

Project TNR
NJ's Humane Solution for Feral Cats



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TNR: How Communities Can Stop Feral Cat Overpopulation

Arguably, the greatest hurdle to managing the cat overpopulation crisis in NJ is the public's non-compliance in spaying and neutering companion cats and allowing them (especially unaltered ones) to roam free. It is these actions that provide a constant "supply" of cats which add to and increase the burgeoning outdoor cat population.

Until such time as the public becomes responsible in this regard, there are four options for outdoor cats that municipalities pursue: 1) ignore them, 2) trap and remove, 3) institute a feeding ban or 4) trap, alter and return.

The first option, while clearly no solution at all, is the one that many municipalities choose: ignore it and it will go away. Nothing could be further from the truth. Two cats become twenty in no time and the problem just gets bigger and bigger.

The second option, which at first glance may appear to be a solution, has its own shortcomings. Trap and remove creates a void that will almost always be filled by other cats (as long as there are irresponsible people who don't alter and who abandon their cats). These unaltered cats will reproduce and the cycle will continue to repeat itself. And then there is the issue of what to do with the removed cats. Not all will be able to be adopted into homes and there are scant few reputable sanctuaries to take in unsocialized feral cats. Sadly, and most often, the end result is that these cats are killed.

Because of this reality, most residents who feed feral cats or know where they are, will not report their existence to whereabouts to local authorities or cooperate with efforts at trap and remove. This makes it impossible for animals control officers to find, much less remove, enough feral cats to get ahead of the reproductive curve and make a difference in overall numbers.

The third option, passing a ban on feeding outdoor cats, is also one that municipalities feel will solve the problem. However, a prohibition on the feeding of feral cats will not guarantee a decrease in the number of cats if there is still a food source available, intentional or otherwise. Additionally, all the laws in the

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.

world will not stop kind-hearted individuals from feeding hungry cats. The feeding will continue under cover of darkness and out of sight of the authorities.

These above three options are the ones most employed by municipalities in New Jersey. If they were the solutions they are held out to be, NJ would not have its current feral cat overpopulation crisis.

The fourth option Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) is the internationally accepted, effective and humane method of controlling feral cat populations. It is a full management plan in which stray and feral cats, already living outdoors in cities, towns, and rural areas, are humanely trapped, vaccinated, sterilized by veterinarians and evaluated. Kittens and tame cats are adopted into good homes. Healthy adult cats, unsocialized to humans, are returned to their familiar habitat under the lifelong care of volunteers.

TNR is based on continued colony management and it is this responsible management that helps insure the success of TNR, as caregivers monitor for sick cats whom they can vet and newcomers whom they can alter and vaccinate, or adopt out if they are friendly.

A comprehensive TNR program, in conjunction with a broad-based public education program, will result in lower animal control costs, fewer to no births, reduction of nuisance complaints by residents and the alleviation of public health concerns.

Animal Protection League of NJ (APLNJ) encourages all New Jersey municipalities to explore and implement a TNR program and willingly offers our expertise, advice and involvement to assist you.

Support of TNR, along with an aggressive public education program emphasizing the benefits of spaying and neutering, is critical in the effort to stem the cat population crisis in New Jersey.