Benefits of a Community, Animal Control, and Shelter Supported TNR Program

Presented by

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Alley Cat Allies
The cats’ leading advocate
Today’s Topics

• Understanding community cats

• Trap-Neuter-Return

• Case studies

• Talking points for TNR opponents
MY BIO

• 14 years in animal control
• Virginia Animal Control Association’s Public Service Award and more
• Member of the National Animal Control and Virginia Animal Control Associations
• Board member of Virginia Federation of Humane Societies and Caring Hands Animal Support and Education
• Helped Trap-Neuter-Return more than 3,500 cats since 2009
• TNR convert!
History of Cat Domestication

It wasn’t convenient (for humans) for cats to live indoors until 1946

9500 Years Ago

7500–7000 BC
Cyprus - Neolithic

4000–2000 BC
Egypt

500 BC
Greece

50 BC
England

1620
Cats on the Mayflower

1871
Cat Show

1946
Cat Litter Invented

www.alleycat.org
Who are Community Cats?

Community cats:
- live outdoors
- avoid humans
- not socialized to people
- unadoptable

Often called:
community, feral, stray, wild, alley, outdoor, barn, neighborhood cats

HELPFUL RESOURCE LINK:
alleycat.org/community-cat-care
Community cats in shelters

• Shelters are designed for adoptable animals; by definition, most community cats are not adoptable

• Feral cats almost always have a 100% rate of euthanasia

• What have we tried without success??
  • Catch-and-kill/
    Trap-and-remove
  • Ignore
What is Trap-Neuter-Return?

Method by which entire colonies of community cats are humanely trapped, spayed or neutered, vaccinated, eartipped, and returned to their outdoor homes.

HELPFUL RESOURCE LINK: alleycat.org/TNR
TNR Across the Country

2003 v. 2017

23 jurisdictions in 2003

At least 650 jurisdictions with a TNR ordinance and/or policy now!
WHAT DOESN’T WORK

• Feeding Bans
  • Cats more visible
  • Not allowing proper care

• Remove to shelters
  • Costly
  • Increases euthanasia
  • Not a long-term solution

• Do nothing
  • Population expands exponentially
  • Public health not addressed
Why are communities embracing TNR?

It’s good public policy!

➢ Public support
➢ Effectively manages population
➢ Improves cats’ lives
➢ Makes cats better neighbors
➢ Helps the shelters: reduces intake & euthanasia
➢ Saves taxpayer dollars
The department also serves Ronald Reagan National Airport, Arlington National Cemetery, and the Pentagon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>26 square miles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>224,000 residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Control Staff Officers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Animal Control Service Calls</td>
<td>7,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>7:00am – 10:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>7 Days a Week</td>
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WHY TRAP AND EUTHANIZE WASN’T WORKING

• Cat population continued to increase
• Nuisance calls continued to increase
• Low staff morale
• Bad image for the public
• Caregivers were hiding
• Couldn’t keep up with the kittens
Removal backfires

“[L]ow level ad-hoc culling” led to larger populations than in colonies left alone.

“...relative abundance and activity of feral cats increased in the cull-sites.”

WHY ANIMAL CONTROL GOT INVOLVED IN TNR

• Participation from the public slowed down

• Animal control knew where the problem areas were located

• We were seeing the cats out in the community
HOW ANIMAL CONTROL INCREASED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

• Canvassing of known complaint spots searching for caregivers

• We trained, and accompanied when needed, volunteers to canvass

• Educate callers on the TNR program
WHY DID ANIMAL CONTROL EMBRACE TNR?

• TNR was working

• We wanted to work with the public in improving the community

• Community service program

• Why not just take over the program and specialize it in our own way?
HOW ANIMAL CONTROL IMPROVED THE TNR PROGRAM

- Contacted caregivers
- Created a “caregiver list”
- Assisted with trapping
- Created cat food bank for caregivers
- Assisted in scheduling TNR surgeries
- Educated caregivers
### ARLINGTON COUNTY

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<tr>
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<th>2009</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nuisance cat complaints</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total cat intake</td>
<td>1276</td>
<td>884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cats euthanized</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of cats euthanized</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
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SOME MORE PROOF...

- Animal control was able to shift its focus
- Caregivers could trust ACOs
- Looking for kittens to foster
- Staff morale improved
The community began embracing the shelter after seeing how we were managing the feral cat population through a humane program.

The neighbors that were originally concerned about the feral cats in their neighborhood were now supporters of the program.
Best Practices for Colony Care

Feeding practices & outdoor shelter guidelines

- Inconspicuous is best
- Keep them neat and clean
- Feed appropriate amount of food on a schedule and remove uneaten food after 30 minutes

HELPFUL RESOURCE LINKS:
alleycat.org/ColonyCare
alleycat.org/WinterWeather
Municipal Shelter
(pop. of 1.131 million)

Benefits
• After implementing TNR, the save rate for catsjumped to over 90% and the intake of all cats has dropped 16%

The Program
• Officers do not participate in TNR but the shelter coordinates TNR clinics and organizes over 350 volunteers
• Shelter fundraises and applies for TNR grants
• Potential volunteers take a training course on TNR
Incidental benefits

- 20% decline in dead cat pick up
- 99% decrease in upper respiratory disease

“Because of its close association with herpesviral activation and stress, URI is also a bellweather for overall shelter cat health and wellbeing”
- UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program

Why TNR?
Real Life Examples

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
ADDRESSING CONCERNS: HUMANE DETERRENTS

HELPFUL RESOURCE LINK: alleycat.org/HumaneDeterrents
“Spotsylvania County’s Community Cat/TNR program has been very beneficial to our animal shelter and the community.”
-Willie Tydings
Manager of Animal Control in Spotsylvania, VA, and President of VACA

“…This change in environment improves the adoptability of all of the animals in our building.”
-Chief Randazzo
Director/Chief Animal Control Officer, Macomb County, MI Animal Control Division

“…it is the RIGHT thing to do. There is no nobility in killing healthy animals. It causes high turnover in shelter staffs, leads to compassion fatigue, and generates a bad reputation for any shelter.”
-Michael Delp
Director of Johnson County, IN Animal Control
QUESTIONS?

Thanks for attending!

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