association
- Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) Canada
- Petsecure, Western Financial Insurance
- PetLynx Corporation

ABOUT CARE FOR CATS AND YEAR OF THE CAT

Care for Cats (CFC) is a long-term project that will increase the value of owned, homeless and feral cats in Canadian communities. CFC has a model of 'free of charge' distribution of impactful public education programs and support materials that can be used by anyone working in the companion animal industry, including shelters and rescue organizations, municipalities, pet stores, veterinarians and more. One purpose of the initiative is to encourage community collaboration across all industry sectors; providing accurate resources; and the collection and evaluation of national metrics to measure success. <http://www.careforcats.ca>

CFC is organized under the direction of a volunteer Advisory Council with representatives from all four sectors of the companion animal industry. (See below.) It is being financially supported by [Petsecure Pet Insurance](#), [PetSmart Charities Canada](#), [Ontario SPCA](#) and [PetLynx Corporation](#).

2011 Year of the Cat (YOC) is a Canada-wide initiative intended to 'get rid of the myths and give the facts!' This program will bring a national time-line of events such as adopt-a-thons and an identification week. To facilitate the effective delivery of these programs online toolkits will be provided at no cost to community collaborators across Canada.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL SUMMITS FOR URBAN ANIMAL STRATEGIES

The International Summit for Urban Animal Strategies [ISUAS] attracts Executive Thought Leaders from North America's Companion Animal Industry to develop strategies that will create and sustain healthy communities for pets and people. Executive level discussion, networking and world-class speakers facilitate the executive working sessions. The Annual Summit Awards are presented in conjunction with the alumni Summit each October and bestow the recognition of industry peers upon individuals and organizations who are achieving success in each summit award category.
<http://www.tsuas.com> & <http://animalsummits.blogspet.com>

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