



Keep Animals Safe

keepanimalssafe.ca

For Immediate Release

Education campaign says for Toronto cats, there's no place safer than home

(TORONTO: June 15, 2009) – Toronto Wildlife Centre and the Canadian Cats Indoors Alliance are launching an education campaign with a focus in the Beach area in Toronto to raise awareness about the dangers faced by free-roaming pet cats, and to encourage residents to take action to keep animals safe by keeping pet cats indoors or in protected outdoor enclosures.

The campaign kicks off Monday, June 22, 2009 at 11am with a launch in Kew Gardens on Queen St. East in the Beach. Residents are welcome to stop by between 11am-1pm and check out a portable outdoor cat enclosure—a safe alternative for outdoor pets—as well as catch a first glimpse of a visual that Beach-goers will soon be familiar with: the campaign ad, created by Agency 59, takes a sobering look at the too-short lifespan of free-roaming outdoor cats—an average of 10 years shorter than their indoor counterparts. The ad will be appearing over the summer in TTC vehicles and stations, and posted in windows of businesses, community centres and libraries throughout the Beach area.

A new website has also been launched—www.keepanimalssafe.ca—which includes more information about the issue, answers to frequently asked questions about indoor and outdoor cats, useful tips to help you transition cats to the indoors, as well as safe alternatives to letting cats roam unsupervised outdoors.

Free-roaming outdoor cats face many dangers including cars, human cruelty, debilitating diseases, exposure to poisonous chemicals and—as recent events with the Neville Park coyote will testify—predation by other animals.

Spring and summer are the deadliest times for outdoor cats, and the wild animals they prey upon. Dr. Barbara Bryer of the Veterinary Emergency Clinic in Toronto advises that the warmer weather brings a “significant spike (in outdoor cat admissions to vet clinics) due to traumas, illnesses and toxins.”

Among these, warns Coxwell Animal Clinic's Dr. Tim Arthur, is a “dramatic increase in cat fight injuries [and] vehicular trauma.”

Outdoor cats also have a devastating effect on wildlife, particularly during the spring and summer when wild animals are nesting and raising young. Young birds and mammals who are not yet fully mobile, such as fledgling songbirds and ground-nesting cottontail rabbits, are easy targets for cats. Since cats are a domesticated species which is not a part of wild ecosystems, the impact of them killing animals in these delicately balanced systems is significant. The scope can be difficult to appreciate—though most cat owners may only be aware of a few animals caught by their cats, current research estimates that outdoor cats collectively kill more than a billion wild animals every year in North America alone.

Toronto Wildlife Centre sees the tragedy from both sides: the centre's wildlife hospital admits hundreds of wild animals attacked by cats each year, and even though they don't work with domestic animals, receives numerous reports on their wildlife hotline of cats who have come into conflict with wildlife, or been otherwise injured while roaming outdoors unattended. "It's tragic" notes TWC's executive director Nathalie Karvonen. "Cats and wildlife both suffer because of the common perception that cats are independent animals that do not require from their caregivers the same level of protection as other pets do."

To learn more about the issue and what you can do to help, check out www.keepanimalsafe.ca.

The Keep Animals Safe campaign is made possible through the generous support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Toronto Wildlife Centre would like to acknowledge the pro-bono contributions of Agency 59 in ad design, The Kenilworth House in media relations, and Off The Cuff Marketing in web development and hosting. Toronto Wildlife Centre would also like to thank the members of the Canadian Cats Indoors Alliance (CCIA), who have partnered in support of keeping animals safe.

For media inquiries, please contact Erin Luther at erin@torontowildlifecentre.com, or (416) 631-0662 x3210.

The Canadian Cats Indoors Alliance: In Support of Keeping Animals Safe

