

## **Feral cat population control in a nutshell**

A Trap, Neuter and Return (TNR) program benefits both community cats and the community by:

- Stabilizing the colony and reducing the intake numbers at area shelters of feral cats and kittens
- Reducing offensive behaviors associated with unsterilized cats such as mating, fighting, yowling, and marking behaviors
- TNR is more effective and less costly than repeated attempts at eradication
- TNR is a more humane approach to community cat overpopulation

Before you place that first trap, know as much as possible about the process. By educating yourself and being an informed trapper or colony caretaker, you will make a more positive impact on the cats you want to help. Here are some facts and tips that may help you in this process.

Identify all cats in the area you wish to trap in. Note those that are regulars, occasional visitors, pregnant females and kittens.

Assess the area the cats are being trapped and its suitability for return of the cats. Most usually it is best to return the cats to the area they were trapped. Make relocation a last consideration. There is a complete process to relocation and it must be done as a last resort only.

Notify neighbors that you will be trapping in the area. Ask that they keep their cat indoors at these times or has identification.

Prior to trapping, make arrangements for social cats and kittens to be adopted through a rescue organization, a no kill shelter or your own network. All kittens and cats must be seen by a veterinarian as soon as possible. All cats should be spayed or neutered, treated for parasites, tested for FIV and FELV and age appropriate vaccinations given prior to adoption. Kittens can be spayed at two pounds or at about eight weeks.

Make sure your veterinarian will work with you on community cats and that he and his staff are experienced in caring for them. Ensure that your veterinarian has the proper equipment such as a squeeze cage and a divider fork or arrange for those items to be available (netting and manhandling community cats is not recommended). Educate yourself and ask about the anesthesia protocol that will be used.

Dissolvable sutures should be used on community cats, and a left ear tip is mandatory (it is the universal sign of a community cat). A three year rabies vaccination is also mandatory, and in Round Rock, Texas, all community cats must be microchipped and registered under a non-profit organization such as Shadow Cats

## Trapping tips:

- Never leave a cat where it might be threatened by people, weather or animals.
- Never leave a trap unattended.
- Once the cat is in the trap, immediately cover it with a towel or blanket as this will have an immediate calming effect.
- Do not trap in inclement weather
- Do not use tranquilizers
- Do not trap lactating females
- If you trap a lactating female and also identify tiny kittens in the area but can not get the kittens, release the mother cat- Return when the kittens are older (8 weeks) and trap them all (First do no harm)
- If you do trap a lactating female but do not realize it until she is 'on the table', spay her. Return to the area and make all attempts to find the kittens. If not found, release mother cat within twenty four hours if possible.

The best trapping time is Oct through March- fewer lactating females/kittens. April through September are prime months for trapping a female with kittens so extra precautions should be taken during these months to avoid the above scenario.

For the most part, kittens under eight or nine weeks have the best outcome for socialization and adoption. For older kittens/cats who have not socialized, the most humane option for them may be to be released back into their colony after TNR.

If you are considering relocation the first rule is, don't. However, if you do plan to relocate, there is an in depth protocol to this (please visit [www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org) for more information on relocation or contact [info@shadowcats.net](mailto:info@shadowcats.net) Relocating may take weeks to months and must be done with the greatest of care and commitment to the process. Dumping cats in rural areas is inhumane and the cats will likely starve, become prey themselves, or become lost trying to return to their old 'home'. Cats must be confined for two to three weeks in order for them to bond to their new home. During this time the cats must be sheltered and fed daily. Please read more about this process before making a decision to relocate.

Cats should be provided long term care and support if at all possible. Daily feedings, outdoor shelters and caretakers that will monitor the colony for general health maintenance is ideal. All newcomers within the colony should be immediately identified, trapped, vaccinated and sterilized.