

February 27, 2023

LD 595
Helpfixme

To Committee Members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Department

My name is Stephanie Mains and I am the President of Cat Coalition of Western Maine, a TNR Program, which has been all over Maine Trapping and organizing MASH STYLE Spay and Neutering Clinics. On many occasions we handled the trapping of the cats and brought a vet with us to do the surgeries.

We used our 18' Cargo Trailer, set up to hold 34 cats comfortably, to hold the cats and to perform the surgery or we did them on an RV from a North Conway Shelter. We even used our portable ice house set up as a MASH Unit. Now CCOWM hosts a monthly clinic in the town of Bridgton, where we work with a vet from Norway Veterinarian Hospital

We do feral, semi feral, or strays, and many owned cats (some families have traveled from Bethel, Rumford, Mexico, So Paris, Norway, Oxford, Fryeburg, Phippsburg, Denmark, Porter, Lovell, Stoneham, Waterford and all-over Western Maine)

Our organization would like to see the Helpfixme Program Continue as the main source for S/N for many folks, larger clinics, and smaller clinics like ours. To require veterinarians to fill out paperwork, get paid before the clinics and make up any difference over or under on the other end, would only bring more work for veterinarians who don't want to work with Helpfixme to begin with because of the overlong time receiving payment. At our smaller clinic we do all the scheduling not our vet. We incur all the overhead not our vet, we do all the paperwork, not our vet and when we schedule our clinics, we let the vet know the Friday before our Sunday Clinics how many total cats and number of females and males. Sometimes we schedule for 20-23, but only get 15 that show up. Basically, we have no idea until clinic day just how many will be neutered.

The minute our vet walks into our clinic, we have weighed the cats, the carriers have been noted as M or F, Feral, Scared, or Friendly and rabies certificates filled out. All our vet needs to do is walk in, give the Kitty Juice, and we are preparing kitties to be fixed. We want our vet to enjoy doing what they do best with the least amount of stress as possible so they will want to keep coming back. We do as much of the paperwork and organizing of the clinic so as not to make things complicated for our vet or us at our clinics that are helping our community get cats S/N.

After all, if S/N was more accessible there would not be so many unwanted strays, ferals, community or cats left behind by bad owners to breed. I truly believe people try to do the right thing here, but many do not have transportation to clinics that are not nearby. It would be easier for some people if the vouchers were available directly to them so they can use them at their own vet. But the HelpFixMe program needs to get more veterinarians on board by paying faster. We have a small clinic, but we also do 15-22 cats at each clinic and we need to keep all clinics.

The clinics like ours helps Western Maine try to keep the feral community cat population down. As you all know, Maine, like every state in America has a huge feral population problem. There is no one town in Maine that does not have a higher percentage population than the next town over, and I know this from being the boots on the ground for the past 13 years, so PLEASE consider keeping the helpfixme program as it is, but also allow a Rescue to run this instead of the Maine Animal Welfare Program. It would spread out the vouchers more evenly amongst all clinics in Northern Maine as well as in Southern Maine, Western Maine and in between.

Thank you for your time

Stephanie Mains
President
Cat Coalition of Western Maine