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Northeast Animal Shelter overflowing with cats

By Robin Kaminski / The Daily Item

SALEM - Northeast Animal Shelter is in a purrr-dicament.

An overabundance of kittens and adult cats are practically overrunning the shelter where, to date, a total of 88 cats and kittens are being housed, 42 of which are cats ranging in age from four months to 9 years old, and 46 are kittens less than four months old.

"It's just insane," said Laurie McCannon, development director at NEAS. "By this time of the year, we usually just place adult cats and the kittens have slowed down, but we are seeing kittens still pouring in the door."

McCannon said the cats have ended up at the no-kill shelter for a variety of reasons such as its owner dying, the owner going into a nursing home, allergies, too many cats in the home, tenants moved and couldn't take the cat, or the owner just didn't want the animal anymore.

Of the cats, 20 of the felines were strays, four were left behind in an apartment when tenants moved out, five were abandoned because the owner couldn't afford to take care and feed the cat and one was left at a police station.

"The others are here because they are either a litter of kittens of a mom that was a stray and had the kittens while in foster care, or were found outdoors," she said. "This is the most we've had in awhile and we're basically at max capacity."

Many of the cats crawling around the shelter were taken from the MSPCA in Methuen, where McCannon said they faced being euthanized because the shelter was overwhelmed by cats and kittens.

"We have more appointments for those shelters to bring us more pets, if we have the space, and we also have appointments for people looking to surrender their cats or for cats they found," she said. "And those cats will need medical and foster care at NEAS' expense because they don't belong to anyone."

The real problem, according to McCannon, is that cats are most likely not being spayed or neutered, and in turn, more cats are being bred.

"A lot of the problems are also because people likely still have a misconception of shelters, thinking they are a bad place, and therefore feel better letting the cat outdoors to fend for itself and are then found as strays," she said. "Or, they need to surrender their pet for whatever reason and the shelters are full of cats waiting to find homes, so the cat is put on a waiting list for when space opens up and the person cannot wait, so they let them go outdoors or bring them to a kill shelter as a last resort."

All of those reasons point to the need for more people to adopt cats, be a temporary foster family for a cat, or simply donate to NEAS so resources can be provided.

For more information, call 978-745-9888.



Trish Alcorn plays with a cat at the Northeast Animal Shelter in Salem Tuesday. Item Photo / Reba M. Saldanha