

Project TNR

NJ's Humane Solution for Feral Cats



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Eartipping *(info from Neighborhood Cats)*

Eartipping is the universal sign of a neutered feral cat. The procedure involves removing approximately a quarter-inch off the tip of the cat's left ear in a straight line cut. This is done while the cat is anesthetized for spay/neutering and healing is rapid. As a guide to veterinarians, a detailed description of the procedure is provided on page 2.

When we first started working with feral cats, we avoided eartipping as it seemed like a kind of mutilation. But everything else we tried failed. Taking photos of the neutered cats was fine if you saw the cats often and could easily tell similar-looking ones apart. But in colonies where the cats were all black and white and the caregiver caught random glimpses, the photos were useless. We tried tattooing the inner ears, but then it was impossible to tell at a distance whether the cat had the tattoo and needed to be trapped or not. Ear tags, which are small metal clips, can get caught in twigs, branches or the like and cause the ear to tear and become infected. In some cases, they fall off.

We were won over to eartipping when we had a cat operated on who had already been spayed, but not eartipped. Fortunately, the veterinarian saw the scar and stopped the procedure. Nonetheless, the cat was unnecessarily trapped and anesthetized, with all the corresponding stress.

In addition to avoiding needless trapping and surgery, eartipping also benefits the cats by clearly identifying them as members of a managed TNR colony. In New York City, animal control notifies us whenever an eartipped cat ends up in one of their facilities, giving us the opportunity to find the caretaker. In addition, depending on local policies, animal control may refrain from trapping eartipped cats, knowing they "belong" to someone.



Detailed Protocol for Eartipping by Dr. Laura Gay Senk, DVM
<http://www.myvetonline.com/drsenk>

Procedure:

1. The ears are examined for ear mites, cleaned and treated (milbemite; milbemycin - novartis , acarexx; ivermectin - idexx, or 0.1 ml eqvalan; L.A. ivermectin injectable solution into each ear)
2. The tip of the left ear is given a sterile scrub after placing cotton at the entrance of the canal so that no excess prep solution runs down into the ear canal.

The goal of Project TNR, a program of Animal Protection League of New Jersey, 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.

3. A straight hemostat is held across the top 3/8 inch of the left ear, applying gentle pressure. Do not clamp the hemostat closed or crushing tissue damage may result beneath the ear tip.

4. The top 3/8 inch of the left ear is cut off straight across the top using a straight edge sharp scissors (there is less bleeding when using scissors than with using a scalpel blade). Proportionately less than 3/8 inch is removed for kittens. It is the straight edge on the top of the ear that is identifying, not the amount removed. Therefore, only 3/8 inch of ear tip need be removed.

5. A hemostatic paste (kwik stop) is prepared ahead of time with lidocaine and epinephrine to make a thick paste. It's applied across the cut surface with a Q - tip. This will lessen the pain and resultant head shaking after recovery.

6. This paste will immediately stop the bleeding once the gentle pressure of the hemostat is removed. If bleeding does occur, apply more kwik stop and if needed, reapply pressure for a short time.

