

OVERVIEW OF A TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN PROJECT



ABOUT TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN (TNR)

the **PROBLEM...** It's estimated that **tens of millions** of feral and stray cats freely roam the streets of the United States and breed rapidly!

Doing nothing and using ineffective approaches are what have resulted in the current overpopulation problem. Trying to rescue all of the feral cats and find them homes is impossible given their numbers and their limited socialization. Removing or relocating all of the feral cats invites new unneutered cats to move in and the cycle of reproduction starts again.

the **SOLUTION...**

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) is the **only method proven to be humane and effective** in controlling free-roaming cat population growth. TNR is about:

- + Population control and **permanently reducing** the number of cats in an area
- + Lowering cat intake into shelters, thereby **lowering shelter euthanasia rates**
- + **Reducing the spread of disease**
- + The returned, spayed/neutered colony **guards its territory**, discouraging unneutered cats from moving in and beginning the cycle of overpopulation anew

What's the difference?

STRAY CAT

A tame cat who has become lost or has been abandoned; she has been socialized to people at some point in her life.

FERAL CAT

A cat who has little contact with humans, is fearful of people and usually lives on her own outdoors.



RETURN

After recovery from surgery, feral cats are returned to where they were trapped and are supplied with ongoing access to food and fresh water.

TRAP

After adequate preparations, including educating the community about the TNR process, colony cats are trapped using humane traps.

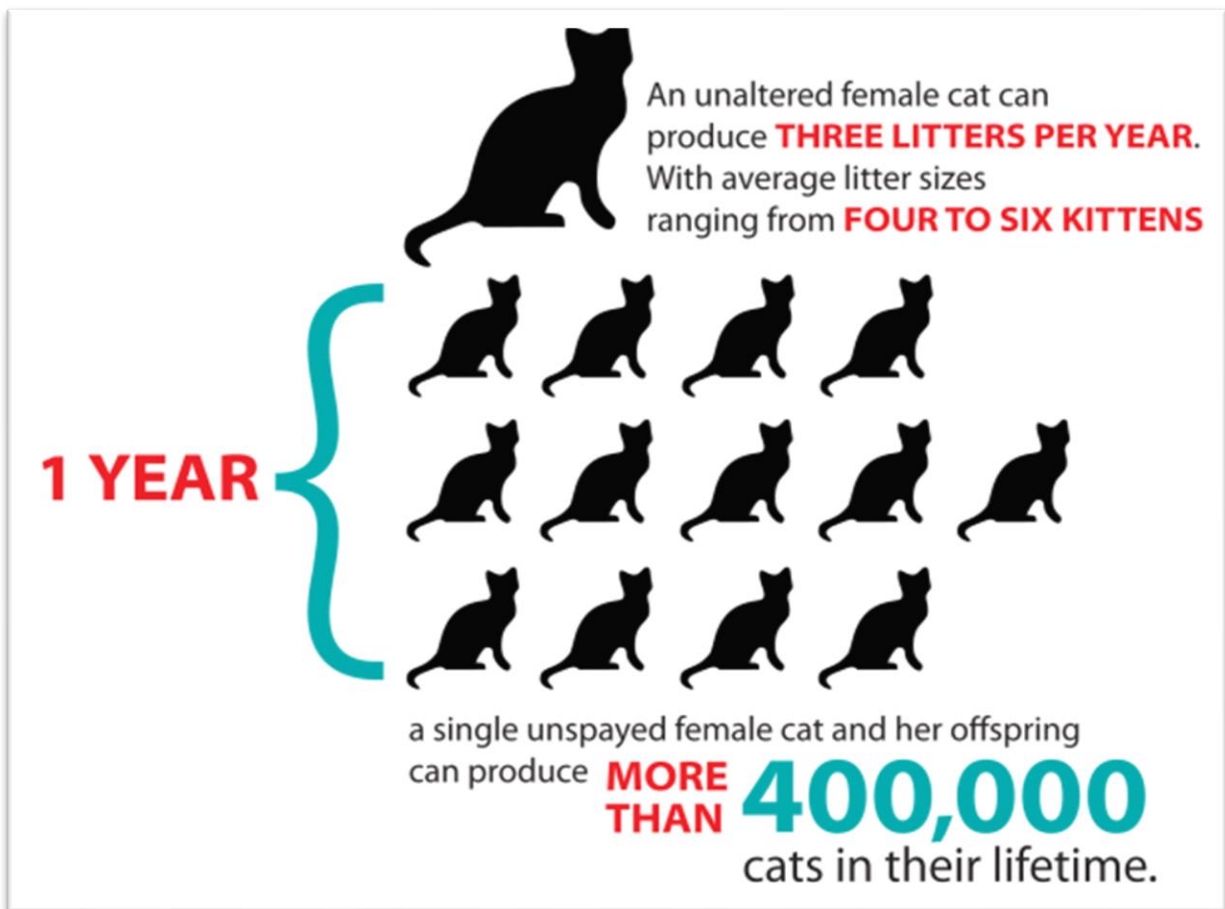
NEUTER

The captured cats are brought in their traps to a spay/neuter provider. Typically, TNR programs also provide vaccinations against certain diseases, like rabies.



EAR TIPPING is the universal sign of a neutered feral cat. The procedure involves removing about 1/4" off the tip of the cat's ear (typically the left ear) while the cat is anesthetized for spaying/neutering; healing is rapid. The mark will help prevent unnecessary surgery, confinement, or euthanasia.

Benefits of TNR



1. Prevents overpopulation of feral cats.
2. Feline nuisance behaviors like fighting, spraying, yowling, etc. are reduced.
3. Most cost-effective and humane way to control the feral cat population.
4. TNR-cats provide excellent rodent control.
5. Improves quality of life for TNR-cats and the people who coexist with them.

We have made the decision - we are going to get the feral cats fixed! Now what? Doing a TNR project well requires planning and preparation. Taking the time to think it out will make the process easier for us and the cats, and it will help us avoid the pitfalls that can happen when we have got a feral cat sitting in a trap and are not sure what to do next.

Here are the seven basic steps we will follow:

1. KNOW OUR STUFF - Working with feral cats safely and effectively requires some training. The good news is there is plenty of informational material and advisers available to us.



2. WORK THE NEIGHBORHOOD - We call them "community" cats for a reason - they don't usually live-in isolation, but are found among us, in the backyard, next to the office parking lot, behind the supermarket, etc. Many people will interact with the cats daily and attitudes may range from positive to hostile. The more informed we are about the neighborhood and how people feel about and act towards the cats, the better the situation we can create for them. We will walk around, talk to people, ask them what they know about the cats. We will hand out TNR infographics. We will also address issues residents may be having and explain how TNR can help. We will need to recruit feeders and volunteers for the trapping. This requires permission from property owners for needed access. Remember that a cooperative and understanding community will make it much easier for us and the cats, both during and after the trapping.

3. ESTABLISH A FEEDING PATTERN, COUNT THE CATS AND SET OUT SHELTERS AND FEEDING STATIONS - To prepare for the trapping, we must get the cats on a regular feeding schedule - as consistently as we can, put out their food at the same time and place daily, then take anything uneaten away after 30 minutes or as soon thereafter as we can. Cats are habitual creatures and will learn to all show up at the appointed hour - which means they will come to us at that same hour when it is time to trap. While establishing a pattern, we will count the cats and assess if any have special needs like young kittens we will want to foster. We will put out feeding stations and shelters if we have not already. It is especially important to have good shelter in place when winter trapping in cold climates, so the spayed females with their shaved bellies will have a warm, dry place to sleep.



4. FIND A HOLDING SPACE - Whether we are catching all the colony cats at once or aiming for one or two at a time, we should allow two to three days to trap, one day for the spay/neuter surgeries, and one to three days for post-surgical recovery. During this period of four to seven days, we will need a place to hold the cats while they're confined in their traps. The space must be warm (at least 65 degrees F.), dry (protected from rain and other elements) and secure (no access to strangers or other animals). Examples might include a garage, basement, shed, barn, warehouse, empty office, spare room, or bathroom.

5. ARRANGE FOR SPAY/NEUTER, TRAPS AND TRANSPORTATION - Once we know how many cats we are dealing with, we will locate a low cost spay/neuter provider and schedule appointments. We will reserve traps and any other equipment we will need. We also will arrange transportation as well - trips may be needed back and forth from the colony site to the holding space, to and from the spay/neuter clinic and to pick up and drop off traps. That will require help from the community.



6. ACTION! - Now we are ready for trapping! We will withhold all food the day before trapping begins so the cats are hungry. We could do everything else correctly, but if the cats are not hungry, they will not go in the traps. We will leave two days to trap even if we are after only one or two cats, and three days if we are after more than a few. That way, we are protected if there's bad weather or someone unexpectedly leaves out a bowl of food that morning. On the scheduled day, we will transport the cats to the clinic, then pick them up and bring them to the holding

space for recovery. After they have had enough time to recuperate, they will be returned to their territory. If there were a couple of cats we didn't catch in time for our spay/neuter day, we will keep trying to catch them for as long as the rest of the colony is confined. The hassle of arranging their surgeries will often be less than the difficulty of trying to trap them later when the rest of the cats are loose, too.

7. CARETAKING - The cats will soon return to their normal routine and our job, and those working with us, will be to provide regular food and shelter, keep an eye out for any new arrivals and smooth out any wrinkles that come up with neighbors. Now that the cats are fixed, we will not have to worry about kittens, there will be far fewer complaints and we will know we have done what we can to make this a better world for feral cats and the residents who coexist with them.

It takes a village to make our community a better place for all living beings.

