

# Is it possible to herd cats?



## *Reporting on five years addressing cat overpopulation across British Columbia, Canada*

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**BCSPCA**  
SPEAKING FOR ANIMALS

# Introduction

In 2013, cat overpopulation was at a crisis point in British Columbia. Most branches of the British Columbia Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA) had wait lists for cats, especially in spring and summer. Kitten intake was by no means contained to just 'kitten season'. With the constant stream of cats and kittens coming in, and reports of free-roaming cat colonies and cat hoarding cases on the rise, staff were concerned that branches did not have the ability to deliver the best welfare to the cats in our care. Outside of sheltering facilities, kittens in the community were given away for free on a regular basis.

The BC SPCA conducted a review of branch and community statistics to assess the current state of pet overpopulation in B.C. This research confirmed that homeless and unwanted cats were the greatest source of animal intake at B.C. animal shelters. Two key issues contributing to animal suffering were identified: 1. Unidentified stray cats and 2. Unwanted kittens.

The BC SPCA's 2014-2018 five-year **strategic plan** made addressing cat overpopulation, as well as raising the cultural value of cats, a top priority.

The organization collectively established a set of goals in a strategy entitled, 'Herding Cats' with objectives, strategies and tactics with a clear **vision**.

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*Vision: For every cat to have a home and be part of a family, where guardians value their cats and are educated on how to care for them.*

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Now, five years later, the BC SPCA compiled our findings into a comprehensive internal review document to help us prepare for continuing the next five years of addressing cat overpopulation across the province. This document serves as a summary version of the review and is our opportunity to share our learnings with other sheltering organizations, cat rescue groups, and cat colony caretakers, with the aim of seeing broad-scale positive change improving the lives of cats across North America.

**Our four key learnings, detailed in the following pages, are:**

- 1. Set measurable goals and track them as part of a team effort.**
- 2. Align internal structures, ensuring the best welfare for cats you care for already.**
- 3. Pair community-wide low-income spay neuter and targeted trap-neuter-return (TNR) with public and youth education.**
- 4. Increase the number of cats that are microchipped.**

To learn more about the BC SPCA and our sheltering structure, visit <https://spca.bc.ca/about-us>.

# 1. Set measurable goals and track them

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*1. Adopt messaging that creates a cultural shift in attitudes towards cats in B.C., including the need to sterilize them and ensure they have permanent identification.*

*2. Maintain existing and develop new services to prevent cat overpopulation in B.C.*

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## Strategy

**The Herding Cat strategy identified two key pillars, distributing the work between our organization's departments.** We collectively recognized the importance of identifying measurable goals that would allow us to benchmark our progress and identify opportunities where we could invest our energy, while anticipating the most effective outcomes.

Determining these goals involved doing a SWOT analysis of all activities relating to cats. This ranged from looking at internal policies to new program delivery.

The 2013 data was used as a benchmark and goals were set based on evidence-driven recommendations for systemic change. Having targets enabled yearly reviews of province-wide data to determine our progress.



A project team was established with representatives from each department who met quarterly. These meetings were an avenue for reporting on task progress to ensure completion of the initiatives identified in the Herding Cats strategy.

Although we did not achieve every goal we set out, the strategy served as a reference document throughout the five-year period, ensuring that all involved continued to make it a priority.

## 2. Align internal structures

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*Capacity for Care is an initiative to increase animal welfare and improve flow through in a sheltering context. Developed by shelter medicine experts at UC Davis, it was piloted at the BC SPCA Vancouver branch and proved to be a huge success.*

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### Strategy

**Policies and procedures:** In order to have success in program delivery, it is important to have clear procedures in place for the programming, as well as clear understanding of how measurements are calculated. The BC SPCA developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for calculating live release rates, return to owner rates, length of stay, and more in depth procedural documents for conducting transfers, implementing Capacity for Care (C4C), assigning Asilomar Accord statuses and engaging in transfers and satellite adoption centres. While the BC SPCA did not develop a waitlist system during the course of this strategy, having a tracked waiting list can assist in assessing the need in the community and will be a focus for future initiatives.

**Programming:** We recommend any sheltering organization or cat rescue looking to decrease cat overpopulation in the community streamline their approach to housing and adopting cats, maximizing welfare and subsequent adoptions. In order to increase live release rates and reduce the length of time cats are in care, we engaged in the following initiatives that resulted in impactful internal change:

#### Implement [Capacity for Care](#) province-wide

The improved animal welfare with C4C results in fewer stressed cats, which lowers the chances of disease breakouts such as upper respiratory infections. Cats that are overly stressed or have illnesses have a greater chance of being euthanized. With the implementation of C4C, fewer euthanasias will lead to higher live release rates.

Improved animal welfare from C4C also increases the cat's likelihood of adoption as they are more receptive to adopters and are not placed in isolation due to illness. The increased rate of adoptions reduces the length of stay for a cat in a shelter, which also further prevents disease breakouts due to prolonged stays. Reducing the length of stay for all animals housed is very important for the animal health and welfare in our branches.



### Improve capacity for transfers

The goal of the BC SPCA transfer program is to eliminate the euthanasia of healthy, adoptable animals and to allow shelters which run over capacity to transfer and only house animals within their resources (capacity, staffing, adoption rates, people traffic). A transfer protocol was developed to improve the welfare of animals during transport, ensuring more rapid adoptions upon arrival. A big challenge is the harsh winter conditions in parts of the province. During winter months, our vehicles are challenged in reaching some remote areas. The BC SPCA is dependent on our partnerships with airlines during those months.

### Improve capacity for adoptions

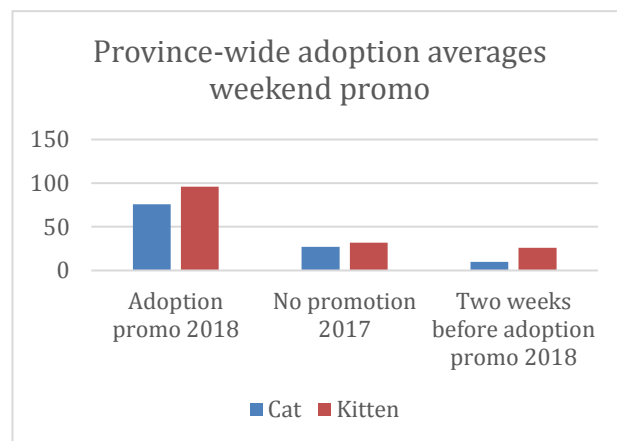
A new adoption process was developed in 2014 to remove the barriers that existed during adoptions, ensuring that cats continued to thrive in their new homes. These barriers were leading to excessive length of stays at our shelters and disappointment with some customers.

The BC SPCA's goal with the adoption process is **to find a permanent home for every adoptable animal in our care**. To make this possible, our adoption process serves to facilitate matching based on an adopter's needs, expectations, and compatibility with the specific needs of an individual animal to cultivate the human animal bond. It is also meant to be a positive experience for both the adopter and the counsellor, and it should provide an opportunity to engage in dialogue with the public and to learn more about our supporters. The BC SPCA Dog & Cat Matching Surveys are intended to move from policy-based questions to open dialogue focused on relationship building.

Our adoption process reduces failed adoptions by reducing the "expectation gap." An expectation gap occurs when people adopt an animal and their expectation of how the animal should behave or the time and cost needed for care is vastly different from reality. Staff and volunteers are taught skills to ensure matches are based on a level of compatibility that will result in a strong human-animal bond.

### Promote adoptions

Adoption promotions are a tool that helps bring awareness in the public to adopt animals from shelters. During the year, there are two provincial wide adoption events, which include all shelters. These promotions are set during times of the year when we have the most cats. The adoption prices are reduced by half during this promotion. There are also sporadic adoption events throughout the year; a shelter can carry them out if they are reaching or beyond capacity. During these visits, we experience an increase in foot traffic as well as website visits. Further, press releases result in media exposure during these promotions that increase visits.



Our data demonstrate that adoptions increase significantly during short-term adoption days, but remained comparable to regular adoption activity on adoption promos seven days or longer. During this time, it is important to ensure enough staff and volunteers are in place to provide adequate customer service. The increased volume of people can be difficult to anticipate and may lead to staff shortages.

### Establish additional satellite adoption centres

The BC SPCA supports the practice of making surplus cats available to retail outlets for selective placement to responsible adopters, subject to the same standards of adoption applied at a shelter. The arrangement is simply an extension of normal Shelter operations. We look for partners that meet our values and share our views on animal welfare. One of those partners that we have built a strong relationship with is the Catfe in Vancouver. Since opening in 2016, the Catfe annually adopts over 175 cats from their location.

Only a select few cats will do well in a retail environment. The right structures need to be in place for ensuring availability of cats and satellite centres need to follow appropriate protocols for monitoring cats, ensuring they settle well in their new environment. There is a risk of disease outbreaks at the satellite locations. When that occurs, all cats have to be removed and a deep clean is required. This can delay bringing more cats in until all the bio-security measures in place.

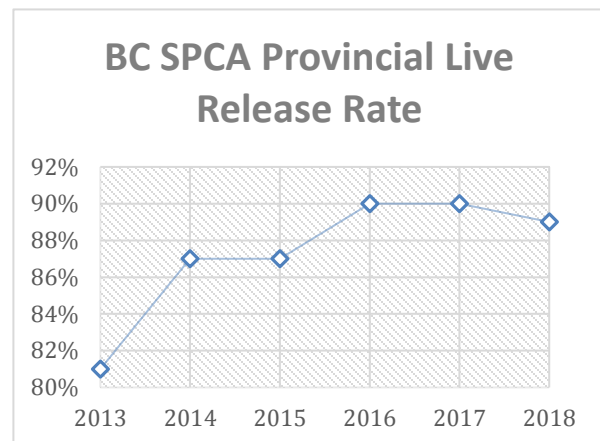
### Liaise with other shelters/rescues

The BC SPCA recognizes the value of collaborative efforts with approved rescue groups in our province and the need for guidelines for the assistance of such groups. Currently, the BC SPCA enjoys excellent working relationships with many rescues, who work in conjunction with the BC SPCA to find homes for special needs animals. These include cats who are severely stressed in the shelter with no BC SPCA foster homes available, in need of medical care beyond the means of the shelter, or in need of behavioural remediation beyond the ability of the shelter.

### Measure & Outcome

The improved flow through of animals by implementing C4C and a new adoption process resulted in lower lengths of stay for cats. As more space was created through adoptions, this also allowed the transfer program to move more animals to shelters with higher adoption rates, taking pressure off shelters that experience pet overpopulation in their communities. Over 5000 animals are transferred annually between shelters and there has been a 12% increase in the number of transfers since 2012. There have been fewer

customer complaints in regards to adoptions and the animals continue to remain in their new homes.



**Goal:** To increase the provincial live release rate of cats in BC SPCA shelters from 81% in 2013 to 90% by 2018.

**Outcome:** The provincial 2018 live release rate for cats was 89%. Though lower by 1% than the target in the objective, we recognize that the live release rate is not the only indicator of success. Assisting cats as part of enforcement of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* results in, at times, euthanasia of cats that are in critical distress. The number of cats involved in these cases vary vastly from year to year. While length of stay statistics were not considered as an objective for this strategy, we note that it has decreased from 29.4 days to 14.9 days since 2014.



### 3. Pair community-wide low-income spay neuter and targeted trap-neuter-return (TNR) with public and youth education

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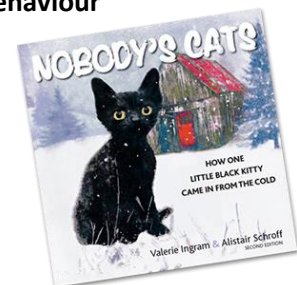
*While some sections of the community are clearly motivated by financial constraints, and will be easily persuaded through reduced cost spay/neuter fees, they will also still need to be engaged through a solid awareness and outreach campaign that will need to be intelligently crafted. –Cluny South, How to Say ‘Spay’*

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#### Strategy

**Messaging:** Effective messaging is critical to behaviour change. In order to identify the most effective messages, and the relationship between messaging and providing a discount for community spay and neuter surgeries, the BC SPCA applied for a Vancouver Foundation grant to test messaging. We partnered with a UBC researcher, who developed the publicly available report [How to Say ‘Spay’](#). This report details how important it is to match messaging with access to funding to ensure maximum impact. **To achieve long-term positive community outcomes on intensive targeted spay/neuter programming, a project should get to the point where messaging is necessary to find the last of the community members who have not fixed their cats, resulting in long-term behaviour change.**

Using our existing communication mediums, we developed messaging and images that would improve the value of cats. Mediums included [print magazines for adults and youth](#), [social media](#), [youth education curriculum units](#) and [a teacher’s guide](#), and the distribution of a locally developed book called [Nobody’s Cats](#).



When delivering information about our programming specifically, we used news releases, social media, TV, radio, doorhangers, postcards and inserts into utility bills in partnership with the municipality. The BC SPCA also developed a [guerrilla media advocacy campaign called ‘Kitten Box’](#), designing a giant box with the words free kittens on the outside, giving locally community members a change to look inside and learn. We videoed people’s responses and distributed the video across the province through social media.

The BC SPCA updated and promoted our [Model Animal Responsibility Bylaws](#) with cat specific content, targeting key municipalities where we were already delivering programming for bylaw change.

**Programming:** Our five main approaches to programming were 1. *Large-scale targeted community spay/neuter*, 2. *Low-income community spay/neuter*, 3. *Trap-Neuter-Return*, 4. *Operating low-cost spay/neuter clinics* and 5. *Prevention of hoarding*.

These programs saw success through the role of a full-time position dedicated program administration. This position was initially funded by the Vancouver Foundation as part of the strategy to identify messaging and programming that would make a long-term sustainable impact on cat overpopulation. This position now provides support to those in the field delivering programming and ensures consistent program delivery across the provinces, which results in sustainable results.

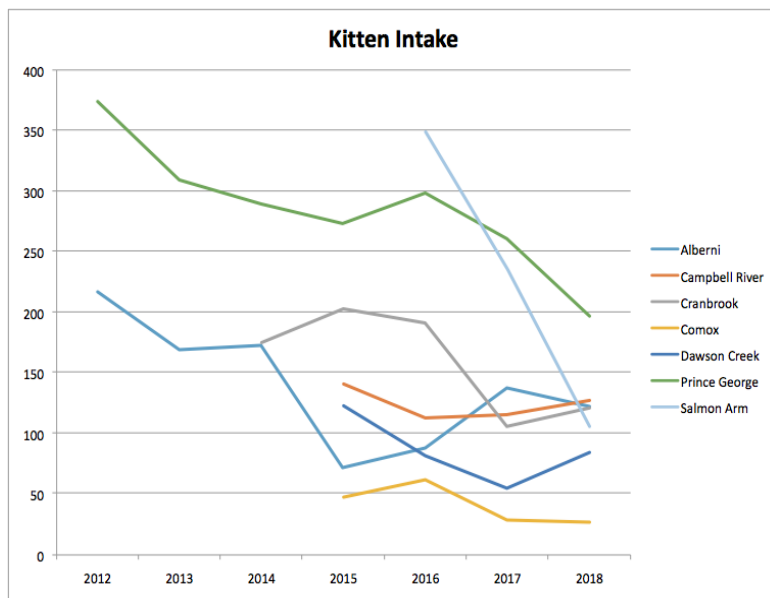
### 1. Large-scale targeted community spay/neuter

In 2013, priority communities for large-scale targeted community spay/neuter were identified through data collection, including cat intake per 1000 residents, and adoption driven capacity, but primarily based on live release rates. Communities that were experiencing drastic rates of euthanasia due to overpopulation were prioritized. Data was collected annually to get the most current situation as cat overpopulation evolved in the communities across the province. The BC SPCA accessed funding from PetSmart Charities of Canada to address these areas that were focus points for animal suffering.

Project years	Priority area	Funding received (\$CAD)	Cats approved	Cats fixed	Total population served by branch	Targeted population with grant
2013-2016	Campbell River	\$157,920	1,500	1,500	39,019	31,186
2013-2014	Port Alberni	\$110,920	800	800	31,061	17,743
2013-2014	Prince George	\$86,240	800	886	84,323	38,448
2015-2016	Cranbrook	\$83,957	750	742	56,695	19,319
2017-2018	Comox	\$78,385	700	613	63,538	43,346
2017-2018	Dawson Creek	\$78,010	650	638	25,907	10,987
2018	Salmon Arm	\$62,000	350	375	36,100	12,218
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$657,432</b>	<b>5550</b>	<b>5554</b>		

Comparatively, we saw overall decreases in cat intake in the communities that received grants, with a few anomalies explained due to specific large-scale seizure cases (see chart below). Six out of seven branches that received PetSmart Charities of Canada grants have seen an increase in Return to Owner (RTO) rates. As a comparison, two out of the three branches where we looked at comparable data but that did not receive a grant saw no increase.





*Kitten intake from the grant area from the year before grant started through to 2018 (please note that Campbell River intake displays from re-opening of adoption centre onwards)*

The large-scale grants have been transformative in the communities where they were targeted, with branches reporting that the decrease in intake has made them available to be more proactive in their work and spend more resources on fewer cats, particularly cats that benefit from more attention.

Targeted large-scale spay/neuter

programming led to some unexpected positive outcomes. Branches were able to assist in decreasing the overall provincial overpopulation by transferring in more cats in need. They were able to dramatically increase return to owner rates by partnering with the municipality to improve bylaws for permanent identification and spay/neuter. Accessing large-scale funding also motivated nearby communities to get involved in addressing overpopulation in their own communities.

Branch managers and staff served a crucial role in delivering successfully on these impacts, by building relationships in the community with veterinary partners, media, municipal staff, municipal council and rescue groups. In determining an area to target for a large-scale spay/neuter program, it is crucial to have partnerships in place in advance. Additionally, training in systems and best practices for these programs ensured branches were prepared and were able to prioritize the program within their branch operations.

It is also important to identify the number of cats that need to be fixed in the community served using calculations based on the average number of cats per household. These calculations assuming 10% of low-income caregivers and 90% of the remainder of the population sterilize their cats. While this may not be 100% accurate, it will assist in setting a goal amount to sterilize in a 2-year period. In a community where a low-income spay/neuter program already exists, the number of cats in need will be lower compared with a community that has not previously had this service available to the public.

As mentioned, public education at the same time as the program is running is absolutely crucial to making sure this investment is sustainable in the long-term. Planning a phase-out is also important, ensuring that there is a plan in place for sustained low-income spay/neuter program after the large-scale targeted program is complete.

## 2. Low-income community spay/neuter

The BC SPCA developed the Community Animal Spay/Neuter Grant program to provide funding for grounds that deliver programming to First Nation communities in need of help for owned cats. The program also funds TNR (see section 3). As a result, 879 remote First Nation cats have been spayed/neutered since 2014. The efforts that our partners coordinate require a great amount of staff time and resources, making a program like this a great return on investment. Having partners who

specialize in high-volume multi-day M.A.S.H. style spay/neuter clinics and understand the legal approval process from the College of Veterinarians of British Columbia (CVBC) has been a tremendous value in addressing cat overpopulation province-wide.

BC SPCA branches also operate low-income spay/neuter programs which are funded through a variety of funding sources, including municipal funds from direct asks, municipal grant-in-aid funding, individual donations, donated veterinary services and community foundations.

The programs are run using a voucher system built into the Shelterbuddy software voucher system. It allows the branch to create and print vouchers for their program, and mark them as redeemed following the surgery. This helps branches keep track of the number of vouchers they issue as well as follow up with vouchers that were not redeemed. Standard operating procedures assist staff in using the voucher programming, and Skype training is provided to branches launching new programs to ensure the function is used to its fullest extent and data is consistent.

Year	Number of cats fixed
2014	1,644
2015	1,667
2016	1,847
2017	1,699
2018	1,885

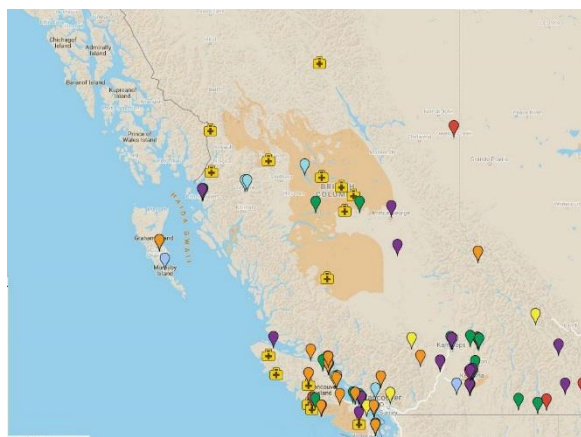
When the strategic plan was developed in 2013, 12 branches offered low-income spay/neuter assistance programs. At the end of 2018, 26 branches reported having run low-income spay/neuter programs during the strategic plan, **an increase of 74%**.

In order to keep their programs sustainable, many branches ask for a fee or donation between \$30 and \$60 to have a subsidized program instead of making the surgery free. The amount of funds generated through this is effective in keeping the program running, while still minimizing the barriers for people in need. Offering this type of program positions these branches as prevention and service-oriented, leading to a positive image in the community and helping people provide care to their pets.

### 3. Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

Programming for TNR is delivered through the Community Animal Spay/Neuter Grant (CASNG) program administered by the BC SPCA, and access to grant funding from PetSmart Charities of Canada.

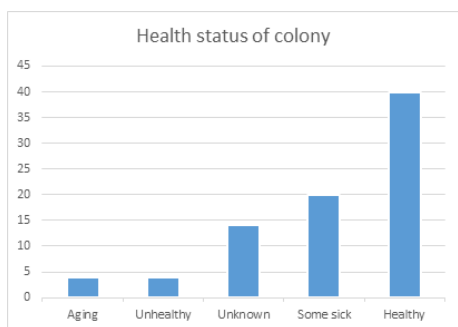
The CASNG grant program was created in 2013 and provides funding to BC SPCA branches, rescues, municipalities, First Nation communities and veterinarians across the province. The grant covers the cost of the spay/neuter surgery as well as permanent ID. Any additional costs, including vaccinations, parasite control, additional medical needs and trapping supplies, are paid for by the grant recipient. Grantees are selected based on the following criteria: clear problem definition and how the group will address the issue to completion, the ability for the applicant to match funds and the participation of a veterinarian willing to discount his or her services. **Image shows geographic locations of 2014-2018 grantees.**



Veterinary partnerships providing discounted rates are required to meet program eligibility requirements, and veterinarians have provided, on average, a 34.5% discount on feline surgery rates. The average cost per surgery for cats was \$130 in 2018. For every 100 surgeries, this is a total savings of approximately \$4,000. The average cost per cat, taking into account costs not covered by the grant, was \$165.40. A total of 2,558 cats were trapped, neutered and returned 2014-2018. With modest estimates, each sterilized cat could be responsible for 100 kittens being born, and thus this program has prevented the birth of approximately **343,800**, over a third of a million, kittens.

In December 2018, we reached out to all current and past TNR grantees and offered the incentive of an additional \$250 for spay/neuter activities in exchange for up-to-date colony information. We heard back from 12 groups and collected data on 99 colonies.

Over 97% of colonies are reported to be declining, with an average decrease of 31 cats since grant project completion. One colony reported an increase, and one reported the number has remained the same. Colonies are reported to be between 0 to 235 cats in size. The majority of caretakers of the colony live on site and feed the cats set amounts at set times.

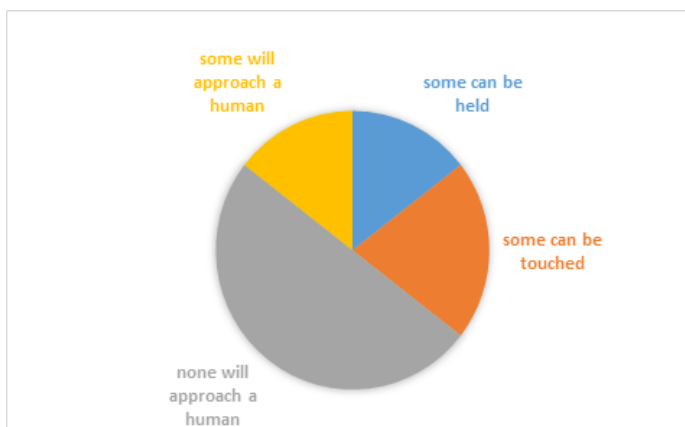


When asked about the health status of the cats in the colony, close to 50% of the colonies have healthy cats. Where cats were reported sick, the most common diseases were: calicivirus, URI, Mycoplasma, fleas and skin issues.

The majority of cats were dewormed and vaccinated as part of the TNR work. Most of the groups who reported that the cats did not receive these treatments, report that they have since changed their protocols and are ensuring all cats are dewormed and vaccinated at the time of their spay/neuter surgery.

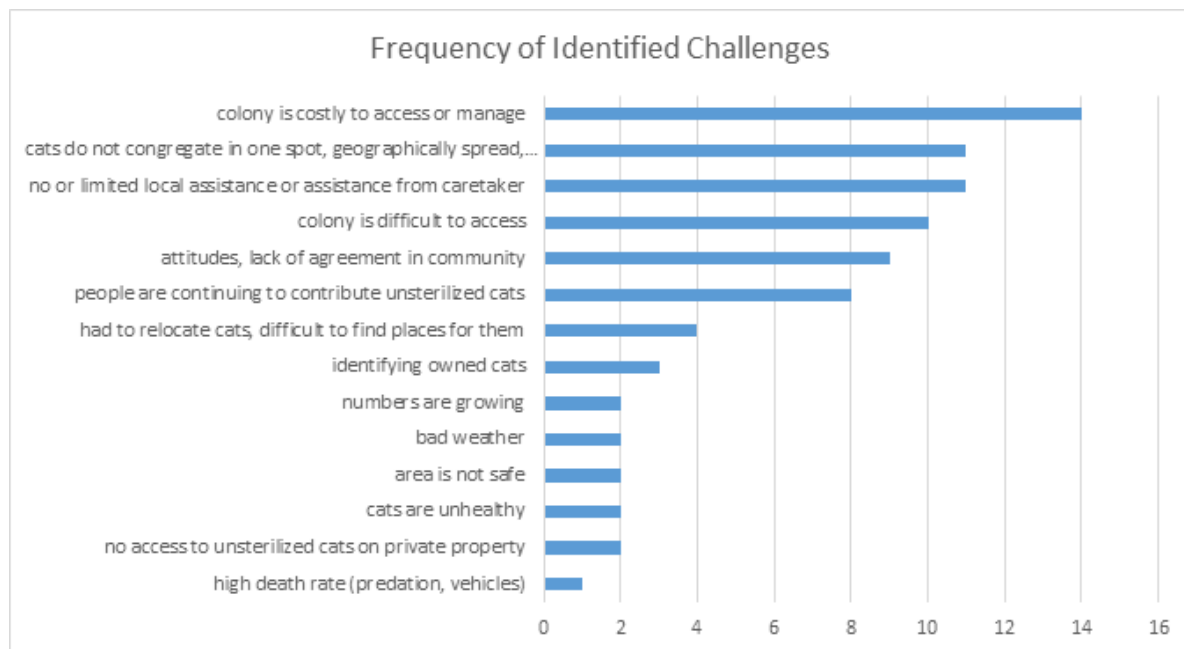
When asked about their behaviour towards humans, 50% report that none of the cats in the colony will approach a human.

The grant program assisted cats in areas where the BC SPCA does not have a branch presence. Many of the groups we partner with have established relationships in their area, making the work more accessible to the community and welcomed by the residents.



Over the year, we have seen groups evolve in their professionalism and understanding of cat welfare. Groups which in the early years were not vaccinating cats, have changed their policies and are ensuring more follow-up with colony caretakers to track the changes in the colony, both in health and cats coming and going.

There are some challenges to delivering this kind of programming that were reported in our survey.



The PetSmart Charities of Canada free-roaming cat grants assisted the BC SPCA in addressing large-scale populations of free-roaming cats in identified areas of the province. TNR can be resource intensive and it was challenging to

Year	Area	Amount received	Cats fixed
2014	Haida Gwaii	\$6,050	56
2014	Port Hardy	\$47,190	297
2015	Prince George	\$23,790	221

meet these numbers in a one year period, leading to extension requests. This funding made a significant dent in addressing overpopulation in these areas. These programs led to stronger relationships with partners in the community, including rescue groups, veterinary hospitals and local government.

#### 4. Operating low-cost spay/neuter clinics

The BC SPCA operates three low-cost spay/neuter clinics in Vancouver, Kamloops and Prince George. These clinics offer varied additional services and have a primary goal of ensuring people have access to spay and neuter surgeries that are affordable. The clinics assist with TNR where possible. For a number of years, they offered a day each year where unsocialized free-roaming (feral) cats could be sterilized for free. The Kamloops Clinic continues to offer this service. While it is possible to complete more surgeries in one day than it normally would, these days can lead to additional stress and waiting times for the cats. The Prince George clinic now works with the local BC SPCA branch to access CASNG funding for TNR, ensuring best practices are followed in regards to the welfare of the cats.

#### 5. Prevention of hoarding

Through the BC SPCA's reporting hotline (1-855-622-7722), all calls related to animal neglect and cruelty are dispatched to a team of special provincial constables (SPCs) who enforce the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*. SPCs frequently encounter colonies of cats. We developed a program to assist with spaying

and neutering cats in cases where the animal welfare is adequate, but the risk of growth is high. The stipulations for the grant were situations where there were 6-20 cats who had access to indoors, but this was modified through the program to address unique situations that would prevent population growth and the person could still provide adequate care. A total of 86 cats in five cases have been assisted in cases where a hoarding cruelty complaint was involved.

## A note on partnerships

Partnerships are crucial to program delivery. To increase the effectiveness of our partnerships, we identified growth opportunities. Veterinarians and other rescue or sheltering organizations are critical to addressing cat overpopulation. We developed a veterinary outreach strategy and as part of Herding Cats, and now send out a veterinary newsletter three times annually. We also send out thank you cards to all of our veterinary partners for their amazing contributions.

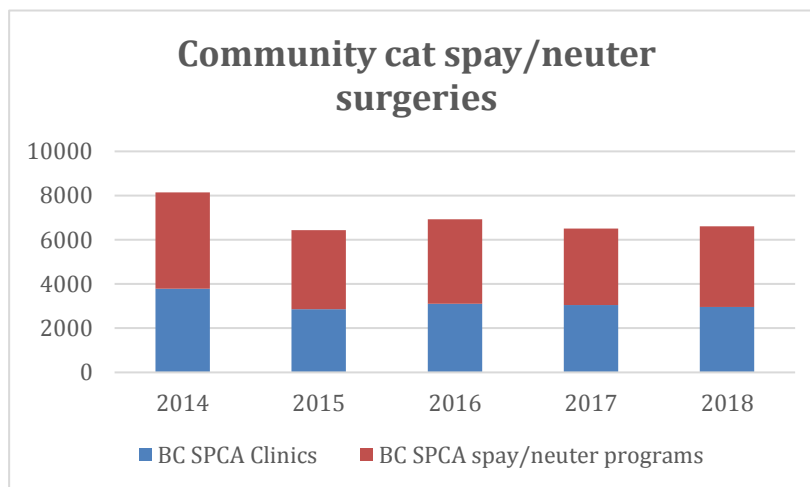
Relationships with rescue groups, particularly in determining a strategy for large communities, has also been an area of growth. Coalitions or networks can serve as a way to gather community data and divide up tasks, ensuring that no 'cat'egory of cats is being ignored. The challenges in rural areas differ from urban, and owned cats differ from unowned, unsocialized cats, but all require consideration in British Columbia's vast and unique communities. By communicating together with everyone who has an interest in addressing cat overpopulation, solutions will incorporate more perspectives, be more widespread and unique, resulting in greater success.

## Measure & Outcome

**Goal:** To increase the total number of community cat sterilizations (i.e. not shelter-based sterilizations) that occur as a direct result of BC SPCA involvement (grants, spay/neuter clinics) from 8,000 in 2012 to 12,000 by 2018

**Outcome:** For clarification, the number quoted in the above objective did not accurately

reflect the number of community cat sterilizations in 2012, but included dog surgeries and was rounded up from 7,100. The graph shows the number of non-shelter cat spay or neuter surgeries performed or funded by the BC SPCA during the 2014-2018 strategic plan. The numbers per year were funding dependent and that BC SPCA spay/neuter clinics did not receive direction to increase their total number of community cat sterilizations. Their focus was on increasing shelter-based sterilizations. Recognizing that funding for community spay and neuter is a challenge, the BC SPCA will continue to seek new funding opportunities.



## 4. Increase the number of cats that are microchipped

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*Investigate opportunities to dramatically increase the number of stray/lost animals returned to their guardians.*

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### Strategy

Tattoos as a means of identification are slower to track than microchips. B.C.'s tattoo ID system was previously administered through the CVBC and records of each tattoo were kept by each veterinarian. This led to challenges contacting clinics with varied hours of operation and veterinary businesses that no longer operated, as well as outdated information for owners that was not consistently updated at their clinic. **As a result, animals were staying longer in shelters and were not always guaranteed to make their way home to their family.**

**The BC SPCA addressed this issue by ensuring that 100% of sheltered cats departing the BC SPCA and 100% of owned cats assisted through outreach programming receive microchips and registration.**

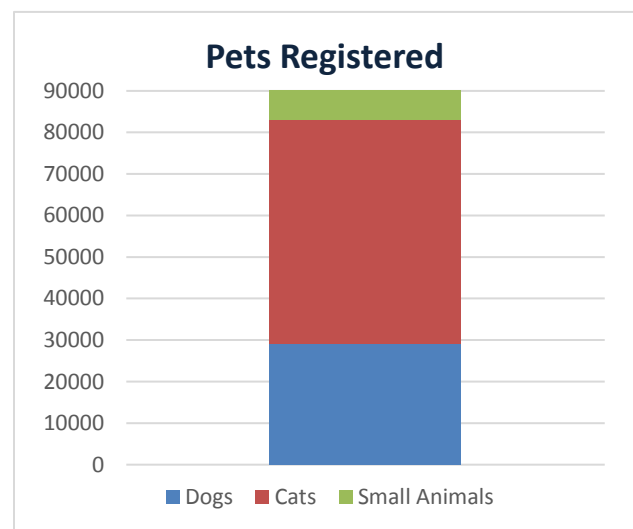
To ensure consistency and best practices in microchipping, the BC SPCA launched the BC Pet Registry. Any microchips registered with the BC Pet Registry are internationally traceable. The BC Registry is partnered with a [universal look-up tool](#), which enables organizations across the globe to access the information in the registry to assist pets in returning home.

The BC Pet Registry currently partners with [127 veterinarians and shelters](#), ensuring that even more cats in the province are consistently microchipped and registered, with up-to-date records.

### Measure & Outcome

**Goal:** To increase return to owner rate for cats in BC SPCA shelters from the provincial average of 8% in 2013 (national average 4%) to 12% by 2018, with no region or shelter falling below 10%.

**Outcome:** In 2018, the return to owner rate was 18%.





# Next steps

The BC SPCA aims, in the 2019-2023 strategic plan, to improve on the programming established in the last five years, ensuring maximum effectiveness. While there have been significant gains, the organization recognizes that more efforts are needed to ensure systemic change in the province. The number of cats entering the shelter system continues to far exceed the number of dogs, and the uncontrolled breeding of cats continues to be an animal welfare crisis. Branches have seen significant improvement in animal welfare for the cats in their care over a very short period of time, and more branches are starting to be able to look outward towards the delivery of outreach services to the community. This shift would not have been possible without all of these pieces working together.

We continue to be guided by our vision, **for every cat to have a home and be part of a family, where guardians value their cats and are educated on how to care for them.**

View the BC SPCA's [2019-2023 strategic plan](#).

For access to any more detailed information or specific guidance regarding program delivery best practices, please contact [outreach@spca.bc.ca](mailto:outreach@spca.bc.ca).

