



Animal Welfare Groups and Municipal Organizations Provide Free Services to Protect Community Health in North Adams

North Adams – On June 2, 2016, an outdoor cat from the Chase Hill area of North Adams tested positive for rabies. Because of the relatively large number of outdoor cats in this area, a case of rabies in one animal suggested the possibility of spread to other animals. In response, in order to protect both public and animal health in the community, the city of North Adams, the Massachusetts Animal Fund, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Berkshire Humane Society, Berkshire Animal D.R.E.A.M.S., Second Chance Animal Shelter, Greylock Animal Hospital, Pittsfield Veterinary Hospital, North County Animal Hospital, Lenox Cat Hospital, SPAY Worcester, the Shrewsbury Animal Control Officer, and the North Adams Animal Control Officer worked in collaboration to develop a care plan for the community and their animals. This three-phase plan sought to bring free rabies vaccinations, microchip identification, and spay/neuter services to owned cats/ dogs and to outdoor community cats in the vicinity.

Phase one of the North Adams Project served to educate the community about the threat of rabies, provide rabies vaccinations to owned cats/dogs, and microchips to owned cats in the area. On July 14, in an empty lot on River Street, Berkshire Humane Society, Animal DREAMS, the Massachusetts Animal Fund and North Adams Animal Control set up tents and staged an RV as a mobile free rabies vaccination/microchip clinic for all owned cats and dogs living within one half mile of the Chase Hill area of North Adams. During the six hour walk-up clinic, veterinarians from Greylock Animal Hospital and North County Veterinary Hospital administered free rabies vaccinations for 215 owned cats/dogs, provided by the Massachusetts Animal Fund, free microchips were provided by Berkshire Humane Society, seventy cats/dogs were given free spay/neuter vouchers provided by the Massachusetts Animal Fund, and free pet food, provided by Animal DREAMS, was handed out for those in need.

Phase two of the project addressed unvaccinated stray and feral cats' potential contribution to the spread of rabies. To pinpoint the locations of where to place traps, Animals DREAMS and Animal Control Officer Loholdt worked to collect information from individuals in the community on where outdoor cats were frequently seen and where they fed. On July 15, Animal Control Officer Pease and volunteers from Animal DREAMS began three days of trapping feral and outdoor cats in the area. Thirty five outdoor cats were successfully trapped and brought to the North Adams Department of Public Works building. There the cats were held and cared for daily by volunteers while they awaited their appointments for spay/neuter surgeries and vaccinations on Monday. During the trapping cats were scanned for microchips and three cats were quickly able to be returned to their families due to this technology. Sunday evening volunteers went door to door assisting owned cats available for spay/neuter by

providing transportation and by utilizing carriers donated by the MSPCA. Veterinarians from Wahconah Veterinary Hospital and Lenox Cat Hospital were on call for emergencies.

Phase three of the project started on Monday, July 18, at 9:00 AM, when the Second Chance Animal Shelter mobile veterinary vans from East Brookfield, Massachusetts arrived at the North Adams Department of Public Works building. By 3:00 PM that day, fifty spay/neuter surgeries were completed on thirty two outdoor community cats and eighteen owned cats from the Chase Hill and surrounding area. Six additional cats received rabies vaccinations. All owned cats were returned back to their families later that afternoon and all trapped outdoor cats were ear-tipped and returned to the location in which they were found early the next morning.

In this collaborative effort 270 cats/dogs benefitted from these free services.

Plans are being made to continue to help cats/dogs in need in this area.