

Case Study

Alley Cat Allies Stops Deadly Plan for Cats in Virginia Community *Educates and Mediates Neighbor and Management Concerns*

When a residential management company hired a pest-control service to trap and kill a colony of cats living in a Northern Virginia manufactured-home community called the Meadows of Chantilly, Alley Cat Allies stepped in and convinced the company to adopt a plan that would humanely address residents' concerns while sparing the cats lives.

The large colony was already known to Alley Cat Allies: in 2005, the organization assisted caregivers with trapping over 300 of the cats, and provided neutering and vaccination services at no cost to the residents or management company. Many of the residents considered the feral cats a part of the community, and for several years had regularly fed and provided veterinary care.

In March 2008, a handful of residents (out of more than 500 living at the Meadows of Chantilly) expressed concern to the management company about some of the cats' behaviors, like digging in flower gardens. In hasty response, the management company announced plans to trap and kill the cats by hiring a pest control company. The caregivers were devastated, and the situation captured the attention of the local media.

Alley Cat Allies contacted the pest control service, which voiced their trepidation over getting involved with the Meadows of Chantilly because the service did not want the negative media attention. Alley Cat Allies called on the management company to place a moratorium on the trapping, and offered to provide and install humane deterrents and to neuter any remaining intact—pet, stray, and feral—cats. When the company at first refused to consider the offer, Alley Cat Allies urged supporters in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. to voice their concerns. Over 2,000 area advocates flooded the company with emails.

The overwhelming response convinced the management company to put a hold on the trapping plan and meet with Alley Cat Allies. After several lengthy discussions, the company agreed to a highly organized colony-management plan—designed and overseen by Alley Cat Allies—that would allow the cats to live peacefully with all residents.

To address any concerns about the cats, Alley Cat Allies visited Meadows residents door-to-door, introducing themselves and answering questions. Based on the canvassing, staff and local volunteers built simple shelters and feeding stations in designated areas, and distributed humane cat

deterrents and repellants to residents at no charge. An exhaustive trapping drive was initiated to ensure all the cats were vaccinated and neutered.

“Some of the residents who had the initial concerns were at first reluctant to adopt the plan, stating that the cats ‘just needed to be gone,’” said Becky Robinson, president of Alley Cat Allies. “After we helped them install some ingenious humane deterrents and repellants—like motion-activated ultrasonic-sound emitters—we’ve heard several tell us they love the devices and have no issue with the cats. The reaction has been overwhelmingly positive.”



Volunteers posted signs and went door-to-door asking concerned neighbors to contact Alley Cat Allies.