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

Presented by
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Associate Director of
Animal Shelter & Animal Control Engagement
Today’s Topics

• Understanding community cats

• Trap-Neuter-Return

• Case studies
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

Present

- 1620: Cats on the Mayflower
- 1871: Cat Show
- 1946: Cat Litter Invented
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
Cat Behavior

• Both are *Felis catus*, the domestic cat species

• Different socialization levels to people
  • Community cats display variety of behaviors
  • Range of socialized/friendly to feral/avoidant

HELPFUL RESOURCE LINK:
alleycat.org/StrayorFeral
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-euthanize/Trap-and-remove
  - Ignore

www.alleycat.org • facebook • instagram • twitter /AlleyCatAllies
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

www.alleycat.org • /AlleyCatAllies
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>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>
</tr>
<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.”


Helpful resource link: alleycat.org/VacuumEffectScience

Other cats move into the area after humans disturb the ecosystem that has been established.
Animal Welfare League of Arlington decided feral cats would not be euthanized, so we needed an option for residents.

Ethics committee evaluated whether TNR was a viable option for our county and decided to approve the program.

The animal shelter board of directors approved the program with the county’s support.

Alley Cat Allies agreed to assist with resources.

Animal control was not involved or supportive of TNR at this time.
THE INITIAL TNR PROGRAM

- Alley Cat Allies monthly workshop
- Shelter loaned traps to the public
- Shelter veterinarian performed surgery
- All cats were spayed/neutered, eartipped, vaccinated against rabies, and given a health check
- Foster program for bottle baby kittens

Animal Control was not involved or supportive of TNR at this time
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

www.alleycat.org
### ARLINGTON COUNTY

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2015</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nuisance cat complaints</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<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>
</tbody>
</table>
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 cats **jumped 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

FAIRFAX COUNTY, VA

www.alleycat.org
Boardwalk Cats Project

The Program

• Started in June 2000
• 5 staff and 30 dedicated volunteers
• Currently 89 cats in 15 colonies
• Most of the boardwalk cats are well into their teens.

Benefits

• Since TNR started, the boardwalk’s cat population has declined by more than 72 percent! No new litters have been born for years.
• Top tourist attraction for Atlantic City
“I want to thank you very much for taking interest in Atlantic City and showing how we can all live together on this earth and on this beach. We’re proud of our cats.”

- Atlantic City Mayor Don Guardian
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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Alley Cat Allies

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