

City of Hamilton Cat Licensing Program

The Cat Licensing Program will promote responsible pet ownership through education and enforcement and will provide an avenue for prompt reunification of cats with their owners, address nuisance cat concerns and provide a resource to support the enhancement of cat population management initiatives. Cat owners and community partners will be engaged in the collective ownership of managing the City’s cat population concerns.

Through supporting initiatives such as Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return (TNVR), affordable and accessible spay / neutering programs, adoptions programs, microchip and vaccination clinics, the City of Hamilton will be managing the unwanted cat population through humane methods, thus reducing the euthanasia rate in the City.

Program Benefits

- A lost cat wearing a City-issued license tag is provided a free ride home. Tag information will allow the Officer to contact the owner immediately to prevent entering the shelter. This will have less stress on the cat and will reduce sheltering costs.
- Senior owners 65 years of age or over, ODSP and CPPD owners will receive a discounted rate.
- Multi-cat homes (over two cats) will be eligible for a flat-rate fee, provided all cats in the home are altered.
- One year free cat licence for any cat rescued from the City’s shelter and adopted through the City’s rescue partners.
- Rescue and foster organizations registered with Animal Services will be exempt from licensing cats waiting for adoption.
- Revenue generated through cat licensing will support cat-related programs such as population prevention and community-based programs.
- Cat licensing can help to resolve cat-related problems between neighbours, such as at-large or nuisance cat complaints.
- No required funding from the City tax base to implement the program.
- Rural and agricultural areas are exempt from the By-law.
- Rewards Card given with the purchase of a licence.

Program Rules

- Seek compliance before enforcement and to sell pet owners on the value of having their pet(s) licensed.
- Cat must be vaccinated against rabies to receive a licence.
- A cat must wear a license tag issued by the City when off of the property. A licence is the fastest way to contact the owner in cases of emergency.

- Cats do not have to wear the license tag when inside the home but do need to be microchipped or tattooed. This information must be registered in the City’s database.
- License rates for unaltered cats are set significantly higher. An owner cannot be forced to spay / neuter their animal. However, a significantly-higher fee will assist in paying for the managing of unwanted litters that arrive at the shelter.
- Existing cats registered with Animal Services will be grandfathered and licensing fee will not apply.

The Licensing Program will have an informative public education campaign. The public will be educated on the many benefits of licensing their cat and how the money generated through cat licensing will benefit the community as a whole.

Concerns about Licensing

My cat is an indoor cat – Even a cat that “never leaves the house or property” has a way of getting out through doors, gates or windows that are accidentally left open. Even during a crisis situation such as a house fire or car accident, a cat has the potential to escape.

My cat won’t wear a collar – It is suggested that all licensed cats wear a breakaway collar with a license tag. Unfortunately, some cats cannot tolerate wearing a collar. That is why Animal Services will accept an identifiable microchip or legible tattoo in lieu of a collar and license tag, provided that the microchip or tattoo has been registered with Animal Services.

Does my cat have to wear a tag? – It is recommended. However, cats do not have to wear the license tag but do need to be microchipped or tattooed. This information must be registered with Animal Services. The incentive is that cats that wear a licence get a free ride home without visiting the shelter. Cats that are microchipped and not wearing a tag do not get the free ride home.

My cat already has a microchip – Microchips are an excellent source of identification. However, the City does not own the microchip data base. Precious time can be wasted while waiting for a response from the microchip company. Also, owners forget to update their information with the microchip company. An annual licence will also act as a reminder to update personal information for your pet. If your cat has an identifiable microchip or a legible tattoo that is registered with Animal Services, they are not required to wear a licence tag outside of the home.