Animal Protection League of NEW JERSEY

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Learn The Terminology of TNR

TNR - Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) - the standard method of reducing community cat populations via nonlethal sterilization. A comprehensive, ongoing program in which stray and feral acting cats already living outdoors in cities, towns, and rural areas are humanely trapped, then evaluated, vaccinated, and sterilized by veterinarians. Kittens and friendly cats are rescued and adopted into good homes. Adult feral acting cats are returned to their familiar habitat under the lifelong care of volunteers.

Some organizations choose to include vaccinate – TNVR- to emphasize how TNR offers cats and communities rabies protection by vaccinating these cats. Some organizations include management after the TNR to emphasise the importance of continued care for returned cats – TNRM or even TNVRM. We opt for the basic essentials and use TNR to refer to this process which always includes rabies vaccination and continued colony management after return.

Feral Cat – Describes the behavior of a cat NOT a circumstance of birth or a breed. Feral behavior indicates a cat who is not socialized or accustomed to people. A feral acting cat may run away from people and not want to be touched. They may hiss when scared. They may try to strike you with claws if they are cornered and cannot escape. A feral acting cat will always choose escape over attack unless they are prevented from escaping. This behavior can change over time as a result of positive human interactions, but some cats will remain fearful and act feral their whole lives despite positive human interactions.

We recognize the rights of feral acting cats to remain in the environment they are most comfortable with and we endeavor to accommodate their choice by supporting them with access to food, water, shelter and medical care as needed.

Stray Cat – A cat that strayed from home and became lost or was deliberately abandoned. These cats either remain social / friendly towards people or can easily be resocialized and placed in rescue for reclamation or adoption.

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Feral Cat Colony – A group of community cats living in a specific geographic area. Prior to the implementation of Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), these colonies consist of both stray and feral acting cats of all ages, from kittens through adults. After TNR is completed, this colony should consist exclusively of adult feral acting cats.

Adoption – Feral acting kittens under 12 weeks of age can frequently be socialized and adopted into homes. Friendly cats whether adults or kittens should always go to rescue whenever possible. While feral acting adults or older kittens may well become socialized over time the resources needed to do so are generally better off being utilized to sterilize a greater number of cats and having an overall net positive effect rather than investing these limited resources on a limited number of cats to be socialized.

Advocacy – "The act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy; active support" (American Heritage Dictionary, Fourth Edition). Community cat caregivers, both individuals and groups, are advocating for nonlethal community cat reduction throughout the nation.

Eartipping / Ear Tip – A technique of painlessly removing a quarter inch off the top of a community cat's left ear while the cat is anesthetized for spaying/neutering. Eartipping is the universal symbol of and only proven way to permanently identify (both close up and from a distance) a cat that has been evaluated, vaccinated, and sterilized. Eartipping ensures that a sterile cat will not undergo unnecessary repeat trapping and surgery.

Establishing Colonies – This refers to the myth that community cat caregivers somehow create and establish new cat colonies where previously there were no cats, by providing resources of food, water and shelter.

The truth is that community cat colonies already exist in abundance in the United States and caring individuals provide resources for these cats **after** they recognize the cats are living unsupported in an area, not before.

Community cat advocates and caregivers who practice TNR and follow TNR Best Practices remove friendly cats and kittens into rescue and return healthy adult feral acting cats to their

outdoor homes after being sterilized and vaccinated, thereby reducing the population both immediately and in the long term. Caregivers do not establish new colonies.

Euthanasia – "The act or practice of ending the life of an individual suffering from a terminal illness or an incurable condition, as by lethal injection or the suspension of extraordinary medical treatment" (American Heritage Dictionary, Fourth Edition). The term "euthanasia" does **NOT** apply to killing healthy companion animals and/or community cats because there are too many of them or because someone has complained about their existence.

SNAP TEST - A blood draw to test for presence of feline aids (FIV) or Feline Leukemia (FeLV) viruses. FeLV is a retrovirus specific to cats, which can cause an immune system breakdown, making the cat susceptible to diseases it might otherwise be able to fight off. It cannot be transmitted to humans nor can it be transmitted to other species. FeLV positive cats may remain asymptomatic (although contagious, they are shedding the virus, primarily in saliva) for many years. With supportive care and symptomatic treatments, many FeLV positive cats live a high-quality life for months to years, while others may succumb quickly.

FeLV is spread primarily from mother to kitten. FIV is also a retrovirus specific to cats, not transmissible to humans or other species and only transmissible between cats primarily by deep bites which result in blood to blood transmission, or via mating of intact cats. As such, FIV can be completely controlled by sterilization of all cats in a colony. FIV-positive cats often live long, symptom-free lives and once neutered, can safely be around other cats.

Caregiver – A compassionate human who feeds community cats, performs Trap-Neuter-Return, and provides long-term care and monitoring for adult cats that are returned. Caregivers are men and women of all ages from all walks of life. Most of the leading feral cat organizations were founded by caregivers whose commitment to community cats grew to encompass entire communities.

Socialization – a process where attempts are made to encourage a feral acting cat to be comfortable around humans so that they may be offered a chance at adoption and an indoor life. Socialization requires that the cats be confined for a short period of time during which they are talked to and gently held and petted for increasing periods until they come to form a human-animal bond. Usually, the younger the kitten, the easier socialization will be. Many have tried various techniques such as clicker training to successfully socialize feral cats. Resources

allocated to socialization must be carefully weighed against resources no longer available to remaining intact community cats.

Goal – Responsible community cat advocates and practitioners of TNR share one main goal with wildlife and environmental groups, animal control agencies, and public health officials: to reduce the number of community cats in the environment in the long term. We strive to demonstrate to these groups that TNR coupled with other nonlethal practices is showing results and should become the standard method of community cat control everywhere.

Groups that advocate adoption for all community cats regardless of their level of socialization are ignoring the fate of such cats when placed in municipal sheltering facilities and are ignoring the likelihood that while effort and resources and spent on placing cats elsewhere, those remaining outside continue to breed and therefore unless the resources are readily available to place every single cat, this approach will fail at reducing community cat populations.

Humane Box Trap – A metal wire box rigged so that when an animal steps into it, the door closes, preventing the animal from leaving. These traps do not cause the animal any pain and are the only type of trap to be used for Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). Ideally the trap used should also have a rear sliding release door.

Managed Colony – A group of community cats living together and having strong blood ties in which all cats have been sterilized and vaccinated and are provided daily food, water and shelter by a volunteer caregiver. The caregiver regularly monitors cats and captures any who need veterinary care, in addition to trapping any newcomers to be sterilized and vaccinated. A properly managed colony is a healthy, stable colony in which no kittens are born and over time the size of the colony dwindles.

No-Kill – A belief that healthy animals should not be killed simply because there are too many of them. No-Kill advocates that animals sick or injured beyond treatment should be euthanized (see Euthanasia), but that healthy or treatable animals should be given the opportunity and resources to live.

Predation – “The capturing of prey as a means of maintaining life” (American Heritage Dictionary, Fourth Edition). The question of what, if any, role cats (both community and

companion cats who are allowed to roam) play in the decline of wildlife is controversial. Some environmental and wildlife groups maintain that cats are decimating wildlife and that all cats must be removed from the outdoors. This position is flawed on two counts.

First, by far the primary issue in wildlife decline is ongoing habitat destruction, disruption, and fragmentation caused by development and other activities associated with human population growth. The major reputable studies on avian and wildlife population declines all point to habitat loss, drought, and pesticides produced by human activities that must be curtailed or corrected if wildlife is to prosper once again.

Second, removing cats from the outdoors sounds like a simple, straightforward operation, except that, as a nation, we have been trapping and removing (killing) cats for decades with no effect whatsoever on reducing their numbers (see Trap and Remove). Communities that practice this outdated approach have as many or more community cats as ever. The critical point about predation is that, no matter what role cats may play in any predatory situation, the solution is to have fewer cats in the environment (see Goal). Trap and remove schemes have failed for decades to achieve this goal.

TNR, on the other hand, has been succeeding. The answer to predation concerns is for community cat advocates and environmental and wildlife groups to endorse spay/neuter for companion and community cats as the standard method of cat population control everywhere.

Rabies – A virus that affects the central nervous system of mammals, causing first encephalopathy and ultimately death. In the United States, rabies is overwhelmingly a disease of wildlife; the vector species are raccoons, bats, skunks, and foxes. Cats routinely account for about 3 percent of rabies cases and are not a primary vector. Pre-exposure rabies vaccine is available for both animals and humans.

Treatment for humans exposed to rabies is completely effective if it is administered before the onset of symptoms. After symptoms occur, there is no cure. While rabies is a lethal disease to be treated with utmost caution, rabies control is a major public health victory in the United States. Human deaths from rabies average 2 to 3 per year. The last recorded death of a person who had contracted rabies from a cat was in 1975.

Relocation – In almost all cases, feral acting cats are better off being returned to their established outside homes after sterilization, to be watched over by caregivers. Cats bond with their territories and with other cats in their colony. Relocation is difficult, time consuming, and often costly, and comes with no guarantee that the cats will stay in their new location with typicall a 25% success rate at best once cats are no longer confined. Advocates strongly

recommend that all measures be taken to correct problems connected with keeping cats in their territories. If, however, compelling difficulties force the relocation of a colony, please read relocation protocols carefully and follow them completely for the greatest chance of success.

Sanctuaries – Proposals to confine feral acting cats in sanctuaries are not plausible. Establishing an animal sanctuary requires land; building(s); hiring/training staff and/or recruiting, training, and maintaining volunteers; ongoing food and veterinary care; insurance; licensing; and ongoing funding. Few cat sanctuaries can house even 100 cats, due to the cost of the elements listed above. The most conservative estimate of feral cat numbers in the United States is 20 million. It would require some 200,000 sanctuaries to house them. Those that are available are quickly filled to capacity and can no longer accept more cats.

Trap-and-Remove – The traditional approach to reducing community cat numbers –trap-and-remove schemes—may achieve a temporary lowering of cat numbers, but survivors of the campaign breed prolifically and outside cats can move in to take advantage of the now available sources of food and shelter and form a new colony (see Vacuum Effect). Trap and remove could only have a chance of success if it were conducted across the entire nation in every corner at the same time. Trap and remove conducted on an actual island (Marion Island) took 14 years of extreme and inhumane trap and remove efforts before eventually being successful – and when conducted in small pockets of not isolated land is never successful. Trap-and-remove is usually a euphemism for killing cats.

Vacuum Effect – Community cats establish territories based on availability of food sources and shelter. When the cats are removed from this environment, more cats breeding in surrounding areas move in to take advantage of those resources. These new unsterilized cats will breed to the capacity of the site. The vacuum effect has been documented around the world.

Zoonotic Diseases – Diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans. Rabies is the most well-known of the zoonotic diseases (see Rabies), although there are numerous others, many not involving cats. Opponents of TNR sometimes cite zoonotic diseases as threats to public health and reasons to eliminate community cat colonies, but it has been demonstrated that cats are rarely the primary or even a significant source of disease, that the diseases connected with cats are extremely rare, and that community cats enjoy the same level of health as companion cats in the United States.