

## Volunteers tackle feral-cat problems at apartments

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Hi, my name is Ryssa, and I am available for adoption at the Salem Friends of Felines shelter.

While I am waiting for a family to call my own, I want to tell you about a project the great volunteers here have taken on.

It is an effort to reduce the number of cats who are left behind when their owners move out of apartments. It also is trying to get feral cats who live in the apartment complexes fixed so they don't keep having litter after litter of kittens — because it gets so crowded here at the shelter sometimes!

Salem Friends of Felines received a grant in December from the Karen M. Schroth Foundation for Animals. The \$17,000 specifically was for spay and neuter programs.

A group of volunteers decided to target apartment complexes. They approached managers, suggesting that residents who got their cats fixed and microchipped could be offered a discount on their pet deposit. The volunteers were looking for incentives to help people keep their cats, rather than abandon them when they move. The volunteers worked with residents to make low-cost spay and neuter services available, if necessary. They have gone to almost 30 apartment complexes and trailer parks so far.

SFOF president-elect Jeanie Sloan told me that as the volunteers wore out their paws going from complex to complex, they came across a recurring situation with feral cats.

(Feral cats are untamed cats. These cats were either abandoned and have reverted to a more wild state, or were born outdoors to a feral or stray mother. Feral cats are frightened of people and avoid human contact.)

"The management often just sees them as a problem and just wants them gone," Jeanie said. "We're trying to get them to see that trap/neuter/return programs are a better option."

(In such programs, cats are captured in humane live traps, taken to the vet for surgery and shots, and after they are recovered, returned to where they are fed.)

"Tenants were feeding them, and we were able to provide some food to help support that," Jeanie said.

People were receptive and have been helping volunteers catch the cats. Ten of the cats are at the Willamette Humane Society today getting their shots and surgery. Ten more have an appointment at a Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon clinic later this month.

"We're just going to chip away at it," Jeanie said, adding that there may be as many as 100 cats at one large complex in southeast Salem.

People who want to help with the project can stop by the shelter (be sure to come in and pet

me!) at 980 Commercial St. SE, Salem. It's open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays. The phone number at the shelter is (503) 362-5611. Donations to support the program always are needed.

Ryssa is a 3-year-old, spayed female with medium-length fur. She was abandoned at the SFOF shelter with a badly fractured hind leg, which had to be amputated. She needs to be an indoor-only cat for this reason.