



AND KITTY, TOO

By Tamara Cook

Did you know that in unincorporated Harris County there is a leash law for CATS as well as dogs? Imagine taking a stroll through the park on a sunny day and seeing Felix from next door being walked on a leash. If you think you would have a surprised reaction, then you are not alone. I am an Information & Referral Specialist at Harris County Rabies/Animal Control. I answer some of the hundreds of phone calls our agency receives every day. So I get a chance to speak to the citizens of Harris County one on one. Some of the most memorable conversations are with cat owners. I have explained the leash law to probably hundreds of pet owners and I get almost the exact same reactions from them all. A few of the comments are, "Are you crazy? That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard", "How do you walk a cat on a leash?" and "When did this become a law?" Well, this law has been in effect since 1983. All cats are supposed to be indoor pets and only outdoors when on a cat leash and accompanied by a responsible person or confined safely in their inescapable, fenced backyard. Now we all know that lots of cat owners let their beloved feline companions take an occasional stroll, knowing that he/she will return safely home. Besides it is a cat's natural instinct to want to roam and hunt from time to



time. Right? On the other hand, who knows what their cat is really getting into when it is away from home? Fortunately I get to hear the opinions of both cat owners and their neighbors who usually are not "cat people." Just a few of the complaints I hear from them are, "My neighbor's cats are using my flowerbed as a litter box." "The cat next door thinks my shiny new car is a scratching post" and my favorite is "There's a male cat spraying my front door." Now some of us do not have the nicest people in the world as neighbors. I hear the strangest threats from people who are just fed up with stray pets. So it might be in your best interest (as well as your cats) to keep Felix inside unless you are out with him. The leash law for cats is not such a horrible thing. Here at Harris County Rabies/Animal Control our interest is the welfare and safety of all animals. Who knows what the future holds for cat owners in Harris County. We have dog parks, so maybe one day we will have a park for cats. Alright, lets not get