

Trap-Neuter-Return

What is Trap-Neuter-Return?

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), the humane approach to addressing community cat populations, saves cats' lives and is effective. In TNR, free roaming, unowned community (aka feral) cats are humanely trapped, spay or neutered by a Veterinarian, vaccinated, and returned to the area from which they are trapped. They are also ear tipped, the universal sign that they have been spay or neutered. TNR improves the lives of cats, addresses community concerns, reduces complaints about cats, and stops the breeding cycle—reducing the number of community cats over time. TNR improves the co-existence between outdoor cats and humans in our shared environment. This is why so many cities are adopting it.

Why not just remove the cats?

Removing cats from an area by killing or relocating them is not only cruel—it's pointless. Scientific evidence indicates that removing feral cat populations only opens up the habitat to an influx of new cats, either from neighboring territories or born from survivors. Each time cats are removed, the population will rebound through a natural phenomenon known as the "vacuum effect," drawing the community into a costly, endless cycle of trapping and killing.

The vacuum effect is a phenomenon scientifically recognized worldwide, across all types of animal species. A habitat will support a population of a certain size. No matter how many animals are removed, if the resources remain, the population will eventually recover. Any cats remaining after a catch and kill effort will produce more kittens and at a higher survival rate, filling the habitat to capacity. Over time, the number of cats in an area where a feral cat colony has been killed or relocated will simply recover and return to its original size.

Cats benefit from Trap-Neuter-Return for their entire lives.

Community cats generally do quite well outdoors. Studies show that after neutering, cats become healthier and gain weight. Outdoor cats in managed colonies even live longer thanks to TNR. One study of a TNR program found that at the end of a 10-year period, 83% of the cats in the managed colonies had been residing in those colonies for more than six years—indicating a lifespan comparable to the 7.1-year lifespan of pet cats.

Neutered cats also roam less and do not fight over mates, creating better cat neighbors. And, multiple long-term studies of Trap-Neuter-Return have shown that the size of managed colonies decreases over time.



Can't I just ignore the problem?

No! Female unaltered cats can go into heat as early as 3.5 months of age and produce up to three litters a season! Cat colonies can quickly grow, creating problems for the cats in the colony and the humans near by. A stable, spay/neutered colony, on the other hand, provides all the benefits of cats (e.g. rodent management) with less of the issues and healthier cats.

How can Community Cat Allies help?

Community Cat Allies, a local non-profit, can help with local cat colonies! Community Cat Allies has a group of volunteer trappers who can trap all of the cats in a colony over time and use local, low cost spay/neuter resources to get the cats altered and vaccinated. We then return the cats to the original area and can come back if additional, unaltered cats are found. Additionally, we can provide education to local residents and partners about the benefits of TNR. Contact us today for more information!

Thank you for helping our community cats!

Adapted from Alley Cat Allies: alleycat.org

