

# Board of Chosen Freeholders County of Burlington New Jersey



Burlington County Health Dept.  
Raphael Meadow Health Center  
15 Pioneer Boulevard, Westampton  
P.O. Box 6000  
Mount Holly, N.J. 08060

Tele: (609) 265-5548  
Fax: (609) 265-3152

March 26, 2009

In January of 2005, the Board of Chosen Freeholders of Burlington County issued a Resolution encouraging, in essence, the implementation of Trap Neuter and Return (TNR) as a tool to reduce the number of feral cats, reduce rabies, lower complaints due to the proliferation of non-sterilized colonies, reduce costs and intake numbers at the County Animal Shelter and educate the public as well as various stakeholders. We haven't eliminated other means of feral cat control where necessary, nor does the TNR program eliminate that need if required.

The TNR program in Burlington County is a private initiative, initially funded by the *Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation* and continued through volunteer fund raising efforts, private citizen contributions and other grants. Gordon B. Stull, VMD has been the lead person in the County developing TNR. Through Dr. Stull's efforts, a model ordinance for municipalities wishing to implement TNR has been developed and in some cases, specifically tailored to meet the needs of the municipality. In addition, caregiver agreements and training on the proper management of colonies is continually provided.

Dr Stull's work on the TNR project includes; local presentations, training of caregivers, immunization and neutering/eartipping/id-microchipping. Dr. Gordon B. Stull VMD as Director of the Burlington County Feral Cat Initiative (BCCI), a non-profit New Jersey corporation has been working on the TNR initiative for several years and successfully implemented the program in 7 of our 40 municipalities.

The County and as well the Burlington County Health Department has an inherent interest in TNR for the following reasons:


- It is another useful and humane tool in the control of feral cats
- Reports have shown that where implemented successfully and intelligently with training, education and follow-up, TNR has dramatically reduced feral cat populations and subsequent complaints.
- TNR coupled with rabies immunizations provides a measure of rabies protection where none existed before.
- Trapping and euthanasia (TE) has not worked as a method of control or solution based on the number of cat intakes to the Animal Shelter which doubled over a ten year period when TE is the only method of control.
- In order to reduce the feral cat population by 10 % approximately 50% of all the feral cats would have to be trapped and euthanized. That figure is about 30,000 cats in Burlington County and Animal Shelters could never handle that type of influx considering holding, feeding and care.
- TNR is far less expensive than TE when all the full costs are considered. In fact, it is less expensive to neuter/vaccinate/eartip/microchip a feral cat through the BCCI program than for the combined costs incurred to amortize shelter building costs, provide heat, and

utilities, pay staffing and benefits, trap, remove, transport, house, care/feed, euthanize and dispose of that same cat.

- Caregivers (those who feed feral cats) go “underground” where TNR is not an option and still feed colonies despite “do not feed” policies, and regulations. The “do not feed” approach is attune to asking people don't feed the pigeons, don't feed the ducks, etc. In essence, it does not work. What does work is gaining cooperation of the “caregivers” in a comprehensive program of education and TNR.
- The Department clearly recognized various feline diseases and rabies is one of those which TNR with immunization begins to address. On the other hand, cats serve to control rodent populations and some of those disease vectors of rodents. Basically, the arguments of the other cat diseases are disingenuous and overstated as various precautions with all animals are essential. Are we trapping and removing deer because of Lyme's disease? Are we trapping birds, ducks and geese because of the threat of avian flu? Are we removing the timber rattler because it's poisonous? That would actually be illegal and rightfully so. Can we fish for the great white shark in New Jersey because it's a “man eater,” no that's also illegal and as well it should be.
- The New Jersey Animal Welfare Task Force Report of 2002 provides substantial reasons to support TNR and outlines its merits clearly in a well thought out and presented manner. (See the Animal Welfare Task Force Report pp 69 through 76).
- Our Department supports uniform cat licensing with a low fee for spay/neutered cats and a high fee for intact cats and as well public education in understanding responsible pet ownership. Those are other tools along with TNR which are needed and will work over time.

In closing, those who are opposed to TRN haven't accepted the fact that TE has not worked and under the present conditions will likely be an unworkable condition for all situations of feral cat control.

TNR may not work in some situations and we also understand that issue. However, most of those situations occur due to poor implementation and a lack of a structured approach and the model ordinance address those situations. We are hopeful in Burlington County that TNR will be successful in reducing the incidence of rabies and the number of feral cats in those areas where implemented. Or we could be like Dr. Phil and continue with TE and say “So how's that working for you.”

  
William M. Weisgarber, MA  
Program Manager/Disease Prevention and Control  
Burlington County Health Department  
15 Pioneer Boulevard  
Westampton NJ 08060  
Phone 609 265-3738  
Main 609 265-5548  
Fax 609 265-3152  
WWeisgarber@co.burlington.nj.us