

Monday, April 14, 2025

Rabbit resolution hops forward at AVICC convention

Province needs to take leadership role in addressing the root causes of feral rabbit issues

NANAIMO - A resolution calling on the provincial government to create a strategy to address root causes of feral rabbits province-wide was passed at the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) convention this weekend.

Abandonment and the following rapid proliferation of feral European rabbits in parks and public spaces is a hot button issue that has plagued municipalities across the province for well over two decades. This ongoing issue leads to negative impacts on ecosystems, native wildlife, urban infrastructure, and public health and safety. The welfare of the feral rabbits also needs to be addressed, and non-lethal solutions are needed.

"Feral rabbits are becoming an increasing challenge for many communities - they are a risk to our environment, infrastructure, and to public safety," says Saanich Councillor Teale Phelps Bondaroff, who initiated the resolution at Saanich council, where it passed unanimously prior to going to the AVICC. "Municipalities and small charities have been left to tackle this issue alone, but without coordinated provincial support, efforts remain inconsistent and ineffective. Leadership from the province is essential to addressing the root causes and preventing further damage to ecosystems and infrastructure."

"Ultimately, the individual communities managing this issue are not the ones responsible for its root causes," explains Lesley Fox, Executive Director of The Fur-Bearers. "There is a lack of regulations around breeding and the widespread selling of unsterilized rabbits, a lack of education for pet owners, and a clear need for provincial support. We support this resolution as it calls on the province to address the root causes of this issue."

"As a lifelong Nanaimo resident, I have watched this issue spiral out of control. Rabbits are suffering and the shelters/rescues are at capacity. I have hundreds of feral rabbits near my house, and I have spent thousands on sterilizing the ones I can catch," said Marley Daviduk, a Nanaimo resident. "A cull is not the answer when the sale of rabbits on Kijiji and marketplace is still a major factor contributing to this crisis. The unregulated sale of rabbits by backyard breeders on Vancouver Island is a major concern while we have an overpopulation crisis on our hands."

The original Saanich resolution was also supported by the BC SPCA, and was initiated after residents raised concerns about feral rabbits in the District.

The motion for resolution was passed on Sunday, April 13 at the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities convention. The resolution will now move on to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) convention for consideration; if adopted, it will be forwarded to the province as an official resolution.

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More on next page.

Attached is a photo of Councillor Teale Phelps Bondaroff from the AVICC vote and issue backgrounder. The resolution can be found in the AVICC Resolutions Book (https://avicc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-AVICC-Resolutions-Book_FINAL.pdf) as Resolution #35 on page 30 of the PDF.

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