

Advocates: JFK feral cats will face death



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Following long negotiations with animal advocates (including the Humane Society) the Port Authority decided to stop the JFK cat neutering program and focus on the rounding up the cats with the intention of getting them off the JFK grounds and into animal shelters. (May 27, 2008)

The cat and mouse game between [Kennedy Airport](#) felines and the [Port Authority](#) has come to an end -- and the cats lost.

So say animal lovers who accuse the authority of backing out of negotiations to humanely deal with the hundreds of cats who roam the 5,000-acre airport.

The next stop for the furry creatures, advocates say, could be death.

"They are telling folks that they are trying to adopt these animals out, but that is patently not true," said Patrick Kwan, [New York](#) state director of the Humane Society of the United States.

"These animals cannot be adopted out. This is an extermination program that sentences them to death."

In October, the Port Authority announced that they were rounding up the feral cats and sending them to shelters. Animal advocates protested, arguing that shelters couldn't handle the cats and that they would ultimately be put down.

They also claimed that a program to trap, neuter and then return the cats to the airport would be more effective.

The agency and the Port Authority have for months been negotiating a solution. On the morning of Memorial Day, Kwan said the agency called him to announce that they were ignoring advocates' plans to trap and neuter the animals and would restart a program to trap and remove the cats.

"We have been working with them since August and we believed they would have a good-faith effort to work with us," said Kwan. "It is not possible to trap and remove all the animals there."

The Port Authority did not return phone calls seeking comment, but in October they explained that the cats can interfere with aircraft operation.

"Airports that serve 50 million people are not an appropriate place for a large, wild, cat colony," agency spokesman Pasquale DiFulco told *amNewYork*.

Many of the cats arrive at JFK after they are inadvertently lost at the airport. In time, colonies of feral cats have taken over the grounds, as many New Yorkers dump kittens there that they no longer want to take care of.

Groups concerned about the cats' welfare have offered to implement a neutering program themselves but they say the Port Authority has rebuffed them.

"It's astounding," said Jane Hoffman, president of the Mayor's Alliance for NYC Animals. "Every time we answer them, they come up with a new question. They say they are a danger to aircraft, but that's silly. I have never seen a feral kitten pole vault into the engine of a jet airplane. Someone there must really have a bee in their bonnet about feral cats."