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Best Practices for TNR

1) Post-surgery recovery time

Recommended minimum post-surgery recovery time is 48 hours for males and females. Only if circumstances require, 24 hours is acceptable for males or nursing mothers, but 48 hours is preferred. All cats should be checked prior to release to make sure they are alert and that there are no medical conditions requiring further veterinary treatment, such as severe upper respiratory infection, bleeding or excessive lethargy.

2) Holding/recovery space

Space in which the cats are held during the trapping and for post-surgery recovery should be warm, dry and secure. "Warm" meaning at least 65 to 70 degrees (especially post-surgery when the cats' body temperatures may be lower than normal), "dry" meaning protected from the elements, and "secure" meaning the cats are not accessible to other animals or anyone not associated with the project.

3) Trapping

To be effective, 100% of the cats in a colony must be TNR'ed or placed up for adoption. Mass trapping should take place whenever possible.

4) FIV/FelV testing

FIV/FelV testing is not recommended except when test results would be useful in diagnosing the condition of a symptomatic cat, or when a cat is being considered for adoption.

5) Vaccinations

It is strongly recommended that rabies vaccinations be administered. Administering other vaccinations, particularly FVRCP, is questionable because of the inefficacy of the vaccine without a booster and because of the stress on the immune system of multiple vaccinations at the time of neutering or spaying.

6) Eartipping

Returned cats should be eartipped in accordance with the universal symbol of an altered feral cat - 1/4 inch off the tip of the left ear in a straight line cut.

7) Long-term colony care

Cats and their colonies who are TNR'ed should be provided with long-term care, including the provision of adequate food, shelter and medical care. Consistent monitoring by a designated caregiver should include regular tracking updates as well as taking reasonable efforts to ensure rabies vaccination are kept up to date.

The goal of Project TNR, a program of Animal Protection League of NJ, is to introduce Trap-Neuter-Return to communities as the humane, effective and cost-effective method of controlling feral cat populations. Trap-Neuter-Return is a comprehensive program that will result in lower animal control costs, fewer to no births, reduction of nuisance complaints by residents and the alleviation of public health concerns.