

Managing Community Cats with Trap Neuter Return (TNR)



PRESENTED BY
Saginaw Animal Services
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WHAT IS A FERAL CAT?

- A cat that is untamed and was born in the wild. Feral cats live outdoors and do not appear friendly when approached.
- Feral cats can multiply quickly.
 - A cat at the age of about 4 months old is able to have a litter of kittens. And can have at least 2-3 litters a year. Once the kittens are weaned (milk dries up) the female cat is able to have another litter of kittens.

TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN

Trap-neuter-return (TNR) and its variants are nonlethal strategies intended to reduce the numbers of community cats, improve the health and safety of cats, and reduce impacts on wildlife.

- Community cats are spayed or neutered so they can no longer reproduce
- Vaccinated against rabies, marked to identify them as sterilized and returned to their home territory.

The universally recognized sign of a sterilized community cat is an ear-tip, a surgical removal of the top quarter inch of the of the cat's ear, typically the left.

About Trap Neuter Return (TNR)

- **TRAP:** Community cats are captured with a humane live trap.
- **NEUTER:** The cats are then transported in their traps to a veterinary clinic. There the cats are spayed (females) or neutered (males) and vaccinated against rabies by licensed veterinarians.
- **Ear tip is removed**, preventing the cat from being needlessly re-admitted to a TNR program.
- **RETURN:** Cats recover quickly from surgery and can be returned to the same location where they started out.
 - Caretakers and other residents continue to provide food, water and shelter to the cats and monitor the colony for any issues that arise or new cats who show up.



Cats in Our Communities

- Cats are a popular pet in the United States. Between 25 and 34% of households own cats, with an average of 1.8 cats per home. That's a total of 58 to 76 million cats (APPA, 2019; AVMA, 2018). The majority—approximately 87%—of owned cats have been spayed or neutered.
- Approximately 68% of owned cats are kept indoors, with the number increasing to 72% who are kept indoors at night. The population of free-roaming owned cats needs to be addressed while managing unowned community cats, particularly if the cats allowed to wander are not spayed or neutered.
- Community cat populations generally consist of a mixture of feral cats, semi-socialized cats and lost and abandoned pets. Community cats are found in all areas of the country. No one knows how many community cats live in the United States, but estimates are in the tens of millions. (ASPCA)

Community Cats/Feral Cats

- It's important to remember that these cats are already living in your community. Their origins may be varied; some may have once been owned cats, while others may be the offspring of generations of feral cats.
- TNR is about controlling and reducing the population of unowned stray and feral cats – IT IS NOT ABOUT ALLOWING MORE CATS TO LIVE IN OUR COMMUNITIES.



Managing community cat populations: What doesn't work

- TRAP AND REMOVE: LETHAL CONTROL

Trap and remove is the “old school” approach to community cat control but does not work

New cats move into an area soon through the “vacuum effect” and the cat population soon grows as large, or larger, than it was before

Neutered cats are territorial and will keep away newcomers.

TNR Benefits

- Community-wide TNR programs are effective because they:
 - Halt reproduction
 - Lead to the reduction and eventual elimination of outdoor cat populations through attrition.
 - Vaccinate cats against rabies (and other diseases, depending on available resources)
 - Decrease nuisance complaints by eliminating mating behaviors – fighting, mating, spraying to mark territory
 - Ease the burden on community resources such as animal shelters flooded with cats and their offspring – reduce need for shelter personnel to kill healthy animals
 - Bring new financial resources and volunteer workforces into the community
 - Can improve community and neighborhood relations and lead to new collaboration
 - Allow private nonprofit organizations that help community cats and volunteers to mediate conflicts between the cats and residents of surrounding communities
 - Maintain the health of community cats and allow caretakers to trap new cats who join the colony for TNR, reunification with their owner, or rehoming.

Public Concerns

- While some residents might complain about cats in their backyard or cats adversely affecting their property, many of these complaints can be resolved with information about humane deterrents and civil dialogue with neighbors. Animal control officers can be an integral part of this approach
- Public support, and volunteerism, is vital to large-scale sterilization programs.
- When confronted with the facts, most residents will choose sterilization for cats in their area, vs. trapping and euthanizing healthy cats.

Feeding Bans

- The logic behind banning the feeding of outdoor cats is that if no one feeds them, they will go away.
- However, cats are strongly bonded to their home territories and will not easily or quickly leave familiar surroundings to search for new food sources. Instead, they tend to move closer to homes and businesses as they grow hungrier, leading to more nuisance complaint calls, greater public concern for the cats' welfare and underground feeding
- Feeding bans are ineffective and are difficult (if not impossible) to enforce.

Feeding bans limit residents' personal freedom
and equate to "punishment for compassion"

Question: Liability

- The Tort Trial and Insurance Section of the American Bar Association supports the adoption of TNR programs by local governments.
- Conducting or allowing a TNR program in order to reduce cat populations, protect public health and mitigate nuisance complaints is a legitimate government purpose
- Thus the municipality should not be held liable for third-party claims (ABA, 2017). (Also known as government immunity)

Question: Rabies Risk

- Vaccinating community cats against rabies is an opportunity to protect public health.
- The number of rabies-related human deaths in the United States has declined from more than 100 annually at the turn of the century to one or two per year in the 1990s.
- Texas currently has 5 top carriers of Rabies: skunks, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, and bats

RABIES CASES IN TEXAS

Statistics from DSHS

January 2021 – November 2021

Number of animals tested all counties 13,998

TARRANT COUNTY

<u>Species</u>	<u>Total Tested</u>	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
Cat	132	0	132
Dog	194	0	194
Skunk	19	8	11
Fox	5	2	3
Bat	24	1	23
Coyote	4	0	4
Raccoon	23	0	23
Other	0	5	0

Question: Toxoplasmosis

- **Most cases of toxoplasmosis stem from undercooked food, not cats**
- Catch and kill advocates argue that feral cats transmit toxoplasmosis, a parasitic disease that spreads via *Toxoplasma* oocysts shed in the feces of an infected animal. But studies show that the overwhelming majority of toxoplasmosis cases actually result from eating undercooked meat. According to CDC statistics, toxoplasmosis is the third leading cause of food-borne illness-related death in the U.S.⁹
- Pregnant women and their fetuses face a higher risk from the disease – but a study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* in 2002 concluded that pregnant women were unlikely to catch toxoplasmosis from a cat.
- It's rare for anyone to catch toxoplasmosis from a household pet.

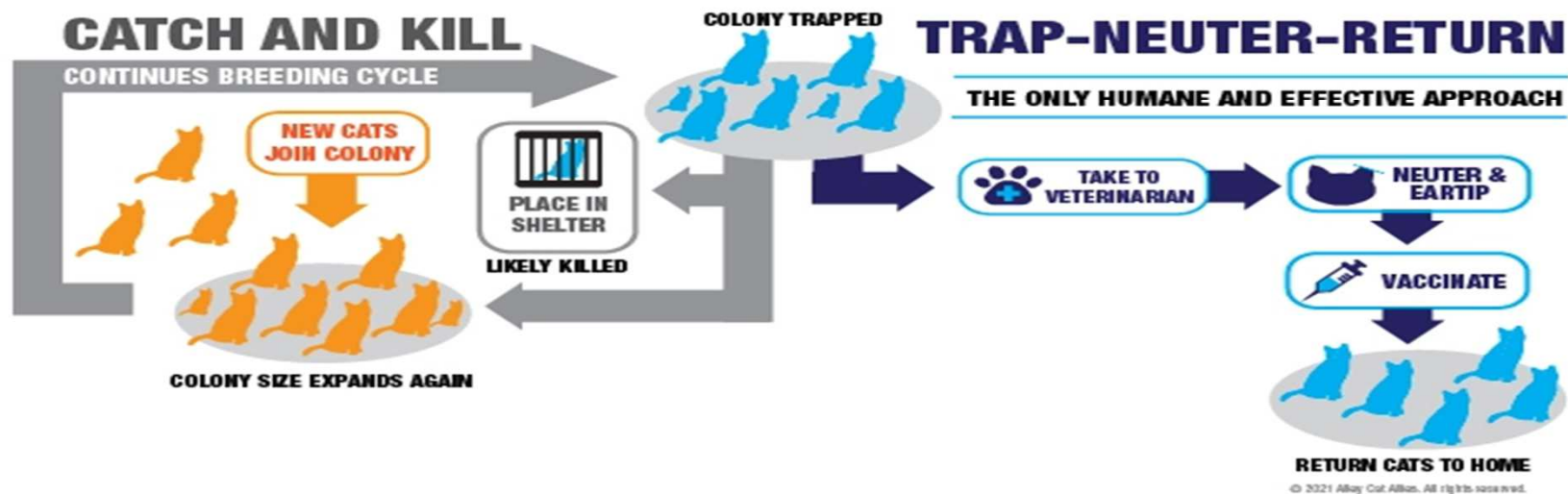
Vacuum Effect

- **What is the Vacuum Effect?**
- The initial population lived in a location because of resources such as shelter, food, and water. Once emptied, this still resource-rich habitat—the vacuum—inevitably attracts other members of the same species from neighboring areas.
- With reproduction from unneutered animals, the area fills back up to capacity again
- The Vacuum Effect occurs across many species, including foxes, mice, coyotes, voles, possums, and badgers – and cats.

HOW THE VACUUM EFFECT WORKS



THE VACUUM EFFECT



Question: Cost

- The Texas Coalition for Animal Protection (TCAP) spays and neuters 12 cats for free most days
- Average fee for Spay or Neuter is \$20 plus \$5 rabies (\$25) Ferals get an ear tip
- Regular price (non-feral, no ear tip) is \$35 for males, \$45 for females plus \$5 rabies.
- Extra fees may apply for in-heat cats, etc.

Estimated Cost for Procedures

- \$25 per animal (without extra costs) x 100 cats (estimated) = \$2500
- Cost of ACO transporting animal to vet and pickup estimated 1-1.5 hrs per trip x 2 trip (morning drop off) (Afternoon pickup) \$54 x 3 days = \$162 x 52 weeks = \$8,242
- 4 trips = 30 miles a day x 3 days = 90 miles a week x 52 = 4680 miles a year.

Housing at Shelter

- Animal Services is currently equipped with 16 cat cages.
 - 10 cat cages in adoption area
 - 6 cat cages in quarantine
- Feral cats would be required to be housed separate from our adoptable cats to prevent the spread of disease.
- Also once surgery has been completed it is suggested to hold male cats 1 day and females 2 days after surgery.

ISOLATION AREA

- Animal Services currently has a storage shed next to dog quarantine that could be converted into a TNR holding area. Items needed are
 - Electricity to the building, including heat/air estimated cost \$4,400.00
 - Water to the building estimated cost \$1800.00
 - Finishing building on the inside so that it can be disinfected estimated cost of work \$7,884.65 (as of Feb 8, 2022).
 - Cat cages estimated cost \$3,912 – \$7,000 per cage depending on size and type
 - Due to cost increases of materials etc. these may go up prior to job completion

EQUIPMENT

- Animal Services currently has approximately 8-9 traps.
- Traps are loaned out to the public for 7 working days to assist in capturing nuisance animals such as cats, wild animals, etc.
- Citizens are responsible for the traps while they are in their possession. If a trap is lost, stolen or damaged the replacement cost is \$75 per ordinance.
- Actual cost for cat traps is \$104.99 for feral cat traps.
- We currently use animal control vehicles to transport animals to the vet. Animal Services has 3 ACO trucks. When transporting animals this takes 1 vehicle out of service for at least 2 hrs a trip traffic depending. 2 trips @2hrs = 4hrs a day. This also means 1 staff member will be taken out of service twice a day for the same amount of time.
- Feral Cat boxes are needed to safely move the cats for cleaning and transporting throughout the shelter. Animal Services currently has 7 boxes.
- The cost for feral boxes is \$89.95

STAFFING

- Animal Services currently has the following staff.
- 1 Animal Services Manager/ ACO, 1 Adoption/Rescue Coordinator, 2 Full Time ACO's, 1 Full time Shelter Technician, 2 Part time Shelter Technicians
- Doing the TNR program will require more staff as the current number of staff is overworked with the current job duties. Reminder the city keeps growing and we have only added 1 parttime Shelter Technician.
- With the amount of calls we receive daily for stray cat issues we would possibly need at least 1 more fulltime shelter technician, 1 administrative position and possibly 1 parttime technician as we are adding another building with animals to care for and clean.

SUMMARY: What Does Work



- **Trap-Neuter-Return Stabilizes Feral Cat Colonies**
- **Colonies that are involved in TNR diminish in size over time.**
- During an 11-year study of TNR at the University of Florida, the number of cats on campus declined by 66%, with no new kittens being born after the first four years of operation.
- **Trap-Neuter-Return quickly stabilizes feral cat populations by instantly ending reproduction and by removing socialized cats from the colony.**
- A TNR program at Texas A&M University neutered 123 cats in its first year, and found no new litters of kittens the following year.

QUESTIONS

- If you have any questions contact Animal Services at 817-230-0460, or jwheeland@saginawtx.org