

TNR FOR ANIMAL CONTROL AGENCIES

FAST ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



WHAT IS TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN?

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) is a full management plan in which stray and feral cats already living outdoors in cities, towns, and rural areas are humanely trapped, then evaluated, vaccinated, and sterilized by veterinarians. Kittens and tame cats are adopted into good homes. Adult cats too wild to be adopted are returned to their familiar habitat, where volunteers provide long-term care, including food, shelter, and health monitoring.

WHY SHOULD/MUST ANIMAL CONTROL AGENCIES MAKE FERAL CATS A PRIORITY?

It is estimated that there now are tens of millions of stray and feral cats in the U.S. and Canada. This affects animal control agencies in three main areas:

- ❑ Feral cats are a prominent subject of complaint calls from the public.
- ❑ Agencies spend a significant percentage of their (tax-funded) annual budgets responding to feral cat complaints.
- ❑ Public health departments, together with animal control agencies, are seeking effective and cost-effective long-term solutions that respond to the public's increasing desire to see feral cats treated with humane, nonlethal methods.

WHY IS TNR THE ANSWER?

Trap-Neuter-Return is the only solution that produces long-term results and is cost-effective. For example:

Reduced complaint calls

- ❑ **Orange County, Florida:** Before implementing TNR, Orange County Animal Services received 175 nuisance complaints a week. Complaints have dropped dramatically; cat adoptions have increased from 400 to more than 1,000 per year.
- ❑ **Cape May, New Jersey:** Since implementing communitywide TNR procedures in 2001, Animal Control Officer John Queenan has achieved an 80 percent drop in feral cat complaints.

Cost-effectiveness

- ❑ **San Diego, California:** In 1992, San Diego Department of Animal Control euthanized 15,525 cats at a cost of \$121 per cat. That year, Feral Cat Coalition San Diego, a private, volunteer organization, began aggressive spay/neuter programs. By 1998, the number of animals killed each year dropped more than 45 percent, with a tax savings of \$859,221.
- ❑ **Maricopa County, Arizona:** Maricopa County spends \$61 to trap, hold, and euthanize one feral cat, versus \$22.50 to spay or neuter and return a cat. Maricopa County Animal Care and Control encourages communities to adopt TNR by passing associated costs along to them.

Public Health Concerns

Descriptions of feral cats as generally diseased are not founded in fact. The truth is that feral cats are generally as healthy as homed cats and present a miniscule health risk to humans.

- ❑ At a meeting of the **Alliance for Contraception in Cats and Dogs** (ACCD) in April 2002, Dr. Julie Levy of the College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Florida, Gainesville, and researchers David and Leslie Gale presented findings for a major study of feral cats. The vast majority of cats were in good physical condition, with only four percent euthanized for health reasons. Cats in the study by the end of the observation period had been present for an average of 6.5 years, which compares favorably to an average 7.1 year lifespan reported for pet cats, particularly since almost half of the cats were first observed as adults of unknown age.
- ❑ The **Atlantic City (NJ) Health Department** approved a TNR program for the Atlantic City Boardwalk, which accommodates 37 million visitors annually. Health Department Director Ron Cash says, "TNR is congruent with my responsibility to prevent injuries to humans, protect humans from public health and safety risks, and promote a healthy human population."

WHERE ELSE DOES TNR WORK?

The programs cited above are but a tiny sample of successful TNR programs now functioning. TNR is practiced in thousands of communities on all levels across the nation. The factsheet entitled "Where Does TNR Work?" lists many more TNR programs but still is far from complete, because the list grows daily.

**ALLEY CAT ALLIES HAS THE EXPERIENCE AND RESOURCES TO HELP
YOU INSTITUTE TNR PROCEDURES IN YOUR JURISDICTION.**