



## COUNCIL WORK SESSION SUMMARY ROUTING SLIP

**Meeting Date** September 28, 2015

**TITLE:** FERAL CAT ADVOCATES UPDATE.

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|---|--|---|
| <b>Are there attachments to the Council Work Session Summary?</b>   | <b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| <b>Will there be a Video Presentation for this item?</b>  | <b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/>            | <b>No</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Will there be a PowerPoint Presentation for this item?</b>   | <b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| <b>If "yes", will a copy of the PowerPoint Presentation be included on the Council Work Session Agenda?</b> | <b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>            |

DEPARTMENT / ORGANIZATION	SIGNATURE	PHONE NO.	DATE
Drafter/Staff Contact	Frank Bryce / Janice Jones		09/22/15
Department Director			
Other			
Assistant City Manager/CAO (if applicable)			
Assistant City Manager/COO (if applicable)			
City Manager			9/22/15



# City of Las Cruces®

PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

## Council Work Session Summary

Meeting Date September 28, 2015

**TITLE:** FERAL CAT ADVOCATES UPDATE

**PURPOSE(S) OF DISCUSSION:**

- Inform/Update
- Direction/Guidance
- Legislative Development/Policy

**BACKGROUND / KEY ISSUES / CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:**

The Coalition for Pets and People (CFPP), the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico (HSSNM) and Alley Cat Allies (ACA) of Bethesda, Maryland, will present an overview of the current Community Cat Colony Management program being implemented in the city of Las Cruces. This will consist of a reiteration and current status of the local community cat colony program being implemented through the auspices of CFPP and HSSNM in cooperation with the Las Cruces Animal Control Section. Rebekah DeHaven of Alley Cat Allies will present a comparison of the City of Las Cruces' Community Cat Colony Program and general community cat programs and various efforts across the nation.

The presentation should contain the good processes, protocols and procedures of the Las Cruces program and a compilation of concerns, suggested improvements, and cooperative directions derived from the Alley Cat representative's meetings with animal welfare organizations and animal control departments prior to the scheduled work session. The Alley Cat Allies representative will also be hosting a general public open meeting to inform the interested public about community cat colony management prior to the city council work session, which will help assess public interest, support and awareness of the program.

**SUPPORT INFORMATION:**

- Attachment "A", Trap-Neuter-Return Ordinances and Policies in the United States
- Attachment "B", Transforming Shelters to Save More Cates: A Blueprint for Change
- Attachment "C", Why Trap-Neuter-Return Feral Cats? The Case for TNR
- Attachment "D", Key Scientifics Studies on Trap-Neuter-Return
- Attachment "E", Trap-Neuter-Return Effectively Stabilizes and Reduces Feral Cat Populations
- Attachment "F", Helping the Community and Animal Shelters through Trap-Neuter-Return

# Trap-Neuter-Return Ordinances and Policies in the United States: The Future of Animal Control

Elizabeth Holtz, JD

2014  
**UPDATED**  
Edition





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# Trap-Neuter-Return Ordinances and Policies in the United States: The Future of Animal Control

Elizabeth Holtz, JD

A substantial number of cities and counties across the United States practice or promote Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) as a method of animal control for feral cats. Alley Cat Allies' survey of city and county ordinances and animal control practices revealed that more than 430 local governments incorporate TNR into their animal control policies and practices. This number does not include the thousands of feral cat groups and countless individual caregivers conducting TNR privately. Many cities, counties, police departments, and animal control agencies recognize that TNR is the most humane and effective approach for stray and feral cats. Trap-Neuter-Return is becoming the predominant method of feral cat management in the United States.

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Alley Cat Allies staff attorney Elizabeth Holtz, JD reviewed hundreds of municipal and county codes and animal control policy statements. This research was then reviewed by a third party. A local government was deemed to participate in TNR if it: (1) has a TNR ordinance; (2) has an animal control department that supports TNR; or (3) has an animal control department that condones TNR. Animal control was considered supportive of TNR if its website or other informational materials explicitly endorsed it. Animal control was considered to condone TNR if the municipal website acknowledged TNR as a valid method of animal control but also offered "catch and kill" services.

Local governments were assessed only on the basis of their ordinances and animal control websites and materials. This analysis does not include local governments that support TNR, but they do not have an ordinance or materials documenting that fact. This methodology therefore excludes some jurisdictions we know support TNR. For instance, the county animal control in Arlington and Alexandria counties in Virginia have active TNR programs. But because they are not listed on the county website—and only on the shelter website—they, and other jurisdictions like them, are not included in this analysis.



Alley Cat Allies President Becky Robinson with Ron Cash, celebrating 10 years of success of the Boardwalk Cats Project in Atlantic City.

## The Public Health Perspective

**Ron Cash** is the Business Administrator of Atlantic City, who oversees the Department of Health and Human Services. Beginning in 1991 as a Licensed Health Officer, Cash has worked on many issues affecting public health from HIV to environmental health.<sup>4</sup> Cash has collaborated with Alley Cat Allies for over a decade to manage the feral cat colonies living under the Atlantic City Boardwalk. He says, “**TNR is good public health policy.**” Before the boardwalk colonies were managed, he received many calls from the public about the cats. But today he says, “The [cat] population that’s here is much healthier. They’re coexisting with people very well now. Most people don’t even know the cats are there.”<sup>5</sup> Trap-Neuter-Return is not only the humane solution but it also makes for good public policy.

## HISTORY OF TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN

Trap-Neuter-Return is successfully practiced in thousands of communities and in every landscape and setting. With TNR, cats are humanely trapped and taken to a veterinarian to be neutered, vaccinated, and eartipped. After recovery, the cats are returned to their home—their colony—outdoors. Kittens and cats who are friendly and socialized to people may be adopted into homes.

Trap-Neuter-Return can be traced to its beginnings in England during the 1950s.<sup>1</sup> It then came to the United States and took hold in the 1990s. As awareness of feral cats grew, animal protection organizations began holding workshops and conferences to address the feral cat population’s special needs.

Supported by science, TNR stops the breeding cycle of feral cats and therefore improves their lives. Feral cats, just like pet cats, are members of the domestic cat species, but they are not adoptable. The term “feral” means that the cats are not socialized to people and generally avoid contact with humans. Feral cats have been living in close proximity to people for over 10,000 years, and they have lived outside in the United States for centuries.<sup>2</sup> Feral cat caregivers care for outdoor cats but are not owners of these cats. Caregivers neither create nor maintain the stray and feral cat population. Rather, they are Good Samaritans stepping forward to help the community.

Historically, the ineffective and costly “catch and kill” approach has been used to control the feral cat population.<sup>3</sup> But attempts to permanently clear an area of cats are futile because of the scientifically documented phenomenon known as the “vacuum effect.” In basic terms, whenever cats are removed, new cats move in to take advantage of the now-available resources (like food and shelter), or the surviving cats left behind breed to capacity. Today, there is robust support for TNR both at the grassroots level and within traditional political structures.

## BROAD SUPPORT FOR TNR

At least 285 local governments have enacted ordinances and policies supporting TNR. One hundred forty cities and counties support or condone TNR as a valid method of animal control. Out of these, 103 endorse TNR as the *only* effective way to address feral cat populations. The three states with the highest number of TNR ordinances are: New Jersey (63), Texas (38), and California (34). Major municipalities and counties that support TNR include: San Francisco; Washington; New York; Sacramento County, California; San Jose, California; Palm Beach County, Florida; Clark County, Nevada; Philadelphia; Pittsburgh; Las Vegas; Broward County, Florida; Cook County, Illinois; Oklahoma City; Dallas; Omaha, Nebraska; St. Paul, Minnesota; Milwaukee; Salt Lake City; Fairfax County, Virginia; Maricopa County, Arizona; and Suffolk County, New York.

## TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN COMMUNITIES ARE DIVERSE

Trap-Neuter-Return is endorsed by local governments ranging from conservative **Colorado Springs, Colorado** to the liberal bastion of **Berkeley, California**. Because TNR decreases the size of colonies, decreases animal control calls from citizens, improves public health, and is humane and economical, it is an appealing method of care for feral cats to many different interest groups and organizations, not all of them related to animal protection. This has resulted in an extraordinary diversity of communities with TNR that vary in population, region of the country, and political orientation.

For example, **Cook County, Illinois**—a major metropolitan area that includes the 2.7 million residents of Chicago—has a TNR ordinance. At the other end of the spectrum, **Elko New Market, Minnesota**—home to less than 1,500 residents—also has a TNR ordinance. Other small rural towns like **Espanola, New Mexico** and **Hermann, Missouri** employ TNR along with urban landscapes like **New York City**.

Support for TNR runs the gamut from a simple animal control department declaration to a complex ordinance enacted by a local government. For example, **Oakland, California** Animal Services states:

“Oakland Animal Services supports trap, neuter, return as a means of controlling the feral cat population... Trap-and-Remove doesn’t work. ‘Trap-and-Remove’ is a euphemism for trapping and euthanizing cats. It may seem like a logical solution, but the fact is that it is not effective... Catch and euthanize is an endless, costly cycle.”<sup>6</sup>

The **Rancho Cucamonga, California** Animal Care & Services echoes this sentiment, stating on the city’s website:

“Sadly, many communities still opt to control populations using outdated methods, including lethal elimination or relocation. Not only are some of these methods horribly cruel, they are ineffective.”<sup>7</sup>

The **Brunswick, Georgia** police department notes in a brochure, “The best way to handle a feral cat problem is with a Trap, Spay/Neuter, Release and Manage Program.”<sup>8</sup>

Some animal control departments work closely with local feral cat organizations to provide TNR services to the community. For example, in **Somerville, Massachusetts** the animal control agency urges residents concerned about feral cat colonies in their neighborhoods to call animal control, and either an officer or a volunteer with Charles River Alleycats will respond to the call and trap, sterilize, and return the cats.<sup>9</sup>

Other animal control departments merely opt not to impound cats that are at-large, and instead refer concerned citizens to private organizations. **Carbondale, Colorado** uses this approach. Carbondale does not impound cats, but instead has a feral cat program managed by a resident.<sup>10</sup> The government’s website states: “This has been a very successful program. We have seen a significant drop in feral cats in Carbondale.”



JASON PUTSCHI

## TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN ORDINANCES: LESS CAN SOMETIMES BE MORE

While this paper focuses on broad, documented support for TNR at the municipal level, this isn't the only—or best—way to implement a TNR program. It is not always necessary or even advantageous to pursue an ordinance if the local codes present no obstacle for the neutering and returning of unowned feral cats.

This approach may seem counterintuitive because animal advocates usually regard laws that protect animals as positive. However, even well-intentioned laws can end up causing more harm than good if they create regulations and restrictions—and subsequently, penalties and liabilities—where there were none. For example, detailed and unnecessary regulations regarding the care of feral cats could result in caregivers being fined if they fail to follow them exactly. Another example: Feral cats could be impounded and killed—even if they already have been neutered and vaccinated—if they are not part of what could be deemed “sanctioned” or “registered” colonies.

**Well-intentioned laws can end up causing more harm than good if they create regulations and restrictions.**

Often, brief ordinances that simply communicate the city's support are best. For example, the Washington, D.C. ordinance underscores the city's commitment to TNR instead of regulating the practice of TNR. It states that the animal control agency “shall promote: (1) the reduction of euthanasia of animals for which medical treatment or adoption is possible; and (2) the utilization of trap, spay or neuter, and return practices as a means of controlling the feral cat population.”<sup>11</sup>

Finally, it is important to note that an ordinance, or the lack thereof, may not provide a clear picture of actual TNR practices in a community. A municipality may have an admirable TNR ordinance, but without education and support from animal control services and community members, the cats are unlikely to benefit. Conversely, there may be a thriving TNR program but no TNR ordinance.

Trap-Neuter-Return is a regular and accepted practice in communities. An ordinance is one tool among many to show support. There are guidelines to follow to ensure any ordinance passed best protects cats and caregivers.

## SAMPLE ORDINANCE PROVISIONS

Ordinances should not be vague or use words inappropriately. Clarifying the meaning of local ordinances and writing them for a lay audience ensures there is no room for misinterpretation.

Below are key components that should be included to best support feral cats in a TNR ordinance. Note that these components include important protections for impounded feral cats, such as mandating the return of cats to their colony, as well as protections for caregivers of the cats.

### Definitions:

- A. **“Eartip”** A mark identifying a feral cat as being in a TNR program, specifically, the removal of approximately three-eighths of an inch off the tip of the cat's left ear in a straight line, while the cat is anesthetized.
- B. **“Feral cat”** A cat that is unsocialized to people and typically avoids contact with humans.
- C. **“Feral cat caregiver”** Any person, who in accordance with a good faith effort to trap, neuter, vaccinate, and return the feral cat, provides volunteer care to a feral cat.
- D. **“Feral cat colony”** A group of feral cats that congregate, more or less, together as a unit and share a common food source.
- E. **“Owner”** Does not include a person caring for a feral cat as a feral cat caregiver.
- F. **“Trap-Neuter-Return/TNR”** A nonlethal approach to feral cat population control where feral cats are humanely trapped, sterilized and vaccinated, eartipped, and then returned to the location where they were originally trapped.

### Additional Provisions:

- 1. Trap-Neuter-Return shall be permitted, and feral cat caregivers, organizations, and animal control, are allowed to carry out TNR.
- 2. An eartipped feral cat received by animal services or local shelters will be returned to the location where trapped unless veterinary care is required. An eartipped cat trapped by animal services will be released on-site unless veterinary care is required.
- 3. Feral cat caregivers are empowered to reclaim impounded feral cats without proof of ownership.
- 4. A feral cat caregiver who returns a feral cat in conjunction with TNR is not deemed to have abandoned the feral cat.



JASON PUTSCHÉ

## REMOVING EXISTING LEGAL BARRIERS TO TNR

Another powerful way to promote and support TNR in some communities is to remove the parts of an existing animal control ordinance that interfere with TNR or make it unlawful to carry out. For example, if there is an ordinance banning at-large cats, consider working to strike that provision or add an exemption for cats who are eartipped.

Additionally, protect feral cat caregivers by exempting caregivers from the definition of “owner.” In some locales, ownership of an animal brings with it a host of requirements like licensing and registration that are inappropriate for caregivers of feral cats. Accordingly, the **Kern County, California** code defines “owner” as “any person who owns, possesses, controls, keeps, cares for, harbors, or has custody of the animal for fifteen (15) or more consecutive days, except feral cat caretakers...”<sup>12</sup> This exemption for caretakers in Kern clarifies that caregiving is not the same as owning the cats.

Trap-Neuter-Return is the most effective and humane approach to feral cats (for a more thorough explanation please refer to “Why Trap-Neuter-Return Feral Cats?: The Case for TNR” available at [www.alleycat.org/CaseforTNR](http://www.alleycat.org/CaseforTNR)) but there is no one-size-fits-all recommendation for **how** cities and counties in the U.S. implement it. Prior to opening a dialogue about a TNR or feral cat ordinance with your city or county council, Alley Cat Allies strongly recommends contacting us first at [ordinances@alleycat.org](mailto:ordinances@alleycat.org).

## The Animal Control Perspective

**Jon Cicirelli** has worked in animal control since 1994, and he has been the Director of San Jose Animal Care and Services in California since 2003. Cicirelli explains: “We use TNR as a humane alternative to the more traditional approach of trap and euthanize. Our focus is on reducing the number of cats being born in the community, which will reduce the number of cats in the shelter and the number of cat nuisances we must respond to.” As a result of San Jose’s program, **Cicirelli and his team have reduced cat and kitten shelter intake by 25% over the last three years.**<sup>13</sup>

**Norman Brice** is the animal control supervisor for the Peoria Police Department in Arizona. Like many other cities, the Peoria Police Department’s previous trap and kill policy resulted in large numbers of cats being killed with no reduction in the feral cat population. The city of Peoria implemented a TNR policy because, as Brice says, TNR is “**the best and most cost efficient way to control feral/free roaming cat populations.**” Brice explains, “TNR, when properly combined with vaccinations, stabilizes feral/free roaming cat populations while reducing the spread of feline disease. When combined with public education, feral/free roaming cat populations can be reduced over time.”<sup>14</sup>

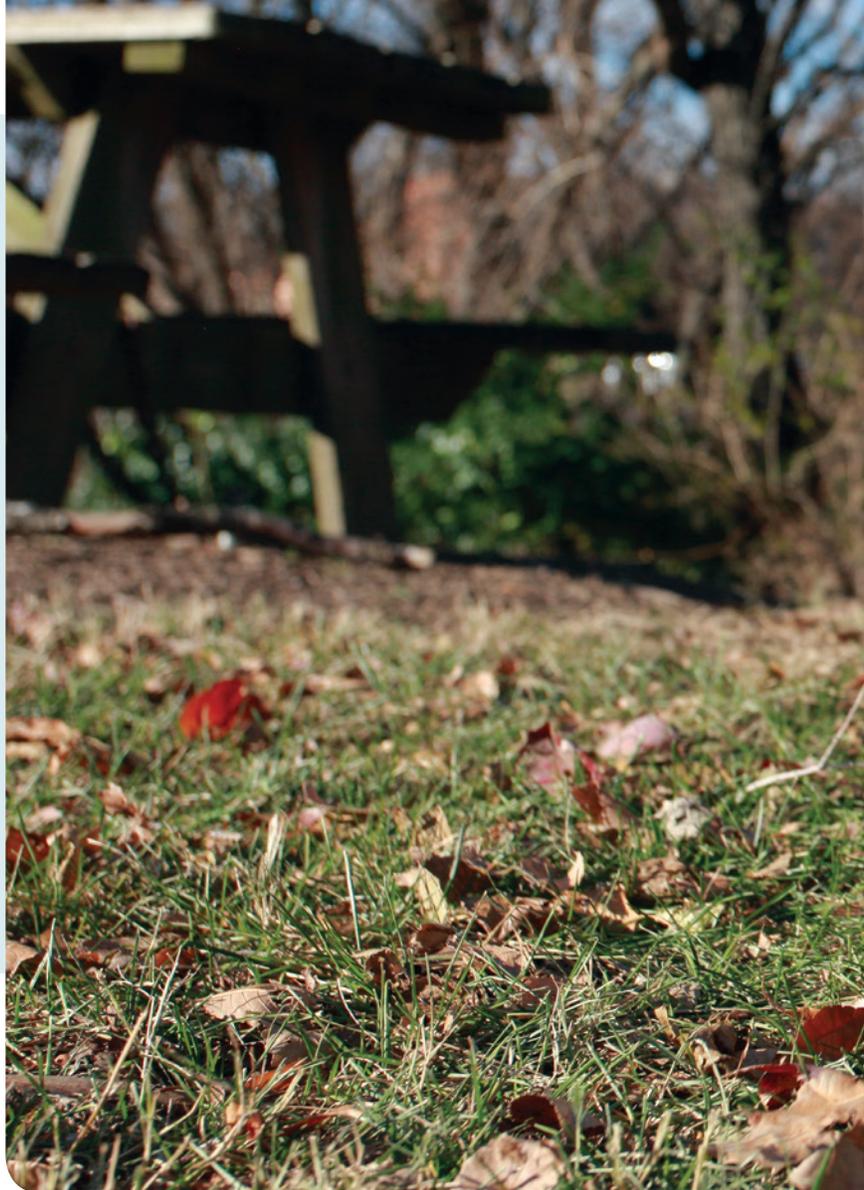
## Spotlight on Communities with Successful TNR Programs

From local government officials to animal control officers to your neighbors, TNR works best when all stakeholders are educated about feral cats. Successful implementation of TNR requires community support. Affordable, accessible spay/neuter services and community outreach are also important components of any feral cat program. Below are highlights of just a few of the communities with successful TNR programs.

### COMMUNITIES WITH NON-ORDINANCE TNR PROGRAMS

**Fairfax County, Virginia** endorsed a TNR program in the fall of 2008. Four years later, the county shelter had experienced a 58% drop in the number of feral kittens in its foster care program.<sup>15</sup> Former Shelter Director Dr. Karen Diviney noted: “Trap, neuter, and return works. It is a humane solution and we are thrilled that in such a short time the TNR program is showing significant results in Fairfax County.” Similarly, **Orange County, Florida** implemented a TNR program in conjunction with the nonprofit CARE Feline TNR, Inc.<sup>16</sup> After six years, the county euthanasia rate for cats has dropped by 18%.<sup>17</sup>

**Santa Clara County, California** launched a TNR program in 2011 with the help of county residents.<sup>18</sup> A year into the program, there has been a 65% reduction in cat euthanasia and a 15% reduction in cat intake.<sup>19</sup>



### COMMUNITIES WITH ORDINANCES

In 2011, **Sea Bright, New Jersey** passed a pilot TNR ordinance, and within a year, the number of kittens born to feral cats was reduced to virtually zero.<sup>20</sup> The **Clark County, Nevada** ordinance has also proved successful. In 2012, one year after implementing the ordinance, the local animal shelter impounded 1,600 fewer stray cats.<sup>21</sup> The **Washington, D.C.** ordinance is implemented through a program called the Cat Neighborhood Partnership Program (“CatNiPP”).<sup>22</sup> The CatNiPP program not only assists with the trapping and sterilizing of feral cats, but it also runs community meetings to educate citizens about feral cats and works with specific neighborhoods to create appropriate TNR programs.



JASON PUTSCHIÉ

## Fairfax County: A Model Community

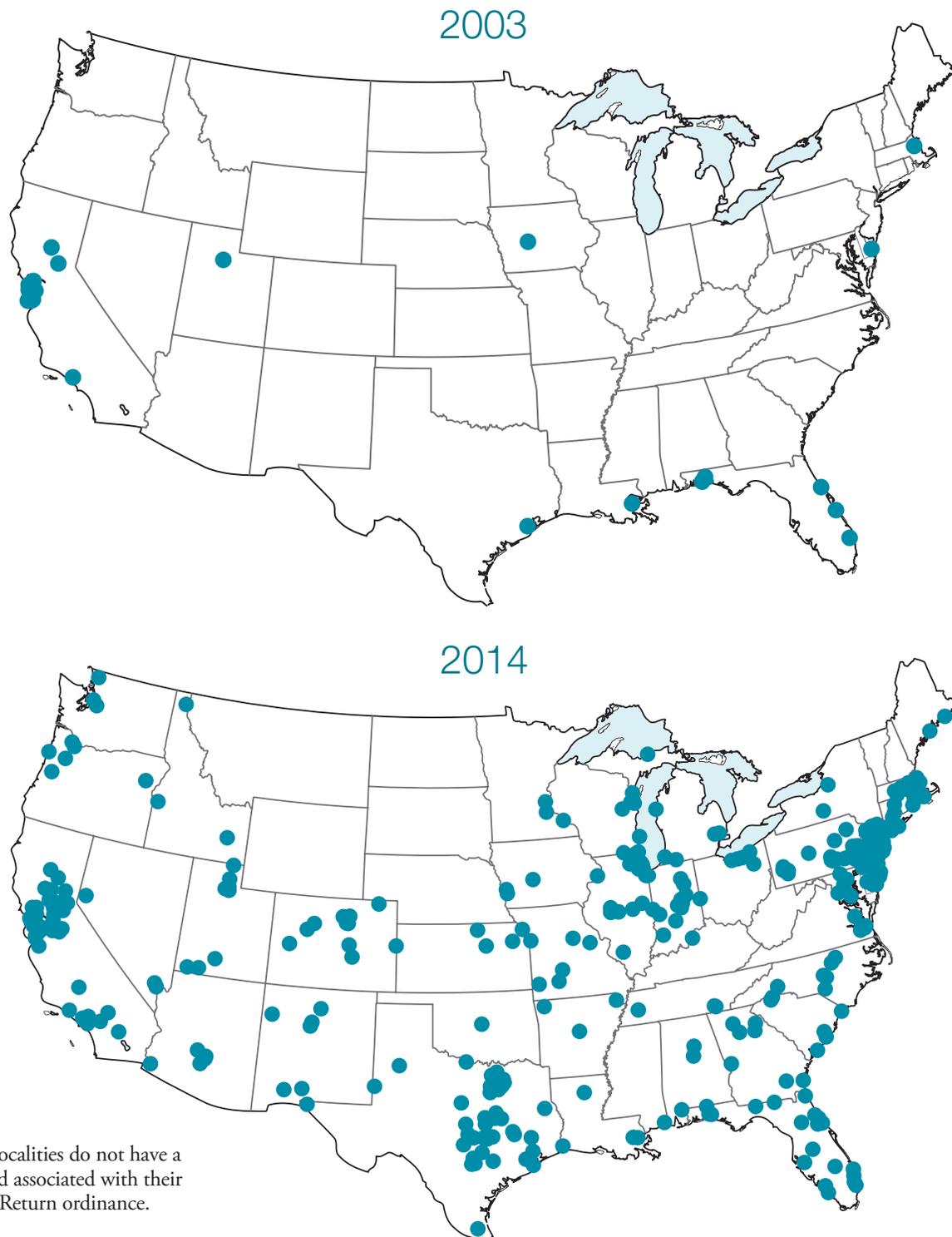
In 2007, tired of the endless influx of cats and kittens into its shelter, the Fairfax County Animal Shelter in Virginia decided to make a change. Karen Diviney, then director of the shelter, chose TNR because “it works and...is the humane solution to a problem that we human beings created in the first place.”<sup>23</sup> The shelter’s TNR program launched in October 2008. In the course of one year, the shelter saw a 58% decrease in the number of feral kittens in its foster care program. By January 2012, 1,800 feral cats had been through the program with the assistance of more than 330 Fairfax citizens.<sup>24</sup> The shelter has received numerous accolades, including the Community Impact Award from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments for its good work in the area of feral cats.<sup>25</sup> Michelle Hankins, who was the shelter’s Community Outreach Program Manager when the TNR program started, explains that the shelter is “working toward a day when no healthy, treatable, or rehabilitatable animal is euthanized for lack of space or resource. TNR has been an important part of that initiative.”<sup>26</sup> Diviney adds, “Someday we will look back on the days before TNR and wonder how we did anything else!”<sup>27</sup>



Founders of Fairfax County Animal Shelter’s TNR program, Karen Diviney and Michelle Hankins.

# TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN ORDINANCES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES: 2003 TO 2014

In 2003, 23 municipalities had ordinances supporting Trap-Neuter-Return.\* Alley Cat Allies' legal team reviewed hundreds of municipal and county codes and animal control policy statements, finding that by February 2014, more than 430 local governments embraced TNR, and that number increases monthly. Hundreds of communities support TNR because it works: It's the effective and humane approach for cats.



\*Note: Some localities do not have a date on record associated with their Trap-Neuter-Return ordinance.



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The research is clear—TNR is the future of animal control and sheltering. Trap-Neuter-Return is embraced by hundreds of local governments in the United States and is becoming the primary method of feral cat management.

## ENDNOTES

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The cats' leading advocate

## Shelter Practices

### Toolkit

# Transforming Shelters to Save More Cats: A Blueprint for Change

## 1. A Need for Transformation

Nationally, only about 30% of cats who enter shelters have positive outcomes. This is devastating for the cats and is not acceptable. It's also devastating for the people working every day to help them. And it's difficult to make changes when animals keep coming through the door. But change is underway in many communities. Many shelters have found that making certain changes to their day-to-day practices and policies can help decrease intake numbers and increase live releases.

**A great first step that can have an immediate impact is adopting a Feral Cat Protection Policy and no longer impounding feral cats.**

This policy is based on the fact that although feral cats, also called community cats, are the same species as pet cats, they live outdoors and are not socialized to people. It recognizes that they live full, healthy lives outdoors—and that almost no community cats who enter shelters have positive outcomes, because they are not adoptable.



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  - Stage Two: Make Additional Changes to Help Even More Cats (page 7)
  - Stage Three: Become a Model Shelter for Cats (page 9)

In this toolkit, we explain how a Feral Cat Protection Policy works and outline other easy-to-implement changes that help you increase your live release rates. For example, many shelters are shifting their focus to organized Trap-Neuter-Return programs for community cats, innovative adoption programs, public education, support for pet owners, resources for compassionate community members who want to help animals, and other efforts that create positive outcomes for animals.

### Making Change Happen

Making changes to how your shelter operates—or even considering making changes—can be overwhelming. It can require a drastic shift in thinking after years—or even decades—of operating in a completely different way. We've heard from many shelter employees who say they love cats but struggle with what to do with them when so many come through their doors every day.

Kate Hurley, DVM, Director of the Koret Shelter Medicine Program at UC Davis, says she has loved cats since early childhood. She began her career by working in animal control. The cats she brought into the shelter only had a one in four chance of

## Fact Sheet:

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### Lives Saved in Albuquerque

The Albuquerque Animal Welfare Department implemented a large-scale Trap-Neuter-Return program in early 2012. The city started covering the cost of spay and neuter surgeries for community cats brought to clinics. The city's program includes a TNR trap loan program, resources and advice for community cat caregivers, mapping of hundreds of community cat colonies, and a partnership with local activists to scrutinize cat intake records to identify any cats who might have come from a known colony. This community-oriented program works wonders for cats. Within the first year of conducting TNR, 59% fewer cats were killed in the shelter than in the previous 12 months.

“At the time, the city was killing several thousand street cats each year but there was no evidence it was a successful method of controlling the street-cat population,” said department employee Jim Ludwick in an article in PETroglyphs. “It was adding to crowding in our catteries, at a time when crowding was a major contributing factor in the suffering and death of domestic, adoptable housecats at the shelters.”

Best Friends Animal Society helped form and support this unique partnership in Albuquerque to make TNR possible. PetSmart Charities awarded Best Friends Animal Society a \$700,000 grant to support the initiative.

a positive outcome. “I believed in my bones that that was the best way to serve that cat and my community,” says Hurley. “So I did that work, as hard as it was.”

Hurley set out to learn more about the shelter system and found that there was a much better way to serve the animals. “Starting a couple of years ago, rereading old research, seeing what was happening in different parts of the country, I came to a kind of troubling conclusion,” says Hurley. She determined that many of the assumptions that she and her shelter operated under were actually false, and that admitting healthy community cats to shelters was not serving the shelter's goals.

Many shelters are coming to similar conclusions and working to change the way they operate. There's a network of shelter staff who have gone down this path before and are willing to help. The new approach won't be perfect—there will be bumps and hurdles. But the goal is to continue adjusting and improving as you advance your shelter's policies and programs.

Alley Cat Allies is available to assist you and to answer any questions you may have as you consider adopting new policies and programs.



## 2. A New Approach for Cats

We have heard from many animal shelters that want a model that helps prevent overcrowding and the associated health and emotional issues for animals, and also helps the shelter save money. Many people assume that increasing adoptions is the only way to increase live outcome rates. But statistics show that live outcome rates can actually decrease despite increased cat adoptions.<sup>1</sup> This is likely because many of the cats entering the shelters are community cats.

Community cats are not socialized to humans and do not want to live in homes. They are unadoptable, but many shelters still take them in even though there is no possibility for a good outcome for them in the traditional shelter setting. This approach is inhumane and ineffective, as it fails to permanently reduce outdoor cat populations because of the vacuum effect. When cats are removed, the remaining cats breed to capacity, and other cats move in to take advantage of the available resources.

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**Adopting a Feral Cat Protection Policy is the best way to quickly lower your intake numbers—and it can actually help you increase your adoption rate.**

## Benefits of a Feral Cat Protection Policy

When shelters stop accepting community cats, they see almost immediate benefits—intake numbers decrease, save rates increase, and community support increases. This approach frees up critical staff time and saves money, allowing shelters to focus more on increasing adoption rates, improving shelter conditions, and implementing Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) in the community.

This approach can also dramatically improve staff morale. The Humane League of Lancaster County in Pennsylvania had a high volume of community cat intakes and ended up spending a significant amount of its time and resources killing community cats. This was demoralizing for the shelter staff, and CEO Joan Brown realized that it was not fulfilling the shelter's mission of animal protection.

"I finally went to the board and said, 'Where in our mission statement does it say euthanize [healthy animals]?'” says Brown.

In 2008, The Humane League made the decision to change as an organization. It would no longer accept feral cats. Instead, it now embraces TNR as the logical and humane approach that supports its mission. "Not only has it made a difference in the shelter environment, but it has allowed us to be far more positive, happy and hopeful in our work," says Brown.

In the rest of this toolkit, we will outline how to adopt a Feral Cat Protection Policy, as well as the subsequent steps your shelter can consider taking to increase save rates for cats.

## New Approach to Adoptable Cats

Many shelters are changing their approach to socialized cats as well. To decrease the number of cats with negative outcomes in your shelter, you may consider only impounding the number of healthy cats that you can adopt out. It may seem counterintuitive, but there are alternatives to shelters. Instead of accepting every healthy cat who comes through your door, you can empower citizens to resolve issues that may make them want to relinquish the cat, and share resources to help them keep the cat until there is space at the shelter, find the cat's owner, find a new home for the cat, or look for a rescue organization that may be able to help. In many cases, it is actually better for cats to stay where they are instead of coming to a shelter. According to Barbara Carr, Director of Erie SPCA in Pennsylvania, cats who were waitlisted when the shelter was full had far more live outcomes than cats admitted to the shelter. Of those not taken in, 45% were rehomed 14% were kept by their caregivers, and about 6% were taken to a rescue group.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, when it comes to cats who are lost, statistics show that lost cats are more than 13 times more likely to be reunited with their owners through non-shelter means than through a shelter. More than 60% of cats who are lost return home on their own.<sup>3</sup>



## A Tremendous Shift

Chico Animal Services in Chico, California, has made a huge change in its approach to cats. It stopped accepting all healthy cats—whether they are unsocialized or socialized—on February 1, 2013. "Obviously, bringing them here is not in their best interest," said Tracy Mohr, the manager of Chico Animal Services, in a *Chico Enterprise-Record* story. "If they are more likely to go home or more likely to get adopted out there, we don't have any business bringing them to the shelter."

The shelter now encourages community members to conduct TNR and helps residents locate traps. They refer any owner-surrendered cats to a private shelter where they are more likely to be adopted.

"There has been a tremendous shift among the welfare community on how to handle cats...What works great for dogs does not work for cats," Mohr says. "Ending the intake of healthy [community] cats will significantly free up resources and energy and allow the shelter to focus on cats that really need the help."

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## 3. Three Stages of Transforming Your Shelter

There are many policies and programs your shelter can consider implementing to save more cats' lives. But you don't have to do it all at once. We've broken up our recommendations for feline-friendly shelter practices into three stages.

These three stages provide an overview of some of the fundamental steps shelters can take to bring about change for cats in their community, but this is not meant to be a comprehensive, one-size-fits-all toolkit that will work for all shelters. Alley Cat Allies appreciates that all shelters have different capacities, and we are sharing examples of what has worked well for some shelters.

In the first stage, you can adopt relatively easy-to-implement, low-cost practices that can make a significant impact on your shelter's save rates. After you've made some or all of those changes, you can move on to stage two where you'll increase your shelter's lifesaving capacity by making additional changes that are somewhat more resource-intensive. In stage three, we've provided additional programs and practices that are ideal but that require more staff time, money, and commitment than the previous stages. You may find that the order of these steps won't work in your shelter and that you can instead adopt a few practices from each stage right away. That's fine, of course! Even if you can only adopt one of these practices right now, that one practice might end up saving hundreds—or thousands—of cats' lives.

### Stage One: Take Simple Steps to Save More Cats

#### 1. Adopt a Feral Cat Protection Policy

The best thing you can do right now to save cats' lives is to adopt a Feral Cat Protection Policy. A Feral Cat Protection Policy explains that your shelter will no longer impound unsocialized community cats from the public.

A Feral Cat Protection Policy can be as simple as:

As of [Date], [Name of shelter] no longer impounds healthy feral cats brought to the shelter and no longer traps healthy feral cats for impoundment. Feral cats are not socialized to people and are therefore not adoptable. Instead of impoundment, [Name of shelter] now promotes Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) for feral cats. Through TNR, feral cats are humanely trapped, vaccinated and spayed/neutered by a veterinarian, eartipped for identification, and returned to their outdoor home.

Once you've written and decided on a Feral Cat Protection Policy, you'll want to announce this new approach to your community so that residents understand how it works and why your shelter has this new policy. Alley Cat Allies recommends posting your policy on your shelter's website, on a bulletin board in the shelter, and on other communications materials. You can also send out a press release announcing this policy change.

Instead of impounding community cats, you can re-route them to TNR programs where they are neutered, vaccinated, eartipped for identification, and returned to their outdoor home. Although



it may not be obvious, community cats are actually not homeless. Community cats are domestic animals, but just like the squirrels, chipmunks, and sparrows we see every day, their home is outdoors. TNR is humane, and it effectively stabilizes outdoor cat colonies. We will explain TNR and how to implement it in Stage Two.

#### 2. Stop Trapping Community Cats for Impoundment

Make sure that your staff knows to never trap community cats. If your shelter is associated with your city's animal control, be sure that all animal control officers are aware that they should no longer trap community cats, unless they are trapping them as part of a humane Trap-Neuter-Return program. Explain your new Feral Cat Protection Policy and why it is the best approach to feral cats.

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## 3. Stop Loaning Traps for Trap and Removal

As part of your new Feral Cat Protection Policy, end the practice of loaning out traps for trap and removal of community cats. If you loan traps out to community members, ensure that they are using the traps as part of a humane Trap-Neuter-Return program, and explain why your shelter no longer accepts community cats.

## 4. Recognize Eartipping of Community Cats

An eartip means the cat has been spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and is part of a community cat colony. Eartipping is an effective and universally accepted method to identify a spayed or neutered and vaccinated feral cat. It is the removal of the distal one-quarter of a cat's left ear, which is approximately 3/8 inch, or 1 cm, in an adult and proportionally smaller in a kitten.

Make sure your staff knows to never trap eartipped cats. If they are mistakenly picked up, return them immediately to their original location.

Learn more about eartipping at [www.alleycat.org/Eartip](http://www.alleycat.org/Eartip).

## 5. Support Trap-Neuter-Return for Community Cats

Shelter protocol for community cats can focus on TNR. Those cats can be spayed/neutered, vaccinated, eartipped for identification, and then returned to their outdoor home. Maintaining excellent records, detailing the location the cats originally came from, will make it easier to return the cats—and track your program's success. If your facility cannot start a program right away, consider partnering with local community cat groups who can help with referrals in the interim and work on making small steps toward the larger goal.

Read more about why TNR is the best approach for community cats and how to implement it in your community at [www.alleycat.org/TNR](http://www.alleycat.org/TNR).

## 6. Make Connections

Reaching out to your community can help ensure that community members understand your shelter's new approach to community cats—and are willing to get involved to make sure it's successful.

- **Build partnerships** with other animal protection organizations in your area, including private rescues, breed-specific rescues, TNR groups, and other shelters. Also, reach out to the veterinary community to find clinics willing to

## Fewer Kittens, Lower Animal Control Costs



San Jose Animal Care and Services in California ditched the trap and remove method in favor of TNR in 2010.

Director John Cicirelli says his department is focusing on “reducing the number of cats being born in the community, which will reduce the number

of cats in the shelter and the number of [calls] we must respond to.”

Cicirelli's department spays and neuters all healthy feral cats who are brought to the shelter and then returns them to their neighborhoods. They educate the residents in these neighborhoods about feral cats and how they can get involved with efforts to help them.

As a result of the program, Cicirelli and his team have reduced cat and kitten shelter intake by 25% over the last three years.<sup>4</sup>

spay/neuter community cats (you may even be able to negotiate a lower rate for community cats). You can include a list of these partner animal organizations on your website and in your shelter, and work together with these groups with the goal of saving more animals' lives.

- **Provide resources for community members** who are working to protect animals. This can include educational resources, meeting space for TNR and rescue groups, a low-cost spay/neuter clinic, and a trap loan program for individuals and groups conducting TNR.
- **Launch a help line.** Have a dedicated phone number or email address, or both, for answering the public's questions about caring for outdoor cats and TNR, and any other questions they may have. Work with local groups to triage calls to meet the needs of the caller. Nevada Humane Society instituted an Animal Help Desk at the shelter to provide free advice and assistance to the public about everything from TNR for feral cats to alternatives to surrendering a pet.
- **Ask people questions** to better understand their issues so that you can provide solutions that are best for the person and for animals. For example, you may learn that they want to surrender their cat because of a behavioral issue that you can

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## Feral Freedom in Jacksonville, Florida

Jacksonville is home to the very successful Feral Freedom program, a program of First Coast No More Homeless Pets. Feral Freedom is a public-private partnership promoting TNR that started in 2008.

When community cats are brought into Jacksonville's shelter, they are sterilized and returned to their outdoor homes. The program is funded entirely by private donations and animal advocacy organizations. Close to 20,000 community cats have been sterilized, vaccinated, and eartipped through the Feral Freedom program since 2008.

Data confirms the success of this partnership. Jacksonville Animal Control and Protective Services estimates that Feral Freedom has saved the city well over one million dollars in just over four years. In the program's first year, negative outcomes for adult cats decreased nearly 60%.<sup>5</sup>

Since the shelter stopped taking in community cats, adoption rates of socialized cats has increased dramatically, according to Scott Trebatoski, Chief of Animal Control and Protective Services in Jacksonville. Since 2007, the number of adoptable cats who are either adopted or transferred to a rescue organization has increased 322%. That's right—322%!

"This is one of the most positive and unexpected benefits of TNR," says Trebatoski.



easily help them with or that all they need is humane deterrents or repellents to keep community cats from entering their garden.

- **When people call about community cats, connect them** with your own or community resources that can help them help the cats, and make sure they are familiar with TNR. You can let them know about Alley Cat Allies' Feral Friends Network, a network used to connect local groups and individuals practicing TNR with people in their area looking for help. Learn more at [www.alleycat.org/FeralFriends](http://www.alleycat.org/FeralFriends).

### 7. Educate, Educate, Educate

Educate the public—and your own staff—about outdoor cats.

- Educate the public about your programs and other local resources for stray and community cats such as low-cost or subsidized spay and neuter clinics and TNR programs. Provide information about community cats at the front desk of your shelter and at all adoption events—even dog events! Consider using our brochures, posters, and other educational tools on community cats and TNR. Go to [www.alleycat.org/Shop](http://www.alleycat.org/Shop).
- When you make the transition and stop accepting community cats, make sure community members understand why you are making this change and that it will actually help protect the cats and will help save the lives of other animals.
- Host a public information and TNR workshop to introduce the new approach and drum up volunteer support. You can get all you need to start your workshop here: [www.alleycat.org/Workshop](http://www.alleycat.org/Workshop).
- When needed, let community members know about humane deterrents to keep cats away from places they are not welcome. Learn more about how to deter cats from areas where they are not wanted at [www.alleycat.org/Deterrents](http://www.alleycat.org/Deterrents).
- Purchase brochures to distribute to callers, visitors in your facility, and in neighborhoods where officers are working at [www.alleycat.org/Shop](http://www.alleycat.org/Shop).
- Become an educational resource center for your community. Transform your website, bulletin boards, and events into educational opportunities.
- Train shelter employees to better understand the public's and the cats' needs, and provide tools and counseling to address common issues.

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## 8. Spay/Neuter All Animals Before They Leave Your Facility

**Spay/neuter all animals before they leave your facility** for adoption, are transferred to another facility or private rescue group, or for your shelter's foster homes if they're old enough. This reduces the number of kittens born each year and sends a message to the public that you are socially responsible and care about the lives of animals. Voucher and other post-adoption spay/neuter programs alone are not effective enough: they have a low rate of compliance and they require resources to maintain.

This includes spaying and neutering kittens before adoption or foster. Early-age spay/neuter (kittens are sterilized at eight weeks, or as soon as they weigh two pounds) before adoption is a safe and successful way to ensure that 100% of animals leaving your facility are sterilized. Learn more about early-age spay and neuter at [www.alleycat.org/EarlyAge](http://www.alleycat.org/EarlyAge).

Early-age spay/neuter and spay/neuter before adoption practices are a good investment: implementing these programs means you can stop spending resources on follow-up to sterilization compliance, paperwork, and caring for the “oops” litters from adopted cats.

## 9. Institute Programs that Reduce Owner Surrender

Provide community members with more options than bringing their companion animal to your facility. Some services you can offer include: website and in-shelter bulletin board posting services, maintaining a list of pet-friendly apartment buildings, providing tips and ideas about getting a companion animal adopted successfully, and invitations to join adoption events. To improve animal retention, consider implementing programs such as low-cost medical services and behavior training. You can also start a pet food bank for people who are not able to afford pet food.

## Stage Two: Make Additional Changes to Help Even More Cats

### 1. Keep Accurate and Detailed Records

When shelters track the number of animals entering the facility and how they leave (returned to owner, adopted, etc.), they have a clear picture of how they are improving, can assess the effectiveness of their programs over time, and can keep track of how their resources are being allocated. It is beneficial for records to include specific categories of cats (stray, feral, socialized, etc.) and to also document the animal's original location; who brought her to the shelter and why; and the animal's outcome, including adoption, transfer, or death. For any death, list the reason for death. It is also beneficial to track the number, type, and result of calls you receive from the public.

**Accurate and detailed records can help your shelter in a number of ways:**

- **They provide immediate information about where and how resources are being used** to help identify needs and evaluate the success or failure of programs. You can analyze the effectiveness of your life-saving programs and determine whether the amount of money spent on spay/neuter impacts the number of animals brought into the shelter.
- **They can help you identify high-impact areas and neighborhoods** for Trap-Neuter-Return and other efforts. You can see which zip codes, neighborhoods, and other areas the most cats—and phone calls—are coming in from.

- **They can help you make the case to potential donors, foundations, or partners** on why they should support your shelter's work. People want to know exactly how their money will be used, and will be more likely to donate if they can see that your shelter is making improvements over time.
- **They build public support.** Being transparent about your shelter's new programs to protect and improve more lives, and then sharing the change in your statistics as you implement those programs, ultimately improves relations with the community. People want to help where they know they are saving lives. Being open with them will build community-wide confidence. It is important to get buy-in from your constituents, and transparency is a good public relations move to promote your humane programs.

### 2. Implement a Shelter-Sponsored TNR Program

TNR is the only humane and effective method of care for community cats. Shelters that start TNR programs can see dramatic results in a relatively short time period. They tend to see significant reductions in kitten and cat intakes, and then increases in their save rates.

Richmond SPCA started a TNR program in 2004. Volunteers humanely trap community cats and bring them to Richmond SPCA's spay/neuter clinic where they are sterilized free of charge.

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“Feral cats are remarkably good at taking care of themselves,” says Richmond SPCA CEO Robin Starr, who implemented the shelter’s TNR program and many other lifesaving initiatives. “With time, patience and support of TNR programs, we can prevent the continued growth of these colonies and keep the cats healthy and well cared for by dedicated volunteers. Feral cats do us no harm, and they deserve to live out their lives peacefully in the only environment they’ve ever known.”

Learn how to implement an organizational TNR program at [www.alleycat.org/OrganizationalTNR](http://www.alleycat.org/OrganizationalTNR).

You and your staff can learn how to conduct TNR through Alley Cat Allies’ free webinars at [www.alleycat.org/Webinar](http://www.alleycat.org/Webinar).

Learn how to practice targeted TNR, which involves identifying which areas or neighborhoods have the most people calling about cats or bringing in cats, and then targeting TNR efforts in those areas at [www.alleycat.org/TargetedTrapping](http://www.alleycat.org/TargetedTrapping).

## More Transparency = More Adoptions

Manatee County Animal Service in Florida wanted to increase the number of animals adopted—and decrease the number of negative outcomes—in its shelter. The shelter started listing on its website the date when a particular animal may be killed, as well as charts detailing the number of animals impounded and whether they ended up being adopted, returned to owners, transferred, or killed. Manatee County is now seen as a state model for shelter transparency.

In April 2013, the Florida legislature passed a bill that requires all state animal pounds and shelters to release monthly reports about how many animals they take in and what happens to them. The bill was based on Manatee County’s practices and success.

“When they start doing it [referring to the Florida bill], they’ll see that their numbers of live release rate are going to increase, their save rates are going to increase because they’re going to have that awareness out in the public,” said Tammy Bentley, a Manatee County shelter employee, in a story on ABC affiliate WWSB.

### 3. Purchase Traps to Loan to the Public for TNR



Consider charging a refundable deposit to ensure that traps are returned. Learn how to use the traps and become familiar with trapping techniques. Include information about how to trap community cats ([www.alleycat.org/](http://www.alleycat.org/)

TNR) with each trap, and always make sure people borrowing traps sign an agreement stating that the traps will be used only for the purpose of TNR of outdoor cats. Show borrowers how to set the traps before they leave your facility. HOPE Animal Shelter in Tucson, Arizona, the Sacramento SPCA, and BARC in Houston are just a few of the many shelters that run trap loan programs. Review our guide to starting a trap depot at [www.alleycat.org/TrapDepot](http://www.alleycat.org/TrapDepot).

### 4. Strengthen and Expand Your Adoption Programs and Foster Network

Having creative and innovative adoption programs and a large and diverse foster network can make a huge difference in animals’ lives. Here are some approaches we’ve seen at shelters around the country that are committed to improving their save rates:

- Keep adoption hours during weekends and evening hours to improve shelter visitation rates. Increase off-site adoption events.
- Improve the access of animal rescue and breed-specific rescue groups to your shelter by building partnerships and creating outreach protocols. The City of Chicago’s Animal Care and Control partners with 230 rescue groups!
- Increase the number of homes available for fostering the animals that enter your shelter. Make sure your community knows you need foster homes by posting on social media, posting flyers in community centers and stores, and by sending out a press release. Call local veterinary offices and ask whether any staff members are interested in fostering. Host regular orientation sessions at your shelter or a local library for potential foster volunteers. Ask current foster volunteers to speak about their experiences at the event. Feature foster volunteers in newsletters and on social media to show appreciation and create a sense of community within the shelter volunteer network.

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## Stage Three: Become a Model Shelter for Cats

### 1. Provide Spay/Neuter to the Public

Open a spay/neuter clinic for low-cost or subsidized spay and neuter services. Offering these services to the public shows your commitment to the community and animals—and will ultimately reduce your shelter's intakes and increase your save rates.

Learn more about high-volume, high-quality, low-cost spay/neuter models and veterinarian training in these methods at [www.humanealliance.org](http://www.humanealliance.org).

Find out more about unique veterinary protocols for community cats at [www.alleycat.org/Veterinarian](http://www.alleycat.org/Veterinarian).

### 2. Conduct Community Outreach in Underserved Communities

Develop strategies and programs to bring critical information and services to areas where many people cannot afford or access veterinary care and other resources that support pet wellness. You might invite your volunteers to assist you with going door-to-door in certain areas and offering information on spay/neuter services and other low-cost veterinary services. If possible, hand out certificates for free spay/neuter surgeries and vaccinations. Even better, launch a mobile spay/neuter initiative and literally bring free veterinary services into low-income areas.

Increase your impact with targeted outreach. If you are tracking where animals brought into your shelter are coming from—and where you're receiving the most calls from—you can identify which neighborhoods and zip codes to spend the most time in.

### 3. Make the Case to Local Officials

**Work with local officials** to ensure that your community's laws and policies help save animals' lives—and voice your opposition to proposed or existing policies that make it harder for shelters and others to save animals' lives.

- **Review local laws and policies that may affect community cats.** If people conducting TNR in your community are not facing any legal issues or harassment, then you likely do not need to push for a law supporting TNR, and a law could actually complicate things and make it harder to implement widespread TNR in your community. However, if TNR groups are being harassed for their efforts to help community

## A Model City for Cats

In Chicago, a coalition of animal shelters and rescue groups works together toward the mutual goal of humanely stabilizing community cat populations. Since the program began in 2008, more than 17,500 community cats have been sterilized through Trap-Neuter-Return in Cook County, which includes Chicago, and the effort has been financed by private groups. The coalition collaborates to offer spay/neuter and other veterinary services, public education, trap lending, hands-on trapping help, transportation services, recovery space, food, and assistance with rehoming cats. The results of this proactive approach have been impressive. One of Chicago's TNR groups, Tree House Humane Society, started targeted TNR projects in 2011 in two zip codes. The number of community cats brought to animal control from those areas already has been reduced by 30-40%. The original population of the colonies has shrunk by 23% through adoptions, and the community has become much more involved in caring for the cats.

cats, that's when it's time to push for a simple, straightforward law supporting TNR. The number of local governments across the country with ordinances favoring TNR for outdoor cats has risen exponentially over the past decade, from just 24 in 2003 to 240 in 2013. That's a tenfold increase in just one decade! Nationally, more than 330 local governments have embraced TNR as their official approach to animal control for community cats. Explain the benefits of TNR and have a detailed proposal ready to outline how a TNR ordinance would help improve your community. Find suggestions for language and sample provisions for TNR ordinances in our Law & Policy Brief "Trap-Neuter-Return Ordinances and Policies in the United States" at [www.alleycat.org/Publications](http://www.alleycat.org/Publications).

- **Provide animal control officers and supervisors with supporting evidence** showing how this new approach to outdoor cats is working for other shelters at [www.alleycat.org/CaseforTNR](http://www.alleycat.org/CaseforTNR).
- **Remind officials that saving animals' lives generates positive media and community support.** Americans love cats and do not want to see them die in shelters. More than 80% of Americans believe that leaving a stray cat outside to live out his life is more humane than having the cat killed, according to a national survey conducted for Alley Cat Allies by Harris

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Interactive. As you know, people feel much more comfortable supporting a shelter that is doing all it can to save lives.

- **Make sure that animal control officers and officials understand that the concerns citizens have about cats will still be addressed.** Explain that the issues residents have will be remedied through TNR instead of through killing the cats. Emphasize that TNR ends mating behaviors such as yowling and fighting, in addition to ending the breeding cycle and stabilizing the population.
- **Voice your opposition to counter-productive animal control laws** that force more animals into shelters, create barriers to TNR and other humane approaches, and overtax shelters by monopolizing resources and staff time. Laws and ordinances that mandate spay and neuter or cat licensing do not work. They only penalize owners and caregivers and increase the number of animals killed. Bans on feeding stray and community cats and requirements for community cat colony care unjustly single out caregivers. Learn more about ordinances: [www.alleycat.org/Ordinances](http://www.alleycat.org/Ordinances).

### 4. Start a Neonatal Kitten Care Program



When unweaned kittens show up at animal control shelters, these babies who require around-the-clock care are almost always killed. But some shelters are starting life-saving programs to protect these extremely fragile

and vulnerable animals. Neonatal kitten care programs rely heavily on devoted volunteers and foster homes to care for the animals. Volunteers are trained in neonatal kitten care and generally given the supplies they need to bottle-feed and care for the kittens until they reach the appropriate age for adoption. Some programs are housed at the shelter itself, with visiting volunteer “nurses” who take shifts with the kittens. This approach avoids the daily grind of neonatal kitten care, which can drain shelter staff’s energy.

Austin Pets Alive! in Austin, Texas, developed an innovative neonatal program that is saving kittens’ lives. Austin Pets Alive! Executive Director Ellen Jefferson, DVM, and her staff visited the city shelter often to determine how to focus their lifesaving efforts most effectively. “One thing I was really struck by is that out of

10,000 animals that were being euthanized or killed, 1,200 of those were orphaned kittens,” she says.

Austin Pets Alive! started having their volunteers pick up kittens as soon as they were dropped off at the city shelter. They were then housed in a dedicated neonatal ward where caregivers signed up for two-to-four hour feeding shifts to ease the burden of 24-hour kitten care. In 2012, the program rescued almost 1,200 kittens. Whenever kittens arrive at your shelter, be sure to try to also get the mother, whether that means trapping her if she’s a community cat, or asking the person who brought the kittens in if they can also bring the mother in. Learn more about what to do in various scenarios in which you may be trying to trap a mother: [www.alleycat.org/MomandKittens](http://www.alleycat.org/MomandKittens).

San Antonio Pets Alive! and Best Friends Animal Society Los Angeles are two more examples of neonatal kitten care programs.

### 5. Start a Ringworm Program

Many cats lose their lives at shelters just because they have ringworm, which is similar to athlete’s foot. Ringworm is highly treatable, and does not have to be a death sentence for cats in shelters. Some shelters have opened ringworm wards where cats with ringworm are cared for and treated. They are moved into the general cat area once they are successfully treated and their infection clears up.

Austin Pets Alive! opened a ringworm ward in 2010 and has already saved more than 200 cats just through this simple program. Their innovative program allows cats to be adopted directly from the ringworm ward so that they can be treated at home with their new family instead of staying at the shelter longer for treatment. They also have a Facebook page for the ringworm ward so that people can get to know the cats.

Nevada Humane Society also has a ringworm program. When the shelter’s former director Bonney Brown began her work there in 2007, she immediately instituted many policy and program changes to increase the shelter’s lifesaving capacity. One change she made was to end the automatic killing of animals for ringworm and other treatable conditions. The shelter depends on foster homes to help care for cats and kittens with ringworm until they are symptom-free and ready for adoption. Since it can be challenging to find foster homes willing to care for animals with ringworm, they make sure to educate people about exactly what ringworm is, how to treat it, and what simple precautions to take when caring for an animal with ringworm.

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## Research

# Fact Sheet

## WHY TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN FERAL CATS? THE CASE FOR TNR

### What is Trap-Neuter-Return?

Trap-Neuter-Return is the humane and effective approach for stray and feral cats. Now in practice for decades in the US after being proven in Europe, scientific studies show that Trap-Neuter-Return improves the lives of feral cats, improves their relationships with the people who live near them, and decreases the size of colonies over time.

Trap-Neuter-Return is successfully practiced in hundreds of communities and in every landscape and setting. It is exactly what it sounds like: Cats are humanely trapped and taken to a veterinarian to be neutered and vaccinated. After recovery, the cats are returned to their home—their colony—outdoors. Kittens and cats who are friendly and socialized to people may be adopted into homes.

Grounded in science, TNR stops the breeding cycle of cats and therefore improves their lives while preventing reproduction. It is a fact that the removal and killing of



outdoor cats that animal control has been pursuing for decades is never ending and futile. Since feral cats are not adoptable, they are killed in pounds and shelters. With a successful program like Trap-Neuter-Return to turn to, it's hard to believe that animal control agencies continue to kill cats, even though that approach has shown zero results.

It is time to put an end to catch and kill. Trap-Neuter-Return provides a life-saving, effective solution for these beautiful, independent cats.

There are so many reasons to embrace and promote TNR!

Trap-Neuter-Return:

- Stabilizes feral cat colonies
- Improves cats' lives
- Answers the needs of the community
- Protect cats' lives
- Works—other methods just don't

### 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.<sup>1</sup>
- A study of the impact of TNR on feral cat colonies in Rome, Italy, also observed colony size decrease between 16% and 32% over a 10-year period.

**Trap-Neuter-Return quickly stabilizes feral cat populations by instantly ending reproduction and by removing socialized cats from the colony.**

- A TNR program at the University of Texas A&M neutered 123 cats in its first year, and found no new litters of kittens the following year.
- Over the course of the same study, 20% of the cats trapped were found to be socialized stray cats and adopted.<sup>2</sup>

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### Trap-Neuter-Return Improves Cats' Lives

Leaders of major humane programs all over America agree that cats live healthier, more peaceful lives after TNR. "It helps to stabilize the number of cats in the community," says Bonney Brown, executive director of the Nevada Humane Society in Reno, Nevada. "It keeps the cats healthy. They really have great lives out there doing their feral cat thing."

- **Trap-Neuter-Return relieves cats of the constant stresses of mating and pregnancy.**

"The obvious benefit of Trap-Neuter-Return to the cats is that the females don't go through cycles of producing more and more kittens. Their health is actually improved," says Rich Avanzino, longtime director of the San Francisco SPCA and current president of Maddie's Fund. Spaying and neutering also virtually eliminates the chance of cats developing mammary or testicular tumors.

- **Mating behaviors cease, like roaming, yowling, spraying, and fighting.**

In a 2002 study conducted by prominent researcher Julie Levy, DVM, caregivers reported that cats tended to roam less after neutering, which is beneficial for their safety and reduces conflict with neighbors.<sup>3</sup>

With decreased competition for mating, the cats are also less likely to suffer injuries. A study of a feral cat colony in London conducted by leading cat biologists and TNR pioneers Dr. Jenny Remfry and Peter Neville found that cats were more affectionate towards each other after neutering, spending more time in groups and fighting less.<sup>4</sup>

- **Cats' physical health improves.**

Studies have found that neutering improves feral cats' coat condition and helps them gain weight.<sup>5</sup> "...[R]esearch at the University of Florida shows that they gain weight and stray less after they've been neutered, so that's a benefit to their welfare, as well," says Dr. Levy.

- **Cats are vaccinated against rabies.**

"The process of Trap-Neuter-Return has an immense benefit for the cats that are involved in these programs,"

explains Dr. Levy. "They're vaccinated, so they're less susceptible to infectious diseases." Although feral cats are healthy, vaccinations given during TNR protect them even further and help put community members at ease.

- **Cats live long, healthy lives.**

At the conclusion of the 11-year study of the impact of TNR on feral cat colonies at the University of Florida, 83% of the cats in managed TNR colonies had been residing in those colonies for more than six years—indicating a lifespan comparable to the 7.1-year lifespan of pet cats.<sup>6</sup> Learn more about feral cat health at [www.alleycat.org/FeralCatHealth](http://www.alleycat.org/FeralCatHealth).

### Trap-Neuter-Return Answers the Needs of the Community

"I think there are several amazing benefits for communities that arise after they embrace Trap-Neuter-Return," says Dr. Levy. "One of the most substantial ones is a resolution of the conflict that...[can] surround cats in neighborhoods. Once residents understand that something is being done to control the cat population, they usually embrace having a Trap-Neuter-Return program there."

- **The population stabilizes—no new kittens!**

Once TNR is in place, the cats will no longer reproduce. The population will stabilize and eventually decline.

- **Cats become better neighbors.**

Studies confirm that once TNR stops reproduction, and therefore mating behaviors, the cats' relationship with residents improves. Colonies become quieter as behaviors like yowling or fighting stop, calls to authorities about the cats decrease significantly, and community morale improves.<sup>7,8</sup>

- **Trap-Neuter-Return creates opportunities for outreach, education, and cooperation.**

Trap-Neuter-Return does more than just produce immediate results and boost the cats' public image. As Alley Cat Allies has found in its 20 years of experience through such on-the-ground programs as DC Cat in

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Washington, DC, and the Meadows of Chantilly in Northern Virginia, this community program presents a great opportunity for educating and addressing any concerns neighbors may have. “Having an open dialogue with neighbors and providing an opportunity to listen to their concerns can make a huge difference to a successful TNR program,” said Becky Robinson, president of Alley Cat Allies.

“Usually, neighbors are relieved just to learn that something is being done to stabilize the cat population. Caregivers can also take further steps to address concerns, such as providing deterrents to keep cats out of neighbors’ yards or constructing discreet feeding stations and litter areas to gradually move cats out of areas they are not wanted.”<sup>9</sup>

The cats live in the neighborhood—they will be there whether they are cared for or not. Trap-Neuter-Return establishes a point of contact for concerns about the cats and for resolving any community concerns.

Download the Alley Cat Allies’ brochure “How to Live With Cats In Your Neighborhood” to help respond to concerns about cats. Visit [www.alleycat.org/Deterrents](http://www.alleycat.org/Deterrents).

### Trap-Neuter-Return Protects Cats’ Lives

The number one documented cause of death for cats in America is being killed in shelters. Over 70% of cats entering shelters are killed—a figure that rises to nearly 100% for feral cats, who cannot be adopted. For decades, animal control policy has wasted millions of dollars catching and killing outdoor cats, but populations of cats are still there, just as they always have been. Clearly, this cruel and costly system has failed.

- **Trap-Neuter-Return is an essential and valuable component of shelter reform to save cats’ lives.**

When used as a part of overall shelter reform with policies including no longer accepting cats at the shelter, across the board, communities with TNR programs report a decline in shelter intake. Alongside a decrease in cat-related calls to animal control, researchers in Orange County, Florida, also found that the number of cats killed by animal control decreased in the six years after TNR was initiated.<sup>10</sup>

### Who does Trap-Neuter-Return?

Trap-Neuter-Return has been practiced abroad for decades, and spread across the United States with the help of Alley Cat Allies in the 1990s. Since then, it has become the accepted approach for feral cats, supported by:

- Major cities including Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Austin, Jacksonville, Topeka, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Cook County, Illinois.
  - National organizations like the Humane Society of the United States, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), and the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA).
  - Colleges and Universities including Stanford, Texas A&M, North Carolina State, and the University of Florida.
  - Thriving destinations and businesses including Disneyland and Portland’s professional soccer stadium.
  - More than 260 registered nonprofit cat organizations nationwide.
  - Millions of Americans, from your friends and neighbors to some familiar famous faces.
- **Trap-Neuter-Return stops wasteful spending of taxpayer dollars.**

Catching and killing cats has been a futile effort used by animal control and shelters across the country for decades (see below). Continuing an approach that is clearly not working is not only a waste of taxpayer dollars, it also shows blatant disregard for efficiency and value—at a time when the economy is at the forefront of everybody’s mind.

Investing in spay/neuter and TNR is an investment in cats’ lives and cats’ health, and it demonstrates a socially-responsible (and compassionate) and efficient approach to serving the animals and the public.

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- **Americans want humane solutions—they want TNR.**

More than 80% of Americans believe it is more humane to leave a cat outside than to have her caught and killed, according to a 2007 study conducted by Harris Interactive for Alley Cat Allies. Unfortunately, many people don't realize that this is exactly what happens to feral cats—they are caught and killed. Trap-Neuter-Return reflects Americans' humane ethic that cats deserve to live out their lives in their outdoor homes.

Though Trap-Neuter-Return is practiced all around the country in hundreds of forward-thinking communities, catch and kill for feral cats is still the status quo in many cities. As the paradigm shifts to the lifesaving Trap-Neuter-Return approach, America's humane ethic is finally being reflected in animal control policies.

In 1993, San Francisco became one of the first American cities to embrace TNR. "Money, instead of being spent on killing, [i]s now being used to protect the animals, to basically support the colony caregivers and to provide the surgeries so that we [don't] see the wasted dollars, the waste of life, and the extra burden put on the cat-colony caregivers," says Avanzino. "It was a tragedy that needed to end, and Trap-Neuter-Return stopped it."

### Trap-Neuter-Return Works—Other Methods Just Don't

Attempts to remove cats from an area always fail because of a natural and scientifically-documented phenomenon known as the vacuum effect. In basic terms, whenever cats are removed, new cats move in, or the surviving cats left

behind, breed to capacity. Learn more at [www.alleycat.org/VacuumEffectScience](http://www.alleycat.org/VacuumEffectScience).

As a result of the vacuum effect, other approaches to feral cats are not only cruel and pointless, they are also completely ineffective at stabilizing the cat population. These methods include:

#### Catch and Kill

The traditional and continued approach of animal control, this futile method has been used for decades to no avail. As the Humane Society of the Ocochos in Oregon, puts it: "...[W]e know now, that more than 30 years of trapping and killing cats has done nothing to reduce the feral cat population."<sup>11</sup> A former president of the National Animal Control Association echoes this sentiment recognizing the ineffectiveness of catch and kill and the prevalence of the vacuum effect: "What we're saying is the old standard isn't good enough anymore. As we've seen before, there's no department that I'm aware of that has enough money in their budget to simply practice the old capture and euthanize policy; nature just keeps having more kittens."<sup>12</sup>

#### Adoption

Some cats who have lived outside their entire life befriend their caregivers and make a slow steady transition to living indoors. This is not representative of the millions of cats who are not going to make the transition to living with people in homes. And, it is a time-consuming project with a very low rate of success. To suggest that all feral cats can go into homes lacks the big picture of the true behavior of cats who thrive and live their lives with their colony members. It also ignores the very real evidence that spending time doing Trap-Neuter-Return and fostering truly social cats will help a much greater number of cats. Learn more at [www.alleycat.org/TNRnotTNA](http://www.alleycat.org/TNRnotTNA).

#### Relocation

While it sometimes seems like an attractive option, relocation is also ineffective for the same reasons: it puts the vacuum effect into motion. And, it endangers cats' lives and causes them undue stress and suffering. Instead of trying to uproot cats from their home, the education and community relations aspect of TNR addresses concerns within the community to reach a harmonious solution. Learn more at [www.alleycat.org/Relocation](http://www.alleycat.org/Relocation).

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## Cat Sanctuaries

While cat sanctuaries are usually well-meaning, they do nothing to stabilize the cat population in the community. There will simply never be enough sanctuaries to house every cat. What's more, feral cats who are used to living outdoors suffer from stress and disease in these facilities.

## Trap-Neuter-Return Is the Solution That Works for Everyone

Cats have lived outdoors for thousands of years—in fact, keeping indoor-only cats only became possible in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Outdoor cats are part of our natural landscape.

With Trap-Neuter-Return, you can stabilize the population humanely, improve the cats' lives, save taxpayer dollars, address neighbors' concerns, and help the entire community reach a solution that benefits everyone.

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<sup>1</sup> Levy, Julie K., David W. Gale, and Leslie A. Gale. "Evaluation of the Effect of a Long-Term Trap-Neuter-Return and Adoption Program on a Free-Roaming Cat Population." *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 222, no. 1 (2003): 42-46.

<sup>2</sup> Kathy L. Hughes and Margaret R. Slater: Implementation of a Feral Cat Management Program on a University Campus (*JAAWS* Vol. 5 No. 1, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Scott, Karen C., Julie K. Levy, and Shawn P. Gorman. "Body Condition of Feral Cats and the Effect of Neutering." *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5, no. 3 (2002): 203-213.

<sup>4</sup> Neville, P.F. and J. Remfry. "Effect of Neutering on Two Groups of Feral Cats." *The Veterinary Record* 114 (1984): 447-450.

<sup>5</sup> Scott, Karen C., Julie K. Levy, and Shawn P. Gorman. "Body Condition of Feral Cats and the Effect of Neutering." *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5, no. 3 (2002): 203-213.

<sup>6</sup> Levy, Julie K., David W. Gale, and Leslie A. Gale. "Evaluation of the Effect of a Long-Term Trap-Neuter-Return and Adoption Program on a Free-Roaming Cat Population." *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 222, no. 1 (2003): 42-46.

<sup>7</sup> Hughes, Kathy L., Margaret R. Slater, and Linda Haller. "The Effects of Implementing a Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Program in a Florida County Animal Control Service." *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5 (2002): 285-289.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Alley Cat Allies. (2009). *Community Relations: Protecting Cats with Outreach, Education, and Negotiation*. Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Humane Society of the Ochocos. *Feral Cat Problem*. 2011 <http://www.humanesocietyochocos.com/Feral.html> (accessed February 10, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> "Taking a Broader View of Cats in the Community", *Animal Sheltering*, September/October 2008, [http://www.animalsheltering.org/resource\\_library/magazine\\_articles/sep\\_oct\\_2008/broader\\_view\\_of\\_cats.pdf](http://www.animalsheltering.org/resource_library/magazine_articles/sep_oct_2008/broader_view_of_cats.pdf) (accessed February 10, 2011).



## Research

### Fact Sheet

# KEY SCIENTIFIC STUDIES ON TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN

Scientific studies show that Trap-Neuter-Return, also known as TNR, is the humane and effective approach for managing feral cats. Trap-Neuter-Return improves the lives of feral cats, improves their relationships with the people who live near them, and decreases the size of colonies over time. These studies have been conducted in multiple countries, and have been published in a variety of peer-reviewed scientific journals.

#### Cats benefit from Trap-Neuter-Return for their entire lives.

Studies show that after neutering, cats become healthier and gain weight. Outdoor cats in managed colonies even live longer thanks to TNR. One study of a TNR program found that at the end of a 10-year period, 83% of the cats in the managed colonies had been residing in those colonies for more than six years—indicating a lifespan comparable to the 7.1-year lifespan of pet cats.

Neutered cats also roam less and do not fight over mates. Studies have found that after neutering, cats in managed colonies were less aggressive and more affectionate towards each other.

#### By eliminating mating behaviors, Trap-Neuter-Return makes cats better neighbors.

Neutered cats make less noise, for example, and fight less. One study found that calls to animal control about cats decreased after a TNR program was implemented—even though the human population increased.

#### Multiple long-term studies of Trap-Neuter-Return have shown that the size of managed colonies decreases over time.

One study found a 66% decrease in the populations of managed colonies over 11 years, while another study of a TNR program over a 10-year period documented colony size decreases of 16 to 32%.

#### Studies

**Finkler, Hilit, Erez Hatna, and Joseph Terkel.** “The impact of anthropogenic factors on the behavior, reproduction, management and welfare of urban, free-roaming cat populations.” *Anthrozoös* 24, no. 1 (2011):31-49.

The research in this article indicates that TNR and colony care improves cat’s lives by reducing their stress levels. While looking at the correlation between the level of care provided by cat caregivers and the economic status of the area in which the cats live, the authors observed that neutered male cats were less aggressive than intact males. By testing the levels of stress hormone in their hair, they confirmed the neutered cats’ lower stress levels. They also found that spayed female cats living in well-maintained colonies experienced less stress than those living in colonies that received less care.

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**Finkler, Hilit, Idit Gunther, and Joseph Terkel.** “Behavioral differences between urban feeding groups of neutered and sexually intact free-roaming cats following a trap-neuter-return procedure.” *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 238, no. 9 (2011):1141-1149.

Researchers compared data from four feral cat colonies: two that were cared for through Trap-Neuter-Return programs and two that were not and demonstrated that TNR reduces the behaviors associated with mating and can therefore address community concerns. They found that cats in the TNR colonies were less aggressive on the whole and that the neutered males were rarely aggressive towards each other at all, resulting in less yowling, fighting, and potential for injury than males in the intact colonies.

**Hughes, Kathy L. and Margaret R. Slater.** “Implementation of a Feral Cat Management Program on a University Campus.” *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5, no. 1 (2002): 15-28.

Hughes and Slater document the success of a new Trap, Test, Vaccinate, Alter (spay or neuter), Return, and Monitor (TTVARM, a.k.a. TNR) program on the campus of Texas A&M University, looking at the changes between the implementation year and the year that followed. In the first year, 123 cats were trapped, compared to 35 in the second. Over the course of the program, 32 cats and kittens were adopted. In the second year, only three kittens were found, and the researchers assume that these were lost or abandoned, as no litters or nursing mothers were seen in that year. The program illustrated how a well-managed TNR program can stabilize a population of cats.

[http://www.societyandanimalsforum.org/jaaws/full\\_articles/5.1/hughes.pdf](http://www.societyandanimalsforum.org/jaaws/full_articles/5.1/hughes.pdf)

**Hughes, Kathy L., Margaret R. Slater, and Linda Haller.** “The Effects of Implementing a Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Program in a Florida County Animal Control Service.” *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5 (2002): 285-289.

The authors analyzed data from a feral cat spay/neuter program that included a volunteer-based program to care for feral cat colonies in Orange County, Florida, against the population of the county for the six years before the program began and the first six years of the program. They found that

both the number of calls to animal control about cats and the number of cats killed by animal control decreased in the six years after these programs were initiated, even while the human population grew significantly. In addition, they reported that the morale of those involved improved, and the residents who participated in the program felt empowered to make a positive impact on the lives of feral cats in their neighborhoods.

[http://www.societyandanimalsforum.org/jaaws/full\\_articles/5.4/hughes.pdf](http://www.societyandanimalsforum.org/jaaws/full_articles/5.4/hughes.pdf)

**Levy, Julie K., David W. Gale, and Leslie A. Gale.** “Evaluation of the Effect of a Long-Term Trap-Neuter-Return and Adoption Program on a Free-Roaming Cat Population.” *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 222, no. 1 (2003): 42-46.

This study tracks a TNR program on a Florida college campus over the course of 11 years to determine the characteristics of cats involved and to document the effectiveness of the program at controlling the population of cats on the campus. Kittens and tame cats were adopted out, and new cats were trapped and neutered. At the end of the study, the population had decreased by 66%, and over 80% of the cats had been residents for more than six years—a duration comparable to the mean lifespan of 7.1 years for pet cats.

[http://www.avma.org/avmacollections/feral\\_cats/javma\\_222\\_1\\_42.pdf](http://www.avma.org/avmacollections/feral_cats/javma_222_1_42.pdf)



JEFF LEVARD

**Natoli, Eugenia, et. al.** “Management of Feral Domestic Cats in the Urban Environment of Rome (Italy).” *Preventative Veterinary Medicine* 77 (2006): 180-185.

This study documents the cat population over 10 years in a well-established Trap-Neuter-Return program in Rome, Italy, and determines that a long-term TNR program significantly reduces feral cat colony size. Colony size consistently decreased over the time period, ranging from a 16% decline in colonies neutered three years into the program to a 32%

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KEY SCIENTIFIC STUDIES ON TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN, page 3 of 3

decrease in colonies neutered six years into the program. Also, as the program became more visible, the number of registered feral cat colonies increased from 76 to 965. The authors caution that community education is crucial to preventing intact pet cats from joining the stray and feral cat population. [http://www.kiccc.org.au/pics/Study\\_FeralCatsRome2006.pdf](http://www.kiccc.org.au/pics/Study_FeralCatsRome2006.pdf)

**Neville, P.F. and J. Remfry.** “Effect of Neutering on Two Groups of Feral Cats.” *The Veterinary Record* 114 (1984): 447-450.

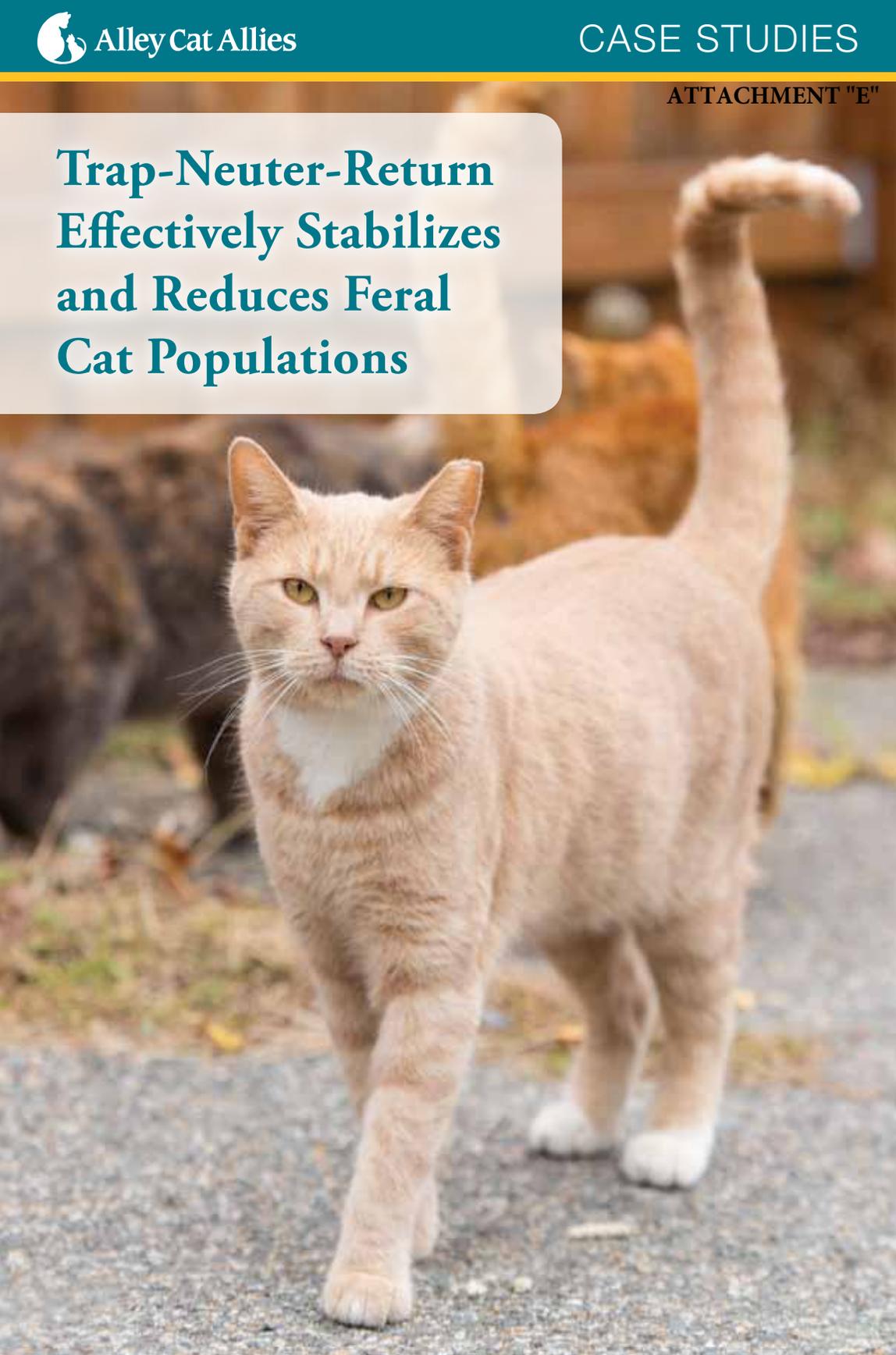
Researchers studied two colonies in Regent’s Park, London, to determine whether neutering had any negative effects either on the social structure of the colony or on the individual cats. No negative health effects were observed, and the colony’s social structure seemed to strengthen after the cats were neutered. Cats were seen to spend more time in groups, show fewer aggressive behaviors toward each other, and fight less. <http://veterinaryrecord.bvapublications.com/cgi/content/abstract/114/18/447>

**Scott, Karen C., Julie K. Levy, and Shawn P. Gorman.** “Body Condition of Feral Cats and the Effect of Neutering.” *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5, no. 3 (2002): 203-213.

This study examines the effects of neutering on feral cat health by measuring the body condition of feral cats upon trapping, then measuring it again for 14 cats who were trapped again one year later. The cats who were trapped initially were lean but not emaciated, and the cats trapped one year after neutering showed significant increases in weight and improvements in body condition. In addition, caregivers reported that the cats had a decreased tendency to roam after being neutered.

[http://www.societyandanimalsforum.org/jaaws/full\\_articles/5.3/scott.pdf](http://www.societyandanimalsforum.org/jaaws/full_articles/5.3/scott.pdf)

**Trap-Neuter-Return  
Effectively Stabilizes  
and Reduces Feral  
Cat Populations**





## Trap-Neuter-Return Effectively Stabilizes and Reduces Feral Cat Populations

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), which involves humanely trapping stray and feral cats and having them vaccinated, spayed/neutered, and “eartipped”\* before returning them to their outdoor home, is the only effective method of stabilizing outdoor cat colonies. As a result of TNR, the birth of new kittens in the colony slows down and eventually ends when all the cats are spayed/neutered. In addition, socialized cats and kittens are spayed/neutered and then often put up for adoption, causing an immediate reduction in the population size.

The following case studies demonstrate that TNR successfully stabilizes and reduces feral cat populations around the world—everywhere from South African university campuses to urban Chicago blocks.

\* The word “eartip” describes when a small portion of the tip of a feral cat’s left ear is surgically removed while the cat is anesthetized to denote that the cat has been neutered and vaccinated. Eartipping is the most effective way to identify neutered feral cats from a distance, to make sure they are not trapped and do not undergo surgery a second time.



JASON PUTSCHE

## Trap-Neuter-Return at Texas A&M University Effectively Stabilizes Feral Cat Colonies

In a 2002 study published in the *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, Kathy Hughes and Margaret R. Slater document the success of a Trap-Neuter-Return program on the campus of Texas A&M University, looking at the changes between the implementation year and the following year. In the first year, 123 cats were trapped, compared with 35 in the second year.<sup>1</sup>

Over the course of the program, 32 cats and kittens were adopted. In the second year, no litters or nursing mothers were seen. While the study did not measure the change in the total number of cats on campus over the two-year period, the researchers noted: the decrease in cats needing to be trapped from the previous year; the adoption of socialized campus cats and kittens into homes; and a decrease in the number of calls concerning cats on college property.

**Findings:** TNR can stabilize large feral cat colonies quickly—often in as little as a year.

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## University of Central Florida Trap-Neuter-Return Program Considerably Reduces Feral Cat Population

A 2003 study published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* found that TNR keeps cat colonies stable and healthy year after year. The 11-year study on the University of Central Florida campus observed the number of cats on campus decline by 66%, with no new kittens born after the first four years of operation.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the study, most of the remaining cats were adults: 83% had been part of the program for more than six years, indicating a healthy lifespan for feral cats after TNR.

**Findings:** TNR keeps feral cat colonies stable and healthy in both the short-term and the long-term.



JASON PUTSCHE

In Trap-Neuter-Return programs, feral cats are returned to their outdoor homes after they are spayed/neutered, vaccinated, and eartipped by a veterinarian.

## Trap-Neuter-Return Significantly Reduces North Carolina Cat Colony Size After Two Years

In a 2004 study in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, researchers observed neutered feral cat colonies and intact feral cat colonies in North Carolina and found that TNR stabilizes colonies and causes population decline over time. All six neutered feral cat colonies in the study decreased in population during the first two years of study, with a mean decrease of 36%, and continue to decline. During the same two years, the three control colonies significantly increased in size, with a mean increase of 47%.<sup>3</sup>

**Findings:** Feral cat colonies that go through TNR decrease in size, while colonies that are left unneutered increase in size.

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## Neutering Significantly Impacts Populations in South African University Colonies

A 2011 study in *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* looks at the populations of feral cats at eight sites across five campuses of a South African university. The study provides a snapshot of colonies with different levels of sterilization and colony management, showing what managed colonies look like at one moment in time. Based on their observations, the researchers provide projections as to what would happen to the population over the course of the next five years, depending on the percentage of the cats who are neutered. At 0% neutering, the population would double. At 100% neutering, the population would be cut in half. The population would stabilize with 55% neutering. This shows how different percentages of cats neutered effect a population.<sup>4</sup>

Contrary to the figure often quoted, it is not necessary to have a 75% or higher level of neutering. In this study's population, having 60% of the cats neutered shows a decline.

**Findings:** Even if you can't spay/neuter every feral cat right away, you can make a difference by spaying/neutering as many as possible.



Alley Cat Allies President Becky Robinson standing in the D.C. alley where a feral cat colony used to live, holding a photo of some of the original colony members. No cats remain in the alley.

### Washington, D.C. Cat Colony Stabilized and Eventually Reduced to Zero

A colony of feral cats in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington, D.C. was eventually reduced to zero as a result of a Trap-Neuter-Return program. This colony was the reason Alley Cat Allies was formed as an organization in 1990, just a few months after the co-founders began helping the caregivers carry out a formal program to help the 54 cats.

Caregivers and newly recruited volunteers implemented TNR for the colony, taming kittens and placing them in adoptive homes, and returning adult cats back to the colony after they were spayed/neutered and vaccinated. In addition to stabilizing the population, spaying/neutering the cats ended behaviors associated with mating including fighting and roaming, making the cats less noticeable. The health of the cats also improved. By November 1997, just seven years after the TNR program started, only six cats remained in the alley. The last cat from the colony died in 2007 at age 17.

**Findings: TNR allows cats to live out their natural, long lives content and healthy in their outdoor homes, and can eventually reduce colonies to zero through adoption of socialized cats and kittens and natural attrition.**

### Trap-Neuter-Return Humanely Stabilized and Reduced in Size the Merrimack River Colony

More than 300 stray and feral cats lived along the Merrimack River in Newburyport, Mass. in 1990. The city brought a private trapping company in to trap and kill some of the cats. Thirty cats were killed, but within two years, those cats had been replaced by 30 more cats who joined the colony. When cats are removed from an area, there is a vacuum effect—other cats quickly move in to take advantage of newly available resources, and they breed back to capacity.

In 1992, the Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society started a Trap-Neuter-Return program for the cats on the waterfront. The TNR program stabilized the colony and resulted in a decline in population.<sup>5</sup> Zorro, the last remaining cat from the colony, passed away in 2009 at age 16. Natural attrition is the normal evolution of TNR.

**Findings: Catching and killing cats creates a vacuum and the population rebounds quickly. TNR is the only effective method for stabilizing and eventually reducing feral cat colonies, even for large, long-standing colonies.**

### Bay Area Colony Reduced by More than Half Through Trap-Neuter-Return

In 2004, approximately 175 feral cats were living along a popular hiking and biking trail in Foster City, Calif. in the San Francisco Bay Area. The City of Foster City, the Homeless Cat Network, and the community decided to join forces to humanely stabilize this colony of cats, and Project Bay Cat was formed. The Homeless Cat Network's volunteers undertook an intensive TNR effort, with two private veterinary hospitals providing spay/neuter and vaccinations for the cats.

As of 2013, 95% of the cats living along the trail were spayed/neutered, and the colony size had reduced by 53% through natural attrition and adoption of socialized stray cats and kittens.<sup>6</sup>

**Findings: When communities come together to support TNR, cats are protected and colonies are effectively stabilized.**





JASON PUTSCHÉ

One of the feral cats who calls the Atlantic City Boardwalk home.

### Trap-Neuter-Return at Atlantic City Boardwalk Reduces Colony Size Over Time

In 2000, Alley Cat Allies launched the Boardwalk Cats Project, a Trap-Neuter-Return program for the cats living around the boardwalk in Atlantic City, N.J. Alley Cat Allies teamed up with Atlantic City's Health Department, the Humane Society of Atlantic City, and local advocates to begin the highly successful TNR program that stabilized the colonies of feral cats living at the boardwalk. Many of the cats trapped were young kittens or cats socialized enough to be put up for adoption. The rest were returned to the boardwalk sporting eartips indicating that they were neutered and vaccinated. As TNR took effect, births of new kittens at the boardwalk gradually ceased. When the program started, there were

approximately 275 cats living around the boardwalk. As a result of the program, no kittens have been born at the boardwalk in over a decade and the population size has significantly decreased through natural attrition and adoption. Alley Cat Allies' recent census reports that the number of cats living at the boardwalk has decreased to 127.

The Boardwalk Cats Project receives outspoken support from Atlantic City's local government, as well as many local businesses along the boardwalk. The public has also responded positively to the program, which attracts tourists year-round.

**Findings: When people learn how positive TNR programs are for cats and communities, the programs receive widespread support and community members are willing to volunteer or donate to support the program.**

### Trap-Neuter-Return Decreases a Chicago Neighborhood's Cat Population by More Than Half

In 2007, a group in Chicago called Cats In My Yard started carefully tracking its Trap-Neuter-Return efforts and the number of cats living in 19 colonies. The colonies are all close together and contained within one large city block bordered by busy main streets. Between 2007 and 2013, 153 cats in the 19 colonies went through TNR. In 2013, a total of 70 cats remained in these colonies. In seven years, the cat population in this neighborhood decreased by 55%.<sup>7</sup>

**Findings: TNR programs effectively stabilize feral cat colonies and reduce them in size over time—from small groups of volunteers to large-scale, citywide TNR programs.**

### Rome Trap-Neuter-Return Program Consistently Decreases Colony Size

A 2006 study in *Preventative Veterinary Medicine* that documents the cat population over 10 years in a well-established Trap-Neuter-Return program in Rome, Italy determines that the long-term program significantly reduced feral cat colony size. From 1991 to 2000, nearly 8,000 cats were neutered and returned to their colony locations. The study spanned 103 colonies of outdoor cats. Colony size consistently decreased over the time period, ranging from a 16% decline in population in colonies three years into the program, to a 32% decrease in colony size after six years.<sup>8</sup>

**Findings: Large-scale, scientific studies show that TNR consistently decreases colony size.**

### Chicago's Trap-Neuter-Return Program Significantly Reduces Colony Size in 23 Zip Codes

A countywide TNR program in Cook County, Ill., which includes Chicago, reduced the size of feral cat colonies in 23 zip codes by 41% in just five years. A coalition of private nonprofits that carries out TNR in Cook County compared the number of cats in 23 zip codes before they started TNR and the number approximately five years after. In November 2007, there were 1,329 in the 23 zip codes. At the end of 2012, there were only 788.<sup>9</sup> The colonies were stabilized through TNR, and reduced in size through adoption of socialized cats and kittens and natural attrition. In 2007, Cook County passed legislation that created a formal structure for a countywide TNR program, with private nonprofit organizations assuming the responsibility for managing feral cat colonies. From 2008 to 2012, more than 17,538 feral cats in Cook County were spayed/neutered, vaccinated, eartipped, and returned to their outdoor homes through this program.<sup>10</sup> The nonprofit coalition estimates that the program has prevented the births of tens of thousands of kittens.

**Findings: Even in large-scale TNR programs that span multiple zip codes, colonies, and neighborhoods, TNR effectively reduces colony size across the board.**



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## ENDNOTES

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3. Stoskopf, M. and F. Nutter. "Analyzing approaches to feral cat management - one size does not fit all." *Journal of American Veterinary Medical Association* 225, no. 9 (2004): 1361-1364.
4. Jones, A. and C. Downs. "Managing feral cats on a university's campuses: How many are there and is sterilization having an effect?" *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 14 no. 4 (2011): 304-320.
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## ADDITIONAL PUBLICATIONS FROM ALLEY CAT ALLIES



### *Trap-Neuter-Return Ordinances and Policies in the United States: The Future of Animal Control*

This 2013 Law & Policy Brief shows that a huge—and growing—number of local governments nationwide have officially embraced Trap-Neuter-Return for outdoor cats. Alley Cat Allies' legal team reviewed hundreds of municipal and county codes and animal control policy statements, finding that more than 330 governments had official policies supporting TNR. That number continues to rise. By February 2014, more than 430 local governments embraced TNR.

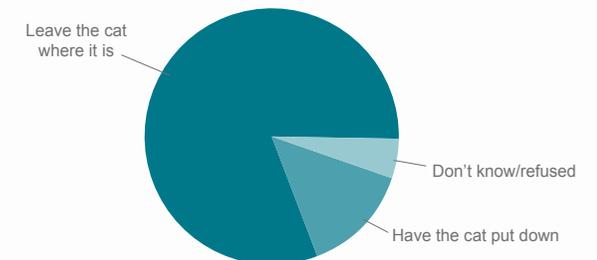
TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN ORDINANCES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES (2013)



### *U.S. Public Opinion on Humane Treatment of Stray Cats*

An overwhelming majority of Americans believe that leaving a stray cat outside to live out his life is more humane than having him caught and killed, according to a nationally representative survey conducted for Alley Cat Allies by Harris Interactive. These results reveal a significant disparity between the public's humane ethic and the operating policy of most U.S. animal pounds and shelters.

If you saw a stray cat in your community and could only choose between two courses of action—leaving the cat where it is outside or having the cat caught and then put down—which would you consider to be the more humane option for the cat?



To view these publications online, visit [alleycat.org/Publications](http://alleycat.org/Publications).



**Alley Cat Allies**  
The cats' leading advocate



**[www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org)**

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# Helping the Community and Animal Shelters Through Trap-Neuter-Return



**Rebekah DeHaven, Staff Attorney  
Las Cruces, New Mexico City Council  
September 28, 2015**



# OVERVIEW

- Who are community cats?
- What are the goals of a community cat policy?
- Why TNR?
- Local Statistics
- Las Cruces Policy



# WHO ARE COMMUNITY CATS?



- Both *Felis catus*, the domestic cat species
- Different socialization level to people
  - Community cats display variety of behaviors
  - Range of socialized/friendly → feral/avoidant



# COMMUNITY CAT ORIGINS & BEHAVIOR

- Where do these cats come from?
- Names vary:
  - community, feral, stray, wild, alley, outdoor, barn, neighborhood, tomcat
- Already living outdoors
- *Tend* to avoid humans
- Mostly unadoptable
- Not suitable for a shelter environment



# WHAT IS THE GOAL?

- Reduction of community cat population
  - Resource-efficient
  - Humane
  - Effective
- How can we achieve that goal?



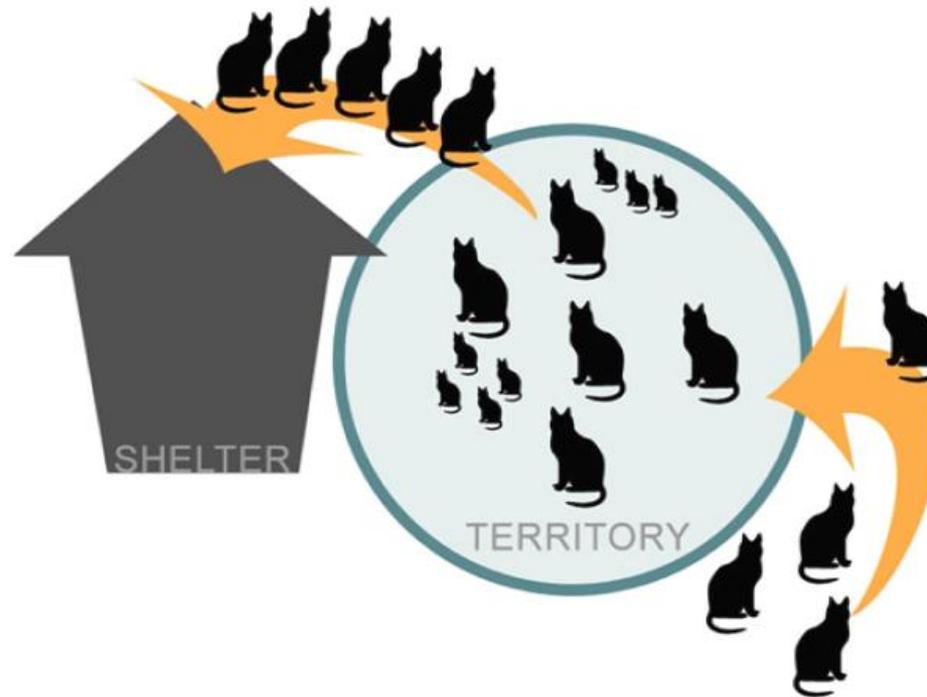
# WHAT IS TNR?

Trap-Neuter-Return: Method by which entire colonies of community cats are humanely trapped, spayed or neutered, vaccinated, eartipped, and returned to their outdoor home.



# THE VACUUM EFFECT

- Why is TNR effective?
- Why don't other tactics work?



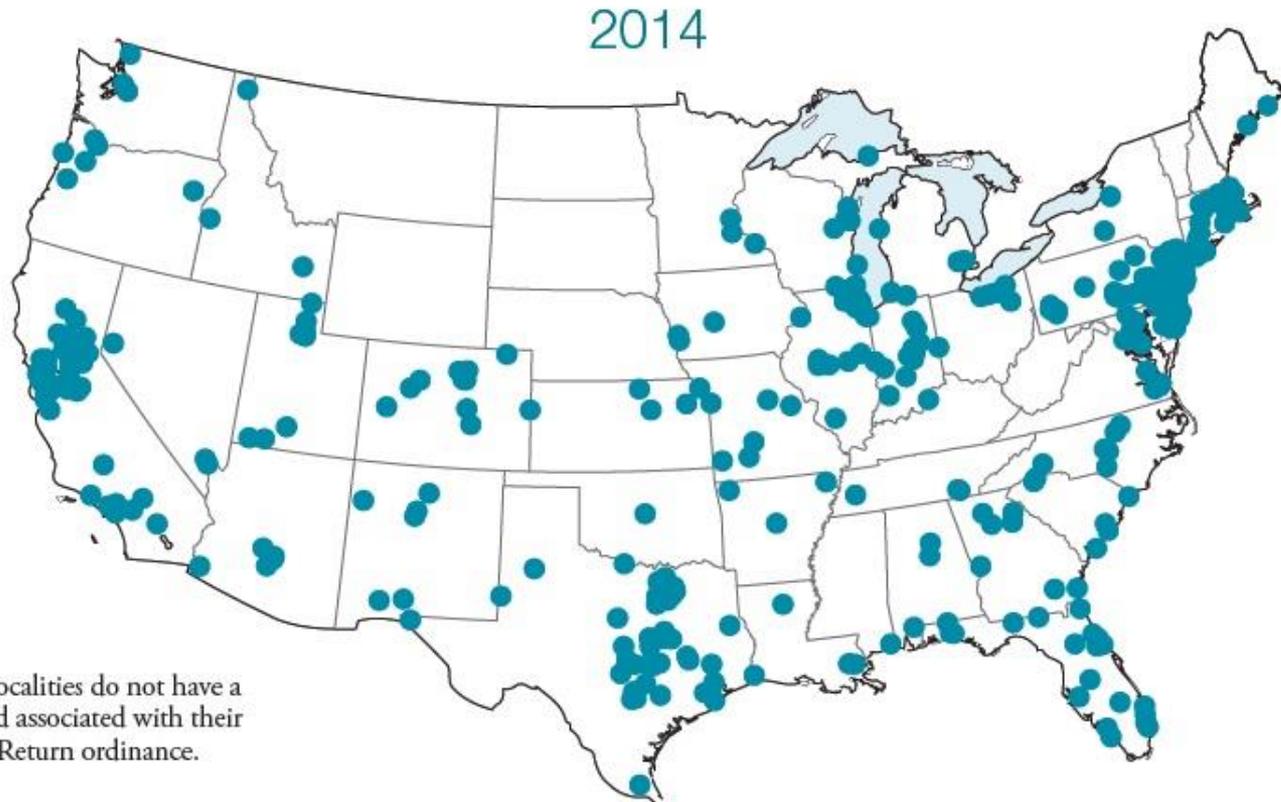
## TNR Across the Country: 2003



Elizabeth Holtz, JD "Trap-Neuter-Return Ordinances and Policies in the United States: The Future of Animal Control," *Law & Policy Brief* (Bethesda, MD: Alley Cat Allies, January 2013).



# TNR Across the Country: 2013



\*Note: Some localities do not have a date on record associated with their Trap-Neuter-Return ordinance.



# WHY TNR?

- Three main reasons:
  - Stabilizes cat populations & improves cats' health
  - Helps the shelter and saves money
  - Nuisance concerns: cats become better neighbors



# EFFECTIVE POPULATION CONTROL

**“Analyzing approaches to feral cat management — one size does not fit all”**

***Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association***

Two year colony case-control study

- Case: 6 colonies were sterilized
- Control: 3 colonies left unsterilized

Source: Stoskopf, M.K. and Nutter, F.B., “Analyzing approaches to feral cat management — one size does not fit all.” *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 2004. 225(9)



# EFFECTIVE POPULATION CONTROL

JAVMA<sup>®</sup>

Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association  
February 15, 2012, Volume 240, Number 4  
www.avma.org/javma



## Results

Case colony population **declined**, on average, by 36%

Control colony population increased, on average, by 47%

Source: Stoskopf, M.K. and Nutter, F.B., "Analyzing approaches to feral cat management — one size does not fit all." *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 2004. 225(9)



# EFFECTIVE POPULATION CONTROL

**“Effect of high-impact targeted trap-neuter-return and adoption of community cats on cat intake to a shelter”**

*The Veterinary Journal*

- **2366 cats neutered in one zip code**
- Cat intake declined 66% in target area vs. 12% decline in non-target



Source: J.K. Levy, N.M. Isaza, K.C. Scott, Effect of high-impact targeted trap-neuter-return and adoption of community cats on cat intake to a shelter, *The Veterinary Journal* (2014), doi: 10.1016/j.tvjl.2014.05.001



# EFFECTIVE POPULATION CONTROL: SHELTER-NEUTER-RETURN (SNR)

- San Jose, CA (over 4 years)
  - 20% reduction in shelter intake
  - 68% reduction in euthanasia
- Jacksonville, FL (over 4 years)
  - 30% reduction in shelter intake
  - 75% reduction in euthanasia



# HELP SHELTERS & SAVE MONEY

- Community cats are not impounded → more space and time for adoptable cats
- Community cats remain in outdoor home → more resources (\$) for other animals and programs
- Fewer kittens born outdoors → fewer kittens brought in + fewer calls of concern
- Reduced/eliminated mating behaviors → fewer calls of complaint
- TNR = lifesaving program → greater community support!



# HELP SHELTERS & SAVE MONEY

## Real Life Examples

- *Greenwood County, South Carolina* – \$37.50 to TNR a cat versus \$45 to impound and euthanize
- *St. Clair Shores, Michigan* – “It is actually cheaper this way than euthanizing. We didn’t do it for the money, but it happens ... it is less expensive” --Mayor Kip Walby
- *Albuquerque, New Mexico* - “[TNR] is one of the principal reasons why the shelter’s intake of cats in the past 12 months was down 24% compared to the same period four years ago.” -- Jim Ludwick, Animal Welfare Department



# HELP SHELTERS: THE JACKSONVILLE, FL EXAMPLE

- Improved employee morale
- Increased productivity
- Reduced worker compensation claims
- Reduction in shelter disease, URI



# BETTER NEIGHBORS

- Main Concerns
  - Kittens!
  - Yowling/Mating
  - Spraying
  - Fighting
  - Defecation
- Public health benefit via vaccinations
- Less noticeable = fewer concerns and complaints for animal control officers and shelter staff
- Best Practices
  - Feeding
  - Conversations
  - Deterrents



# BETTER NEIGHBORS: TESTIMONIAL!

“I have been surprised that almost every resident who has complained about feral cats has chosen to participate in TNR once they understand it.”

--Susan Sherman,  
COO of animal control  
shelter in Arlington, VA

## Best Practices: Community Cat Colony Care

You want to protect the cats—and part of keeping cats safe is keeping the cats' colony sites clean and unobtrusive. As a colony caregiver, keep these easy pointers in mind when caring for cats and working with neighbors in the area.

### FEEDING

- Remove uneaten food within 30 minutes. Never allow food to sit out overnight, as it may attract insects or wildlife.
- Keep the feeding location neat and clean. We recommend a feeding station to keep the food dishes in one place for easy cleanup and provide a tidy appearance. If you feed on disposable plates or bowls, take them with you—to throw away or recycle.
- Deter Insects:
  - Surround the food bowl with a ring of baking soda.
  - Use an ant proof bowl—examples available at [www.alleycat.org/AntProof](http://www.alleycat.org/AntProof)
  - Wet food can attract more bugs, so cut back, or completely cut out, the amount of wet food that you feed. Be sure to add more dry food to compensate.

### PREEMPTIVE STEPS

- Trap-Neuter-Return all cats in the colony—and let neighbors know that is the plan. A short conversation stating your intentions early on can eliminate confusion down the road. Let them know they can contact you with questions or concerns.
- Follow good cleaning and feeding protocols! Remove all trash and debris, even trash you did not create, daily or weekly to help make the feeding station sanitary and unobtrusive. This helps avoid possible health code violations and maintain positive relations with the local residents.

### COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- When dealing with a neighbor who has concerns about the cats, determine the specific problem and do your best to resolve it. Remain calm and constructive in all of your interactions.
- Use humane deterrents to keep cats away from places they are not wanted. Offer to provide and apply these methods for neighbors at your own expense.
  - Read more about deterrents at [www.alleycat.org/Deterrents](http://www.alleycat.org/Deterrents)

Have more questions?  
Visit [alleycat.org](http://alleycat.org) for more information!



# Animal Service Center of the Mesilla Valley

## 2012 - Monthly Intake

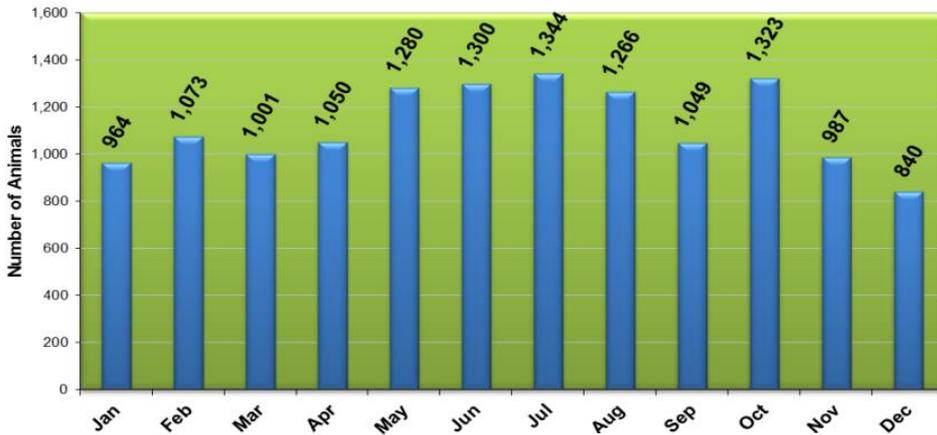
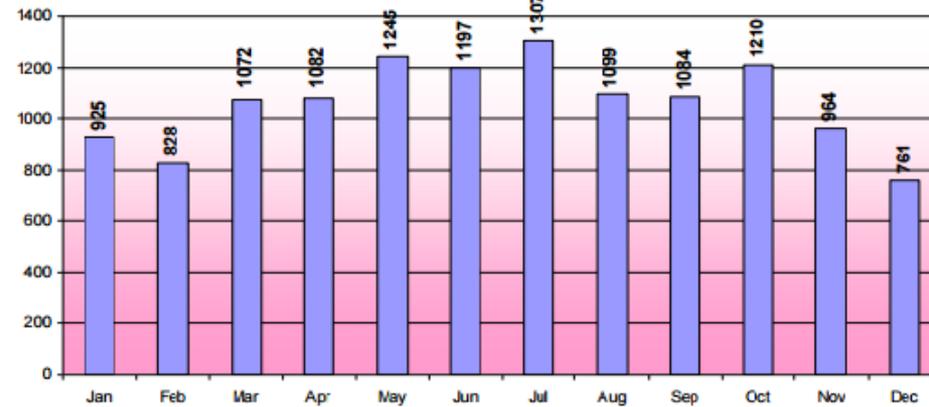


Table 6: Monthly Intake

Table 6: Monthly Intake - 2013



## Monthly Intake - 2014



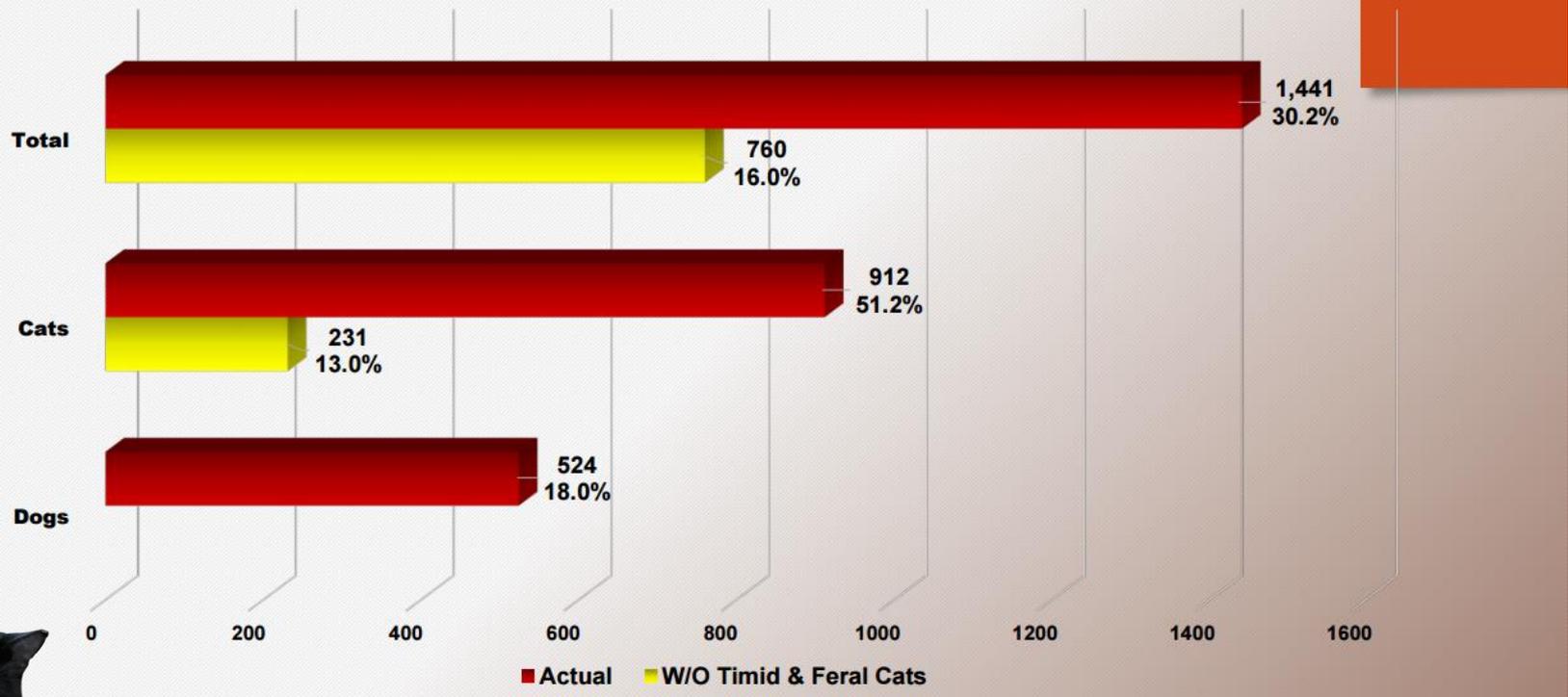
With an annual intake of **11,858** animals, an average of more than **32** animals was received by the ASCMV **each day**. This number must be greatly reduced so that those animals leaving the ASCMV do so alive and well.

Source: 2012, 2013, and 2014 Annual Reports



# Animal Service Center of the Mesilla Valley

## 2015 January - June Euthanasias: With vs. Without Timid & Feral Cats

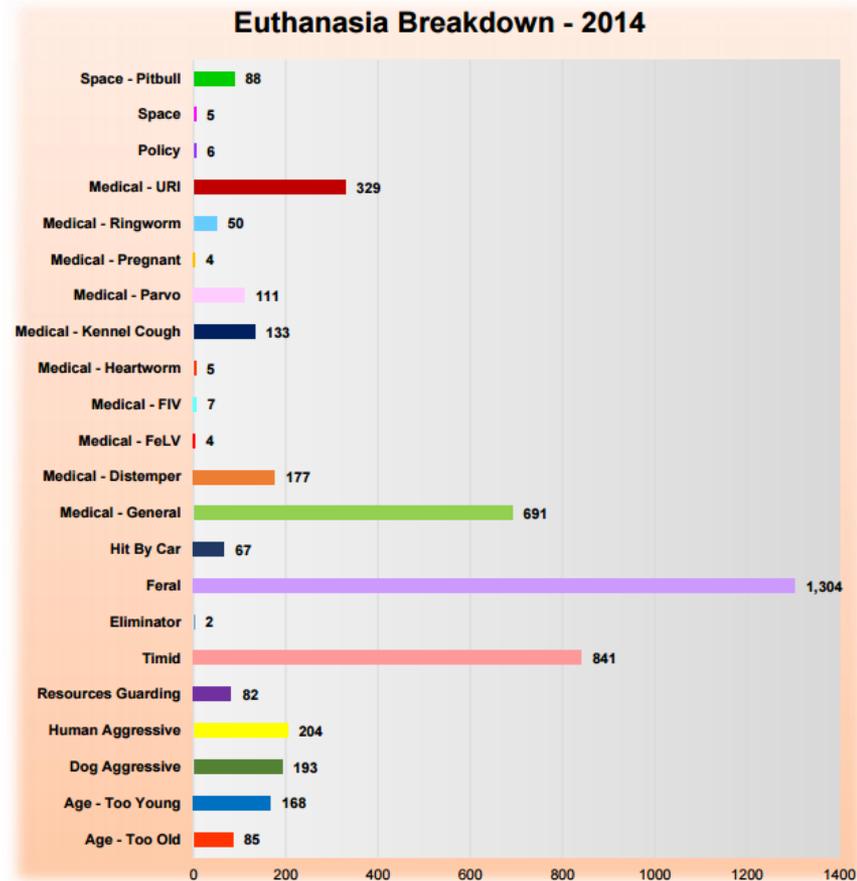


Source: June 2015 Director's Report



# Animal Service Center of the Mesilla Valley

**Table 16: Euthanasia Breakdown 2014**



# Legislating TNR

Legislating the details and requirements of Trap-Neuter-Return often **backfires by decreasing** the amount of spay/neuter being performed in a community

- Community cat colonies exist whether or not someone steps in to provide spay/neuter and vaccinations
- Restrictive requirements therefore have it backwards: they make it more difficult to limit the growth of colonies, while keeping residents from spaying and neutering feral cats. This restrictive approach is more costly for city taxpayers, who must address more cats down the line.



# Las Cruces

- Caretaker exemptions from harboring & owning are positive.
- Restrictions on those “seeking to operate a feral cat colony.”
  - Fees
  - Consent agreements
  - Firm number
  - Cat trapped outside of colony twice = nuisance
  - Revocation
- What is the intent behind these regulations?
  - What is the goal for the community cat population?
- Compliance
  - Good Samaritans want to care for these cats and reduce the population. Current structure hinders their good work instead of encouraging.



# Las Cruces

- Removing strict colony registration requirements will not lead to more community cats; it will enable citizens and organizations to work at their full capacity for TNR.
  - More TNR = fewer community cats on the streets, fewer cats and kittens entering the shelter, and fewer calls from concerned neighbors.
- Las Cruces has a strong, active animal welfare, rescue, and TNR community!



# QUESTIONS?



Email me at [rdehaven@alleycat.org](mailto:rdehaven@alleycat.org)

or

Learn more at [www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org)

