

## PART ONE: TNR FROM A POLICY PERSPECTIVE

### 1. What is Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)?

#### a. The basic method: Cats in a colony are:

- trapped,
- neutered, rabies vaccinated and eartipped for identification,
- returned to their original territory,
- monitored and provided long-term care (when possible adoptable cats and kittens are removed).

#### b. The goals: reduction of colony size through adoption and attrition & the humane treatment of existing ferals

### 2. What are the consequences of feral cat overpopulation?

#### a. Animal shelter system

- increased cat intake, cat euthanasia, lower adoption rates

*\*80% kittens born to feral moms; 1/3 households who adopt cats get the cat directly from the street*

- complaint calls (for animal control)
- stress to shelter workers
- actual costs
- opportunity costs (resources diverted from other programs)

#### b. Public health

- rabies, other zoonotic diseases (toxoplasmosis, cat scratch fever, fleas)
- quality of life complaints (noise, odor, kittens, property damage)

#### c. Wildlife predation

- predator
- competitor
- location issues (e.g., fragile ecosystems, rare species)
- scope issues (degree contributing to wildlife decline in general)

**d. The welfare of the feral cats** (in unmanaged situations - unaltered, no caretaker)

- high kitten mortality
- stress of reproduction, scavenging for food, fighting, disease

**3. What are the traditional approaches to TNR and why do they routinely fail?**

**a. Do nothing**

- carrying capacity of environment determines population growth; capacity is flexible and able to increase
- none of the issues are resolved (animal shelters, public health, etc.)

**b. Feeding bans**

- cats don't go away, may become malnourished and more prone to disease and parasitic infestations; seek out other alternative food sources within the territory
- historically unenforceable

**c. Trap and remove (usually for euthanasia)**

- inadequate animal control resources; lack of volunteers; difficulty of trapping
- caretaker resistance
- feral cat population dynamics, including vacuum effect (unaltered habitat invites migration from other feral colonies) and increased survival rate of untrapped colony cats
- difficulty of altering the habitat to prevent vacuum effect and increased survival rates
- ongoing abandonment of unneutered cats
- lack of an ongoing monitoring system
- synergistic effect of all factors

**d. TNR in comparison:**

- proactive (cf. doing nothing)
- not trying to solve problem with unenforceable laws (cf. feeding bans)
- attracts volunteers, gains caretaker cooperation, doesn't create vacuums, creates long-term monitoring system(cf. trap and remove)

#### 4. How does TNR address the consequences of feral cat overpopulation?

##### a. Animal shelter system - fewer cats could equal less impact

###### ▪ Examples (local/neighborhood by Neighborhood Cats):

\* **Fresh Kills Landfill**, Staten Island, NY (45 cats in 2003, less than 20 currently)

\* **Riverside Park**, NY, NY (65 cats in 2001, less than 30 currently)

\* **Rikers Island**, Bronx, NY (300 cats in 2002, less than 150 currently)

\* **97<sup>th</sup> St. Colony**, NY, NY (30 cats in 1999, 1 currently)

###### ▪ Examples (community-wide)

\* **Newburyport, MA** [Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society]: 300 cats in 1992, 6 currently

\* **Atlantic Beach, NY** [Neighborhood Cats, Atlantic Beach Cats] - 125 of estimated 140 cats neutered early 2005 – 3 kitten sightings total in 2005.

\* **Long Beach, NY** [Long Beach Cats/Neighborhood Cats] - TNR program begun in 2005, half of estimated 400-500 ferals altered by end of 2006, 26% drop in cat intake in Long Beach Animal Shelter for 2006.

\* **West Valley City, UT** [No More Homeless Pets in Utah] - 508 cats TNR'ed in one year period 2004-2005, cat intake down 27% (cf. 3% statewide), euthanasia down 34% (cf. 5% statewide)

\* **Burlington County Feral Cat Initiative (NJ)** – from mid-2005 through end of 2006, 38 colonies with 445 cats in mid-2005; 346 cats at end of 2006 (22% decline). 16 colonies reduced in size, 22 remained stable, 0 increased in size.

\* **San Francisco, CA** [San Francisco SPCA & San Francisco AC&C] - TNR was an element of a comprehensive program that also included increased adoption efforts and other measures to address companion animal overpopulation. From 1993 through 1999, cat impounds dropped by 28%, euthanasia rates for feral cats dropped by 73%, and euthanasia rates for all cats fell by 71%

\* **NYC Feral Cat Database, NY** - colony registration and tracking system based on caretaker reports; 311 colonies with at least 1 cat TNR'ed; 4483 total cats at TNR start dates, 3233 cats at most recent reporting dates, equals 28% decline

- **Examples (academic)**

- \* **Levy, Julie, DVM., "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*, Vol. 222: 42-6, January 1, 2003 (155 cats in 1991, 23 in 2002 = 85% decline in Univ. of Central Florida campus)

- b. Public health**

- fewer cats equals less impact
- Vaccination preferred method by World Health Organization (vs. eradication) to control rabies outbreaks.
- single vaccination better than none - length of efficacy unknown; official sanctioning of TNR can encourage re-vaccination efforts
- toxoplasmosis: only study conducted found living in a neighborhood with cats is not by itself a risk factor (Kapperud, G., et.al., "Risk factors for *Toxoplasma gondii* infection in pregnancy; Results of a prospective case-control study in Norway," *American Journal of Epidemiology* 144: 405-412, (1996))
- sterilization results in nuisance abatement (no noise & fighting from mating; no noxious odor from testosterone in urine spray, less roaming, no kittens).

- c. Wildlife predation**

- fewer cats equals less impact - a common goal
- dropping the cats vs. birds debate can help both feral cats and wildlife
- cooperative feral cat/wildlife undertakings can protect rare species & fragile ecosystems
  - \* Stone Harbor, NJ (piping plovers)
  - \* Project Bay Cat, Foster City, CA (California Clapper Rail)
  - \* NJ Feral Cat & Wildlife Coalition (includes NJ Audubon Society and NJ state endangered species program; pilot project in Burlington County, NJ, location of ecologically sensitive Pine Barrens)

- d. The welfare of the cats**

- Substantially improves with sterilization and long-term management, less disease, fewer parasites.

## **PART TWO: BUILDING A COMMUNITY TNR PROGRAM**

### **1. The need for collaboration**

#### **a. TNR as a cooperative effort**

- colony level (caretaker, veterinarian, property owner, municipality)
- community level (e.g., NYC Feral Cat Initiative & smaller communities as well)

#### **b. Forms of collaboration**

- formal: council, coalition, alliance - groups working together
- informal: regular communication
- contractual

### **2. Defining the program's mission**

#### **a. Mission**

- permanent reduction of local feral cat population
- humane treatment of existing ferals

#### **b. Defining steps to achieve the mission**

- maximize caretaker participation
- maximize community participation
- ensure longevity of the TNR program (participation & resources)

### **3. Working with local government**

#### **a. Need for acceptance by governing authorities**

#### **b. Unfavorable laws & policies**

##### **Examples:**

- Pet limits
- Cat licensing
- Feeding bans (for animals outdoors)
- Anti-roaming (at large ordinances)
- Trapper permits

- Dept. of Health interpretation of sanitary & nuisance regulations
- Animal control practices re: free-roaming cats

**SOLUTION:** seek exemptions

**c. Endangered Species Act - state & federal level** (prohibits “taking” of rare, threatened or endangered species - state lists of species may be more comprehensive)

- not settled if TNR equals a “taking”

**SOLUTION:** Collaboration better than litigation

**d. TNR ordinances**

- matter of local culture whether to seek/enact
- needs to set realistic standards
- avoid penalizing caretakers with fines - better to deny benefits of program if lack of adherence
- risk of Freedom of Information Act requests if non-profit becomes “de facto public agency” (***also a risk with government contracts and/or funding***)

**4. Forming a strategic plan**

**a. Choosing between an “Expert” or “Grassroots” model**

- **Expert:** program performs the hands-on work
- **Grassroots:** program coordinates services, trains caretakers to perform the hands-on work

**Which model to choose depends on:**

- i Size of the feral population
- i Resources available (including ACOs, volunteer trappers)
- ii Geographic area to be covered (e.g., one town or whole county?)
- iii E.g., Long Beach, NY - expert models; New York City - grassroots model

**Focus differs in each model:**

- Expert program focuses on finding the cats
- Grassroots program focuses on training caretakers and increasing services

**Protocols for each model:**

- Expert - responding to resident requests (e.g., Long Beach Cats - see *Long Beach Cats program flyer & request for assistance form in Community TNR Guide*)
- Grassroots - channeling caretakers into training and utilizing provided services (see *NYC Feral Cat Initiative protocol in Community TNR Guide*)

**b. Allocating resources effectively**

- 70 percent rule (but aim for 90 percent) - applies to expert & grassroots programs
- ***Could be the factor determining success or failure!!***

**c. Selecting initial projects**

- high profile (media or municipal)
- quality & reliability of the caretaker
- likelihood of success

**5. Administration**

**a. Lead agency**

coordinating role or main service provider (depends on size of the feral population, size of community & available resources)

- avoid multiple, independent programs (waste of resources, different standards of practice, poor communication with local government)
- mediating role (caretakers vs. residents)
- TNR Coordinator

**b. Separating TNR from rescue**

- rescue of adoptables can speed population reduction
- need – ***if*** the resources are available (either within the same organization or by partnering with another organization)

- TNR programs without rescue resources need to focus on sterilizing the ferals and working with caretakers, not rescue & adoption
- organizations with both rescue & TNR programs - need for separation of budget, personnel
- minimize involvement in relocation efforts

**c. Liability concerns**

- avoiding negligence claims by volunteers, caretakers or other non-staff participants requires:
  - Release form (*see example in Community TNR Guide*)
  - Training
  - Adequate supervision
  - (*recommended*) Written and signed protocols
- lending out traps; need:
  - Training
  - Release form (*see example in Community TNR Guide*)
  - TNR of owned cats:
    - 1) Notice
    - 2) Municipal ordinance allowing neutering of unidentified, unaltered free-roaming cats by authorized TNR program<sup>3</sup>. Carefully evaluate any cat with indicia of ownership; follow “lost pet” notification procedures

**d. Funding**

- Traditional nonprofit fundraising (see Beamish, Richard, *Getting the Word Out in the Fight to Save the Earth* (The John Hopkins University Press, 1995))
- Municipal contracts (see Long Beach Cats contract in Community TNR Guide)
- Caretaker/resident donations
- Grants (PETsMART Charities)

## 6. Elements of the Program - Field Work

### a. **Training Workshops** - *see sample workshop outline in Community TNR Guide*

- Neighborhood Cats TNR Handbook (see Effectively Managing Feral Cats CD/DVD package)
- Online course ("Trap-Neuter-Return: Managing a Feral Cat Colony") at Humane Society University ([humanesociety.org/university](http://humanesociety.org/university))

### b. **Free or low cost spay/neuter-Spay/neuter clinic** (fixed or mobile)

e.g., Humane Alliance Spay/Neuter Clinic in Asheville, NC ([www.humanealliance.org](http://www.humanealliance.org))

- **Private veterinarian network** - e.g., SPAY USA ([www.spayusa.org](http://www.spayusa.org)) or Friends of Animals ([www.friendsofanimals.org](http://www.friendsofanimals.org)) -**Mass Spay Days** - e.g., Feral Cat Coalition of San Diego ([www.feralcat.com/pindex.html](http://www.feralcat.com/pindex.html))

### c. **Veterinary protocol**

- **Standard:** neuter, eartip, rabies vaccine
- **Optional:** flea & ear mite medication, dental
- **Not recommended:** FIV/FeLV testing, FVRCP vaccine

### d. **Equipment**

- **Traps** - 36 inches in length with removable rear door (e.g., Safeguard Large Raccoon with Rear Door, model SG-36D, available through ACES (800-338-ACES); \$50 each for 2 or more.
- **Dividers** - Tru-catch Model TD-2 **ONLY!!** Available through ACES, \$11 each for 2 or more
- **Number** of traps/dividers - to maximize spay/neuter capacity (e.g., 10 cats per week = 20 traps (10 in clinic/10 in field))

### e. **Trap banks** - *see contract & trap bank procedures in Community TNR Guide*

### f. **Holding space** (warm, dry & secure)

- Program or caretaker responsibility?
- Function of scope of program/number of cats
- Post-surgery recovery time - 48 hours recommended

**g. Trappers**

- Expert model - trained staff/volunteers
- Grassroots model - caretakers, possibly with expert assistance

**h. Transport**

- to and from: trap bank, colony site/holding space, holding space/clinic
- expert vs. grassroots model

**i. Food drives & giveaways**

**7. Elements of the Program - Data & Outreach**

**a. Documenting the work**

- Cats TNR'ed/rescued/other.
- Grassroots model - caretakers trained & assisted (hands-on, equipment, advice)
- Track changes in size of colony populations (feral cat database)-  
Data at local shelters
- cat intake, euthanasia, adoption rates

**b. Colony registration**

- Combine with feral cat database
- caretaker contact info, colony location
- Returning eartipped cats
- Who administers? Holder of data must have trust of caretakers
- confidentiality may be critical

**c. Caretaker network**

- Open meetings-Online discussion group-Email network

**d. Website**

- Centralized information
- participating organizations, services offered, program description, eligibility requirements, current news, guidelines
- Example of larger program: [www.nycferalcat.org](http://www.nycferalcat.org) (NYC Feral Cat Council)
- Example of smaller program: [www.LBcats.org](http://www.LBcats.org) (Long Beach Cats, NY)

**e. Public phone/voicemail**

- for public, non-Internet access
- returning calls optional
- info can be mailed-screen requests with outgoing message (what the program does and doesn't do)