



Tompkins County SPCA

Feral Cat Series

Trap, Neuter, Return

What is TNR?

Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) is widely recognized as the most humane and effective strategy for reducing feral cat populations. TNR involves humanely trapping feral cats and transporting them to a veterinary clinic where they are spayed or neutered. At this time, they may also receive a health check, vaccinations, and can be treated for routine medical conditions. After surgery, the cat recuperates for a day or two and is then returned back to his colony habitat where he will live out his natural life. Since the cats are no longer reproducing, the colony will gradually diminish in size. And by reducing or eliminating mating, fighting, and wandering, TNR makes the colony more stable, impacts the influx of newcomers, and improves the health of the cats.



Trap and Kill

As a general rule, feral cats cannot be adopted into human homes, and relocating them to another area is extremely difficult. Therefore, in most cases, if feral cats are taken to an animal shelter instead of being altered and returned, they will be killed. Besides being inhumane, trap and remove is only a temporary "solution," opening up an ecological void which more cats-unneutered-will eventually fill, starting the breeding process all over again. Trap and remove, then, is an endless cycle of breeding and killing, while TNR is a lifesaving and permanent solution.

Case Studies

A survey of feral cat caregivers found that every caregiver who implemented a TNR program saw their colony stabilize or decrease in number. And after caregivers at Stanford University started a successful TNR program, the campus cat population reached zero population growth almost immediately. Today, through natural attrition and the adoption of tame cats, the colony has decreased by over 50%.

In contrast, at Georgetown University, school officials trapped feral cats and took them to the local animal control agency where the cats were killed. Less than six months later, 10 new unaltered cats and 20 kittens appeared on the campus.

How You Can Help

While it is advisable to provide food and water on a daily basis, for those who do not wish to take these steps, just having the cats altered will help a great deal. Here are five good reasons to get started with TNR:

1. **It's effective.** Having the cats altered and returning them to their habitats is the quickest way to permanently reduce feral cat populations.
2. **It's easy.** We will lend you a trap and show you how. We also regularly hold free clinics to alter feral cats.
3. **It's humane.** There are very few feral cat sanctuaries and even fewer volunteers seeking to adopt feral cats. If you trap the cats and take them to animal control shelters, they will be killed since feral cats cannot be adopted into homes.
4. **You'll be in good company.** Tens of thousands of compassionate people across the country are helping ferals by having them spayed or neutered. Join the crowd!

