



Community Cat Programs Handbook

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Photo courtesy of Christopher Crews



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 1

Introduction to Community Cat Programs

Introduction to Community Cat Programs

Why community cat programs?

Community cats can be found just about everywhere that people live. These outdoor, free-roaming cats live in and are cared for by the community, hence the term “community cats.” For decades, community cats have been trapped and removed in a failed attempt at population management. In addition, using this approach, shelters have struggled to keep up with the number of cats coming in. Because shelters aren’t able to handle this level of feline intake, cats now account for roughly two of every three animals dying in U.S. shelters.

Thankfully, this ineffective, costly and inhumane approach to managing community cats is steadily being replaced with progressive community cat programs (CCPs) in shelters across the country. At the heart of all CCPs is a simple, humane philosophy: Cats are accepted members of many communities, often cared for by multiple residents. Vaccinating and spaying or neutering them, then returning them to their outdoor homes, is the best way to manage the population, respect the bond their caregivers have with them and reserve limited shelter space for cats without such an option.

CCPs have two basic components:

- Return-to-field (RTF, also called shelter-neuter-return or SNR): For those community cats brought into shelters by well-meaning individuals or field services staff
- Trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR, also referred to as trap-neuter-return or TNR): For community cats who don’t find themselves delivered to a shelter by a member of the public

No matter which group cats fall into, they are evaluated by a veterinarian, altered, vaccinated, micro-chipped (in some instances) and taken back to their outdoor home. Cats who are thriving in such environments very rarely are the only ones living there, so another important piece of a CCP is to trap the rest of the cats in the community and put them through the TNVR process as well. (To save even more lives, shelters may implement a combination of other lifesaving programs alongside a CCP. See Chapter 26, “Additional Cat Lifesaving Programs,” for more information.)

In addition to offering a common-sense, humane, effective and economical alternative to the traditional method of managing community cats, this approach has a strong basis in science and enjoys broad public support. Indeed, national surveys commissioned by Best Friends in 2014 and 2017 found that Americans prefer TNR to lethal roundups by nearly three to one — not only for its obvious benefit to community cats but also for its benefit to public health.¹ These results correspond to those of previous surveys revealing strong opposition to the lethal roundups of community cats² and to lethal methods in general as a means of population control.³

Brief history of TNR

Trap-neuter-return (TNR)⁴ was first introduced during the 1950s in Britain, and then in Denmark during the 1970s. The practice was introduced in the U.S. around the same time, but remained largely “underground” until the formation of Alley Cat Allies in 1990. The first large U.S. city to embrace TNR as a fundamental part of its approach to animal sheltering was Jacksonville, Florida.

Beginning in 2008, the City of Jacksonville joined forces with the nonprofit First Coast No More Homeless Pets (FCNMHP) in launching the Feral Freedom program. Under the new program, “feral” cats (the cats who didn’t make it out of the shelter alive in the past) brought to Jacksonville Animal Care and Protective

¹ P.J. Wolf, 2015. “New Survey Reveals Widespread Support for Trap-Neuter-Return.” Faunalytics.org. <https://faunalytics.org/new-survey-reveals-widespread-support-for-trap-neuter-return>

² K. Chu and W.M. Anderson, 2007. Law & Policy Brief: U.S. Public Opinion on Humane Treatment of Stray Cats. Alley Cat Allies: Bethesda, Md. <http://www.alleycat.org/document.doc?id=61>

³ R. Karpusiewicz, 2012. “Poll: Americans Favor No-Kill Animal Shelters.” AP-Petside.com. <http://ap-gfkpoll.com/featured/ap-petside-com-latest-poll-findings>

⁴ You will see the terms trap-neuter-return (TNR) and trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) in this handbook. TNVR indicates the vaccination component of TNR. Although vaccination is common practice for most TNR programs and is considered best practice, it is not yet universal. All the Best Friends CCPs include vaccination and for that reason, throughout this handbook we will refer to the process as TNVR. However, to honor how other organizations refer to their own programs, TNR is used in specific instances.

Services were transferred to FCNMHP. They were then spayed or neutered, vaccinated, microchipped, ear-tipped and returned to their outdoor homes. Best Friends has supported Jacksonville’s Feral Freedom program since its inception, providing generous grant funding and expertise.

“Community cats are not a new phenomenon and neither is the compassion shown by people who want to help them. A new movement erupted in the 1990s when lone caregivers became community organizers along with their veterinarians. Necessity is the mother of invention and there were plenty of cats to help.

“Today there are hundreds of established and effective nonprofit groups and spay/neuter clinics with paid employees, and thousands of large-scale TNR programs. TNR brochures have been replaced with beautiful websites. Several municipal agencies have launched return-to-field initiatives. And more than 500 new ordinances and policies are in place, making TNR mainstream.”

Becky Robinson, co-founder and president, Alley Cat Allies

In 2010, San Jose Animal Care and Services (SJACS) in San José, California, launched its own version of Feral Freedom. According to SJACS, intake of cats and kittens decreased 29.1% after four years, and the number of cats dying decreased from over 70% of intakes in 2009 to 23% in 2014.⁵ And in 2011, Best Friends began a similar program in DeKalb County, Georgia, and the save rate for cats jumped from 47% to 78% in the first year alone.

April 2012 saw the launch of the first Community Cats Projects⁶ in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and San Antonio, Texas. The Community Cats Projects were partnerships among Best Friends, PetSmart Charities and local municipalities. These high-volume, three-year programs focused on specific zip codes and/or neighborhoods (generally those known to be the source of highest shelter intake) in the community, and have proven highly successful at reducing both shelter intake and non-live outcomes of cats and kittens. (See “Model Projects and Programs” below.) Since then, Best Friends’ collaboration with PetSmart Charities resulted in four additional Community Cats Projects, a model that Best Friends continues today.

Model projects and programs

The Community Cats Projects originally funded by PetSmart Charities are considered the model for the community cat programs (CCPs) we operate today, reflecting proven strategies and some of the most progressive thinking — with the results to prove it. By integrating RTF and targeted TNVR efforts, Best Friends’ first six CCPs collectively showed median reductions of 32% in feline intake and 83% in feline non-live outcomes. Following that model, newer programs are continuing to be effective.

In addition to the shelter statistics highlighted below, CCPs also build positive relationships between the community and the shelter by providing services for cats who were previously marginalized and by reuniting cats with their owners via RTF.

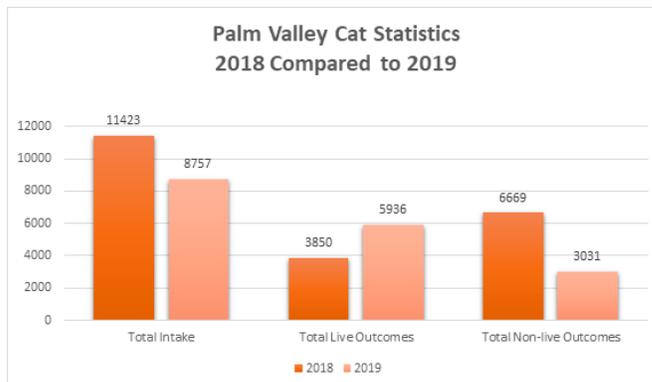
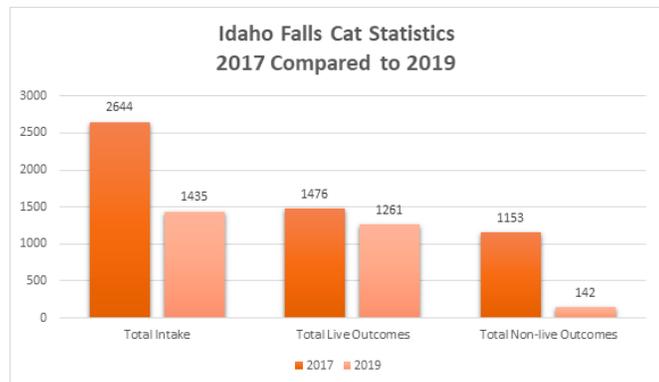
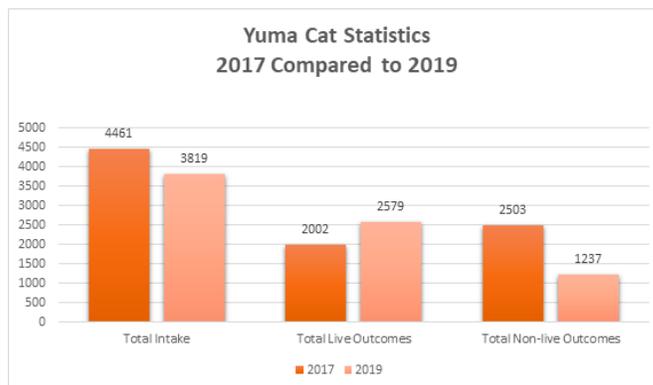
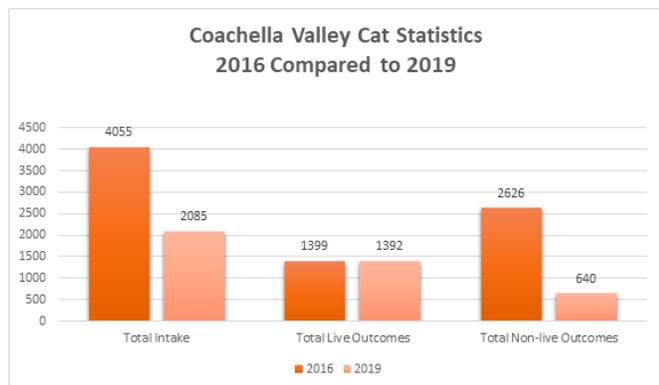
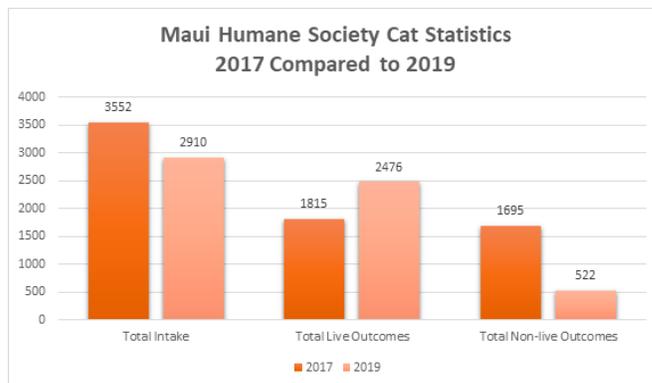
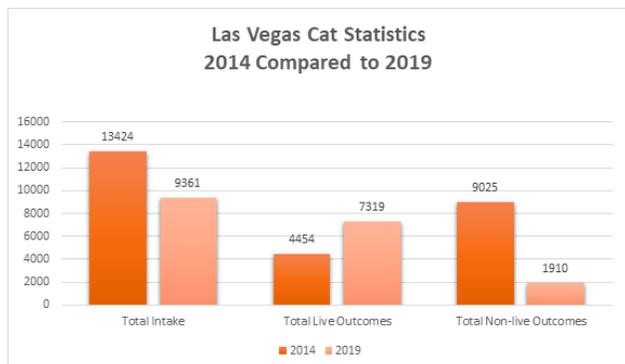
Here are some encouraging statistics:

- In Las Vegas, about 13,400 cats and kittens entered the shelter system in 2014, the year before the CCP began. In 2019, about 9,300 cats entered the shelter system, representing a decrease in intake of about 30%. There was also a decrease in non-live outcomes of almost 79%, and the save rate for cats went up from 33% to 80%.
- In Coachella Valley, 50% fewer cats and kittens came into the shelter in 2019 compared to 2016; the save rate increased from about 35% to almost 70%; and cat and kitten non-live outcomes decreased by about 75%.

⁵ K.L. Johnson & J. Ciciirelli, 2014. “Study of the Effect on Shelter Cat Intakes and Euthanasia from a Shelter Neuter Return Project of 10,080 Cats from March 2010 to June 2014.” PeerJ 2, e646. <https://peerj.com/articles/646/>

⁶ The term “Community Cats Projects” is used to describe the CCPs that were initially funded by PetSmart Charities. Today, Best Friends’ programs are funded internally and are referred to as “community cat programs.”

- In 2017, before implementing the CCP, Idaho Falls' shelter system had a feline save rate of about 56%. In 2019, the shelter achieved a save rate of 90%. There was also a decrease in non-live outcomes of almost 88%.
- Maui Humane Society saw an 18% drop in cat intake after implementing a CCP, and the save rate for cats and kittens increased from roughly 50% to nearly 80%.
- In 2017, before the program's start in Yuma, Arizona, the shelter's cat save rate was about 44%. In 2019, Yuma's shelter system achieved a save rate of almost 70% and a decrease in cat and kitten non-live outcomes of about 50%.
- Palm Valley Animal Society experienced a 23% drop in cat intake after implementing a CCP, and the save rate for cats and kittens increased from roughly 42% to 65%.



“The ideal community TNR program will operate on multiple fronts — saving healthy outdoor cats in shelters from euthanasia through return-to-field, targeting areas with large cat populations for intensive TNR and engaging the public to practice TNR themselves. This holistic approach is the fastest, most sustainable way to solve overpopulation.”

Bryan Kortis, program manager, PetSmart Charities (2010–2015)

Much of the success of the CCPs can be attributed to what’s become known as the “red flag cat model.” Under this model, staff and volunteers consider each stray cat surrendered to a shelter as a likely indicator (i.e., a “red flag”) that additional cats are living in the same area. Although it’s possible that the cat could truly be a loner, it’s more likely that he’s got friends and family nearby — and perhaps he’s even part of a well-established community. Time and time again, this assumption pays off.

Indeed, we’ve found that for every program cat who’s pulled from shelter intake, many more are found in the community as a result of calls from concerned citizens and door-to-door neighborhood canvassing by staff and volunteers. This allows us to identify cat communities that are otherwise largely “invisible” to shelter and field services staff, and to spay or neuter a high percentage of the cats (as well as provide resources to caregivers).⁷ For municipalities interested in reducing feline intake and increasing live outcomes, such programs are the way to go.

The importance of leadership

Planning, launching and operating a CCP is a considerable undertaking, in part because it involves creating and implementing a wide range of new policies and procedures. More broadly, though, it often requires a radical shift in the way an organization and the community it serves approach community cats (and cats in general). Such a shift requires strong leadership in both shelter and field services operations, as well as the support of the city and/or county officials who oversee shelter and field services operations. Each of these leaders must demonstrate to their stakeholders an unwavering commitment to the program and its objectives while creating the conditions under which staff and volunteers can work toward achieving those objectives.



Key characteristics of successful leadership in support of CCPs include:

- Deep appreciation and understanding of the organization’s mission and the ability to articulate its values and vision internally and externally, specifically as it relates to the CCP
- Thoughtful leadership that exemplifies a collaborative, motivational and decisive communication style
- Working knowledge of proven strategies and trends regarding TNVR
- Relationship builder with the flexibility and finesse to “manage by influence”
- Sincere commitment to work collaboratively with all constituent groups, including staff, board members, volunteers, donors, program participants and other supporters

Kathy Davis, director of San Antonio Animal Care Services from 2012 to 2016, was at the organization’s helm during the implementation of a CCP in San Antonio. She stated: “While we had many staff members

⁷ These efforts also allow us to gather “intelligence” about cats and their communities, ensuring that cats being returned are thriving in their outdoor environment.

who ‘got it’ as soon as we previewed the Community Cats Project, we still had many that felt it wouldn’t work or would not be accepted by the public. Our managers and supervisors were instrumental in changing the not-so-accepting hearts and minds of our staff. It takes teamwork. And it takes off when you combine the two.”

The leadership needed to run a successful CCP is about more than policies, procedures and bullet points. It requires extraordinary commitment to the program, enlightened and confident relationship-based management, and a uniquely skilled and dedicated leader. Any serious effort to undertake citywide implementation of a CCP must bear each of these things in mind and consider them a high priority.

Engaging key stakeholders

By their very nature, CCPs are collaborative efforts. To be effective, a program must have some degree of buy-in from a range of key stakeholders in the community, including these:

- Elected or appointed officials overseeing animal services in the community
- Shelter staff and volunteers
- Field services officers and dispatch staff
- Private and nonprofit veterinary clinics
- Local TNR (aka TNVR) and rescue groups
- Local wildlife rehabilitation centers or sanctuaries, local chapters of the National Audubon Society
- Caregivers and cat community managers
- Donors and other funding sources (e.g., nonprofit organizations offering grants)
- The general public

In each of these categories, it’s easy to imagine securing support from like-minded individuals. Keep in mind, though, that not everybody will look on a CCP favorably. Some veterinary clinics, for example, might see low- or no-cost veterinary services as a threat to their livelihood (though there’s no evidence that this is the case). And, of course, the general public includes residents who complain about the cats. Remember, engagement means having honest, good-faith conversations, not necessarily convincing others to adopt your position on the issue. What’s most important is to proceed with a clear understanding of key stakeholders’ concerns and to share relevant data and information that addresses those concerns.

“It’s critical to engage key stakeholders, ones that you see as potential allies and collaborators, as well as those who may oppose the project. Either way, it is important to know the interests and issues of key stakeholders in order to garner support, address concerns or, if necessary, combat threats to the project.”

Holly Sizemore, chief national programs officer, Best Friends Animal Society

About the handbook

Through various partnerships, Best Friends operates more large-scale CCPs than any other organization in the country. We are therefore in a unique position to comment on what it takes to make such programs effective. Indeed, we feel an obligation to share our knowledge with individuals and organizations interested in creating their own CCPs. This handbook is one manifestation of that obligation.

The chapters that make up the *CCP Handbook* fall into three sections, as follows:

Administration

- Chapter 2: Staffing Considerations
- Chapter 3: Volunteer Engagement

- Chapter 4: Marketing and Public Relations
- Chapter 5: Key Legal Issues to Consider
- Chapter 6: Financial Considerations
- Chapter 7: Facility Requirements
- Chapter 8: Community Outreach and Engagement
- Chapter 9: Community Cat Management and Caregiver Resources
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- Chapter 11: Working Toward Positive Outcomes
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Supplemental

- Chapter 26: Additional Cat Lifesaving Programs
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- Chapter 28: Disaster Preparedness for Caregivers

Additional resources

- [Trap-Neuter-Return \(TNR\) Success Stories](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions About TNR](#)
- [Free-Roaming Cats: Facts vs. Fiction](#)

Acknowledgments

Much of our knowledge of CCPs has been acquired through our hands-on work in shelters around the country, and we are deeply indebted to PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Maddie's Fund® for the opportunity to participate in these innovative public-private partnerships. We owe an additional debt of gratitude

to the elected officials, shelter and enforcement leadership, veterinary partners, staff and volunteers, and everybody else whose tireless efforts continue to make these programs successful beyond all expectations.

In addition, the following individuals and organizations have been invaluable resources in making the *CCP Handbook* a reality, allowing us to benefit from their experiences and integrate their materials with our own. Thank you all!

- ASPCA
- Alley Cat Allies
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- Christopher Crews (photos)
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- Fix Our Ferals
- Street Cat H.U.B
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- Kate Hurley, director of the Koret Shelter Medicine Program at the University of California, Davis
- IndyFeral and the Foundation Against Companion-Animal Euthanasia
- Julie Levy, Maddie's Professor of Shelter Medicine and founder of Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida
- Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals
- Neighborhood Cats
- Recycled Love
- San Antonio Animal Care Services



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 2 CCP Administration: Staffing Considerations

Staffing Considerations

Introduction

There are many different ways to staff a CCP. CCP staff can be existing shelter or organization staff who help manage and lead the CCP. Many CCPs are run by a program coordinator and program assistants. Some smaller programs are run by a program coordinator alone. The ultimate goal is to have all staff and volunteers at the shelter well versed in the program and conveying the same information. While traditionally a great deal of responsibility falls on just a few individuals, there are ways to split up the work among multiple staff. In all cases, CCP staff work closely with shelter staff, field services officers, clinic staff, community members and others.

Both the program coordinator and program assistant roles are demanding and require an unusual set of skills. Just as important as the skills and experience, though, are the personality and temperament of the individuals doing this work.

Shelter staff are often exposed to an enormously stressful environment. During the beginning stages of a CCP, far too many lives are still being lost even though the way forward might be clear and the results look promising. So, burnout and “compassion fatigue” are serious risks.¹ In addition, frequent interaction with people not fully supportive of the CCP (residents complaining about the cats, shelter staff and field service officers reluctant to adopt new policies and practices, etc.) demands great patience.

The following guidelines are intended to help organizations recruit qualified candidates and convey to them what the job entails. Sample interview questions are included in the appendix.

The various functions of CCP staff

The nature of the job requires that CCP staff “wear many hats” — and they often must change them frequently and with little notice. The constant variety is one of the greatest challenges of the work, but also one of its greatest rewards. Figure 1 shows the variety of individuals and groups with whom CCP staff typically interact.

Shelter and field services staff. Interaction with shelter staff typically involves pulling eligible cats from intake, doing daily rounds to check return-to-field eligibility of all cats, discussing alternative outcomes, and (where applicable) coordinating surgeries and post-surgery recovery with the shelter’s clinic staff. It also involves working with shelter intake staff to mitigate intake and offer resources to the public. Interaction with field services officers typically involves handling nuisance complaints, working to empower officers to handle nuisance complaints and coordinating returns. (See Chapter 12, “Working with Field Services and Dispatch Staff,” and Chapter 13, “Working with Shelter Staff and Volunteers,” for additional information about this topic.)

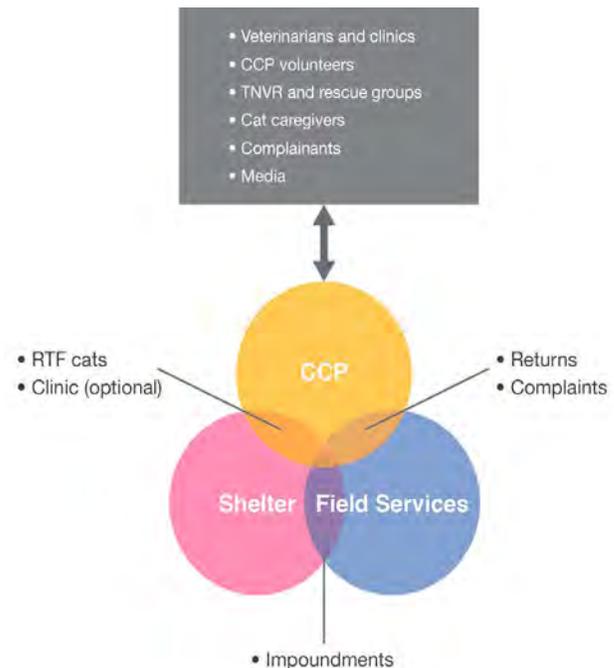


Figure 1. Individuals and groups with whom CCP staff typically interact

¹ This topic is addressed in the book *The Power of Joy in Giving to Animals* by Linda Harper and Faith Maloney (available on Amazon.com).

Veterinarians and clinics. Typical interactions with partner veterinarians and clinics include dropping off and picking up cats, processing paperwork (invoices, vouchers, etc.) and consulting about cats in need of medical treatment. (See Chapter 14, “Working with Veterinarians and Veterinary Clinics,” for additional information about this topic.)

Volunteers. Shelter staff recruit and manage volunteers to do several important tasks, including distributing door hangers in target neighborhoods, transporting cats to and from clinic appointments, trapping cats and more. (See Chapter 3, “Volunteer Engagement,” for additional information about this topic.)

Local TNVR and rescue groups. CCP staff provide local TNVR (aka TNR) and rescue groups with the training and resources necessary to save more lives. They also serve as a conduit between these groups and shelter staff and field services officers, an especially important role in places where relationships between the rescue community and shelter and field services personnel have been strained. (See Chapter 15, “Working with Local TNVR and Rescue Groups,” for additional information about this topic.)

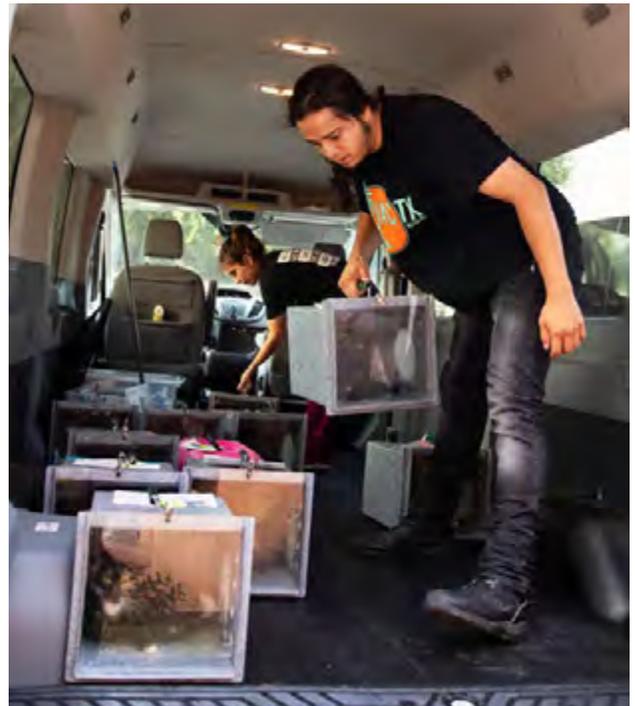
Cat caregivers. As with local groups, staff provide caregivers with the training and resources necessary to enhance their lifesaving efforts. Staff also serve as an intermediary between caregivers and field services officers, as well as between caregivers and other residents or complainants. (See Chapter 9, “Community Cat Management and Caregiver Resources,” for additional information about this topic.)

Additional roles. In addition to the roles described above, CCP staff work with residents to resolve complaints about community cats, field calls from the media, and much more. The variety of roles involved is one of the greatest challenges for CCP staff, but for the right person, it also makes the work enormously satisfying.

Key responsibilities

Although no two CCPs are alike, the basic staffing requirements are largely the same. In a smaller program, the key responsibilities might be undertaken by one individual managing a team of volunteers, whereas some programs divide up the tasks among current employees. Even when the TNVR goals are the same, every program may require different staff structures that take current resources into consideration. If field services staff return many of the shelter cats, then fewer CCP-specific staff hours would be required for that task.² The one thing all programs typically have in common is a wish for more staff and a reliance on the support of other shelter workers and volunteers.

Regardless of how the work is distributed, the work itself is similar from program to program. The following lists of responsibilities, corresponding to various positions in Best Friends’ CCPs, are intended to provide a general sense of the tasks associated with these programs and to show how these tasks might be assigned to different staff members (when having multiple staff members is an option).



Community cat program coordinator. This individual’s chief responsibility is achieving the goals of the CCP (e.g., reduction in shelter deaths, reduction in feline intake and a certain number of cats sterilized). This position typically involves management of one or more assistants and a team of volunteers, and collaboration with shelter staff, field services officers, partner clinics, local TNVR groups and others.

² Programs run by Best Friends have ranged from one FTE (full-time equivalent) to three FTE employees overseeing the TNR of 2,000–5,000 cats per year.

Additional responsibilities (partial list):

- Oversee the work and schedules of staff and volunteers.
- Assist shelter staff in determining which cats are eligible for return-to-field.
- Check the shelter population for cats whose eligibility may have been missed at intake to ensure that all eligible cats are being returned.
- Promote the CCP in a variety of contexts (meetings of elected officials, community events, spay/neuter and adoption events, etc.).
- Develop and deliver educational materials and resources to increase awareness and acceptance of CCPs.
- Meet with shelter leadership to discuss the CCP's progress, challenges and plan to overcome challenges on a regular basis.
- Attend meetings and events with community leaders, elected officials and local media, as necessary.
- Conduct site assessments to help caregivers manage their cat communities responsibly and work with complainants to deter cats effectively.
- Conduct complaint mitigation training for field service officers.
- Communicate and coordinate with local TNVR groups to ensure that these groups are referring residents in target areas to the CCP and track the outcomes of these referrals.
- Work with spay/neuter providers (negotiating cost of services, tracking invoices, etc.).
- Communicate and coordinate with local rescue groups to maximize positive outcomes and minimize redundant efforts.
- Perform other fieldwork as necessary. (See the job description for CCP assistant below.)

Community cat program assistant. This individual's chief responsibilities are identifying and transporting return-to-field eligible cats, conducting and managing CCP fieldwork, and trapping and working with caregivers. The CCP assistant is also responsible for transporting cats to and from clinic appointments, returning them to their trapping locations and performing administrative duties as assigned by the CCP coordinator.

Additional responsibilities (partial list):

- Distribute door hangers in the neighborhoods where program cats are returned.
- Enter cat community and caregiver information in the CCP database in a timely fashion.
- Set up traps at specific target locations by appointment and check them throughout the scheduled time slot, as needed; assist with drop-trapping, as needed.
- Keep traps clean, in working order and clearly labeled with trap tags.
- Maintain the inventory of trapping supplies.
- Keep track of loaned-out traps. Before trapping day, deliver traps and supplies to locations.
- Train new caregivers in TNVR and use of traps.
- Transport program cats to partner clinics in a timely manner. Fill out all paperwork and ensure that traps are labeled and cats are organized by community to expedite their return.
- Relay any relevant information about program cats to shelter and/or veterinary staff prior to surgery.

- Pick up cats from partner clinics and return them directly to their community, or to their caregivers or local trappers for return to the community.
- Ensure that clinic policies and procedures are being followed accurately.
- Make reminder calls to clients for their appointments; rework and reschedule last-minute changes in the schedule.
- Assist in tracking of all spay/neuter surgeries done through partner clinics.

Additional resources

- [Best Friends' community cats page](#)
- [FAQs About Trap-Neuter-Return \(TNR\)](#)
- *The Power of Joy in Giving to Animals* (book available on Amazon.com)

APPENDIX

Sample interview questions: CCP field worker

(Rate responses as follows: 1–above average, 2–average, 3–below average)

1. What do you know about this position and why does this position appeal to you?
2. What qualities or experience make you the best candidate for this position?
3. Describe a time when you had to be professional and respectful when interacting with people outside of the organization or company you worked for. What was the situation? What did you do?
4. Tell me about a time when you had to quickly adjust to a department or team change. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the outcome?
5. Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your manager or supervisor. What was the situation? What did you do?
6. Because of the nature of working with community cats, at times we will be returning cats to less than perfect situations. Describe how you would cope with returning kittens to an industrial park vs. taking them in for adoption, and describe your comfort level with dealing with these situations on a continuous basis.
7. Our yearly goal is to sterilize, vaccinate and return cats from specific targeted neighborhoods. Because of the nature of feral cats, our schedules vary in order to allow us the best chance at success. Describe how you feel about sometimes working late nights followed by early mornings.
8. Have you had any experience working with volunteers and, if so, in what capacity? How do you feel about leading volunteers?
9. Tell me about a time when you did something at work or while volunteering that later you wished you had handled differently.
10. Tell me about a time when you had to manage multiple responsibilities at the same time. What was the situation, what did you do, and what was the outcome?
11. What experience do you have driving multi-passenger vehicles or something other than cars in various areas of _____?
12. Give an example of a situation when you had to change someone's mind and gain his or her cooperation — someone you had little control over. How did you do it?
13. Consider this scenario: You arrive at the site of a feeding station and a neighbor comes out and starts yelling at you about the cats coming into his yard. He tells you he plans on poisoning the cats if you don't take them all away permanently. How would you respond to that situation?
14. Which common cat ailments are you most familiar with? Describe what you know about them.
15. Consider this scenario: You get a call from a client saying she has found some newborn kittens that have been abandoned by their mother and she wants you to come and take them. What do you say or do in this situation?
16. What aspects of this job do you think will be the most challenging for you? And what will you do to meet those challenges?
17. What concerns do you have if you were to be offered this position?
18. Do you have any questions?

Sample interview questions: soft skills

Influencing others

1. Gaining the cooperation of others can be difficult. Give me a specific example of a situation when you had to do that.
2. Tell me about a recent success you had influencing an especially difficult employee.
3. When you recommend something to management, what approach do you usually use? Give me an example.
4. Tell me about a time when you had to persuade a group of people on your point of view or sell a group of people on your idea. Be specific.

Conflict management and resolution

1. Can you give me an example of how you handled a workplace conflict in the past?
2. What kinds of disagreements are you able to handle easily? What kinds of disagreements have you been involved in that were upsetting or difficult for you? (Describe one that was not so easy to handle.)
3. Describe a situation when you found it necessary to confront someone at work. How did you handle it?
4. Describe a time when you had difficulty getting people to work together to solve a problem or complete an assignment. What did you do?
5. Describe a time when you had to intervene to resolve a conflict. What did you do and why did you handle it that way?
6. Describe a time when you had an employee who felt you were treating him/her unfairly. What actions did you take to resolve it?
7. Tell me about a time when you had a disagreement or a conflict with another employee or supervisor. What was the issue? What did you do? What were the outcomes?

Reliability

1. If I were to ask your former employers about your reliability at work, what would they tell me?
2. Do you consider yourself committed to your job? Please explain.

Team orientation

1. Do you consider yourself a team player? Give me a specific example of a time when you demonstrated this.
2. Give me an example of a situation when you demonstrated your ability to work as a team player. What was your role? What did you accomplish? How did you solve the problems? If I spoke with the other team members, how would they describe you?
3. Describe a time when you had difficulty getting people to work together to solve a problem or complete an assignment. What did you do?
4. Tell me about one of the toughest teams or groups you have had to work with. What made it difficult to work with them? What did you do about it?

Taking the initiative and being proactive

1. Tell me about a time when you reached out for additional responsibility. What happened?
2. What ideas have you “sold” to your management? Give me a specific example. What happened?
3. Give me an example of something you recommended that was not adopted. Why wasn’t it? What could you have done differently?
4. What is the most creative thing you have done in a past job? How did it occur?
5. Would you rather formulate a plan or carry it out? Why? Give me an example of a plan you have formulated and implemented.
6. Tell me about a time at work when you discovered an opportunity to improve a process, procedure, system or policy. How did you go about improving it? What did you do?

Leadership and being a positive role model

1. Tell me about a specific time when you supported a company or department decision even though you didn’t necessarily agree with it.
2. Tell me about a time when you had to coach someone who was struggling to understand how his/her individual contribution was affecting the success of the department or organization.
3. Give me an example of a time when you came up with and implemented a way to positively affect the work environment for other employees.
4. How have you demonstrated your integrity within your current (or last) employer? Give me a specific example.
5. Describe your style of leadership. Give an example of a situation when your leadership style was especially effective in motivating someone or a group of people. What were the outcomes? Why was your leadership style effective?
6. What personal characteristics do you feel are necessary for success as a leader?
7. What would it be like working for you?
8. Describe a leadership situation that you would do differently if you had to do it over again.
9. Describe a time when you had to give direction, an assignment or guidance to someone who did not report to you. What did you do? How did it turn out?
10. Give me an example of a time when you used your power, authority or persuasion skills to get your employees to do what you wanted them to do.
11. In what ways do you feel the people who report to you might find you difficult to work for?
12. Tell me about a time when you had to handle a tough morale problem. What did you do? What was the result?
13. Tell me about a time when you led or were a member of a team that was floundering. Specifically describe what you did to try to re-engage team members to get the team back on track.

Relationship building and interpersonal skills

1. Give me an example of a time when you had to build relationships with employees both inside and outside of an organization.

2. Tell me about a situation in which you had to gain the trust of someone else (or a group of others). What did you do? What were the results?
3. Tell me about a time when you had to help an employee manage his/her own stress. What did you do and what ultimately happened?
4. Describe one of your least successful relationships at work. What did you do to try to create a better relationship?
5. Tell me about a recent success you had with an especially difficult employee.
6. Tell me about a situation in which you became frustrated or impatient when dealing with a peer. What did you do?
7. Tell me about a time when you had to influence someone to do something that he/she really did not want to do. What did you do? What was the outcome?
8. Give me an example of a time when you had difficulty remaining approachable when dealing with someone or several other people.

Effective communication

1. Describe a time when you had to adjust your communication style based on the message you were sending and the audience to whom you were communicating.
2. Tell me about an important presentation you had to create and deliver. What was the topic? How did you go about organizing the information to ensure that your audience understood, and that the communication was effective?
3. Describe what “active listening” means, and tell me about a specific time when you had to use an active listening technique.
4. Tell me about a time when you caused a communication breakdown at work.
5. Tell me about a time when you had difficulty communicating with someone you worked with. What was the issue? What actions did you take? How did you resolve it? What did you specifically say to the individual?

Decision making, judgment and problem solving

1. Give me an example of a time when you sought out and acted on others’ input in order to make a decision.
2. Tell me about a specific time when you had to resolve a tough problem. What was the problem? How did you go about solving it? Why did you choose this method?
3. Can you tell me about an important decision you made and how you arrived at it?
4. What was the biggest error in judgment you have made in a previous job? Why did you make it? How did you correct the problem?
5. We all make decisions that turn out to be mistakes. Describe a work decision you have made that you wish you could do over.
6. Give me an example of a time when you had to use your own judgment and take independent action to solve a problem. What was the problem? What did you do? How did it turn out?
7. Describe your approach to making decisions and solving problems. How do you assemble relevant data to make your decisions? Give me an example of a tough decision you made. What was the thought process behind it?

8. Tell me about a recent business problem you solved. How did you use the organization's resources (policies, systems, etc.) to solve the problem?

Performance management

1. Describe the most challenging performance management issue you have had to deal with involving an employee. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the result?
2. Describe a specific performance management situation that you would do differently if you had to do it over again. Why?
3. How do you monitor and manage the performance of your staff?
4. What type of employee do you find the most difficult to manage?
5. Give me an example of a time when you had to communicate performance goals to an employee who did not understand them. What did you do about it?
6. Tell me about the types of methodologies that you have used to develop your employees.
7. How do you make sure that your employees are held accountable? Please provide a specific example of how you have done this in the past.

Analytical skills and attention to detail

1. Describe a time when you had to identify, extract, compile and organize data from several different sources into a report format for management. What was the purpose? What did you do? What was the outcome?
2. Describe a time when you had to conduct a research project. What was the topic? What did you do? What were the outcomes?
3. Give me an example of a time when you analyzed the benefits and risks of a solution to a problem and, based on this analysis, chose not to act. Why didn't you act?
4. Describe a problem you had in your last or current job. How did you go about solving it?
5. Tell me about a project you completed in which attention to detail and accuracy were critical to the success of the project.

Customer service

1. Describe your biggest strength in the area of customer service and cite an example of how you have demonstrated this strength in your current or a past role.
2. Have you had to teach customer service techniques? Cite an example and describe how it was successful and what could have gone better.
3. What steps do you take to ensure good quality service when interacting with a client, donor, volunteer or partner?
4. Give me an example of a situation when you dealt effectively with an irate client, donor, volunteer or partner. What was the issue? What did you do? What was the outcome?
5. Give an example of a situation when you taught or coached someone on how to establish rapport.
6. What is the most important customer service accomplishment you have achieved in your career? Please describe the situation and your results.

Change management

1. Give me an example of a time when, on your own, you identified that a change in your department needed to take place. What did you do? What were the results?
2. Give me two examples of things you've done in previous jobs that demonstrate you are willing to do what is necessary to get the job done.
3. Tell me about a time when you had to quickly adjust to a department or team change. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the outcome?
4. Tell me about a specific risk you took in a previous position. Why did you consider it a risk? What was the outcome?
5. Tell me about a time at work when you discovered an opportunity to improve a process, procedure, system or policy. How did you go about presenting it to management? What were the results?
6. Give me an example of a time when you helped another member of the staff to accept a change and make the necessary adjustments to move forward. What happened?
7. Tell me about a major change initiative you have led. How did you manage the process of change? How did you manage the people involved in or affected by the change?
8. Tell me about a time when you made a recommendation to management about something you felt needed to be changed. What was the issue? What was your recommendation and why? What was the outcome?
9. Give me an example of a way you found to make your job easier, more interesting or more productive. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the outcome?

Time management

1. How did you feel about your workload in your last job? Why?
2. What methods do you use to carry through on assignments to ensure their timely completion? Please give me a specific example.
3. Tell me about a time when you had to prioritize your work requirements in order to complete them all effectively.
4. Explain how you manage your time to effectively accomplish goals and meet deadlines.
5. Tell me about a time when you had to change your work schedule or work extended hours to complete a goal.
6. Tell me about a time when you were under pressure to complete a project that had a tight deadline. What were the specific steps you took to ensure that you met this deadline?
7. Tell me about a time when you had to manage multiple responsibilities at the same time.
8. Describe for me how you go about prioritizing your work on a typical day.

Project management

1. Tell me about a cross-functional task force, project, committee or team that you led. How did you understand and balance the varying needs of each of the functions? (Was the team successful in achieving its objectives?)

2. Give me an example of an initiative or project in which you didn't have direct authority over the decision-making process, and you had to use your project management skills to get it accomplished. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the outcome?
3. Tell me about a time when you led a team, project or other group effort. What was the situation? What did you do? What were the outcomes?

Learning orientation

1. How would you describe your learning style?
2. What do you do to ensure that you continue to learn and improve in your job and beyond?
3. What steps do you take to promote learning in others?



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 3 CCP Administration: Volunteer Engagement

Volunteer Engagement

Introduction

As with animal welfare in general, community cat programs (CCPs) usually rely heavily on volunteers to achieve their goals. There are many opportunities for volunteers to contribute, whether it's distributing door hangers in target neighborhoods, transporting cats to and from clinic appointments, or trapping cats. Volunteers can be incorporated into all aspects of the CCP.

A well-run volunteer program can dramatically increase a CCP's effectiveness and provide volunteers with a real sense of satisfaction. A dedicated team of volunteers can also become the pool from which future CCP staff members are recruited. This is especially true of lead volunteers or individuals who take on some of the work typically done by staff, as well as manage the team of volunteers. (See Chapter 2, "Staffing Considerations," for additional information.)

The following guidelines are intended to help organizations recruit and retain talented CCP volunteers, and to provide their volunteers with a meaningful experience.

Preparation and recruiting

It's easy to think of volunteers as supplemental to a CCP's staff. This is accurate in the sense that staff are employees, so the organization has somewhat different expectations of them. On the other hand, volunteers are responsible for much of the work associated with a CCP's operation and are therefore essential to its success. In this sense, then, volunteers aren't so different from staff.

For this reason, those in charge of the CCP must plan before recruiting volunteers — just as they do when they hire staff. Recognizing the importance of this often-overlooked step, Best Friends developed the online resource [*Recruiting Volunteers for Nonprofit Organizations*](#) to help organizations assess their readiness to include volunteers for all kinds of programs; assess and plan for risk management; and prepare to recruit, screen, train, supervise and recognize volunteers.

Typical CCP volunteer positions

There are many opportunities for volunteers to contribute to a CCP. Below are descriptions of typical volunteer positions.

Trapper

Function: These volunteers work closely with staff to trap cats in target areas. They often work with veterinary clinics, too, transporting cats to and from clinic appointments.

Core responsibilities: Trapping community cats. Often, the same volunteers who trap the cats will transport them to and from clinic appointments, house them before and after surgery, and, finally, return the cats to their trapping locations.

Return-to-field transporter

Function: These volunteers work closely with CCP staff (or appropriate shelter staff) to pick up community cats from the shelter and return them to their pickup locations.



Core responsibilities: Transport community cats and identify additional community cats in the vicinity of the return site by canvassing the neighborhood and talking with residents (documenting and sharing information with staff).

Community engager and mediator

Function: These volunteers gather support for, and address opposition to, the CCP at a community, neighborhood and resident level.

Core responsibilities: Inform residents about the CCP, TNVR (aka TNR), local laws relevant to community cats and the use of humane deterrents. Also, resolve cat-related complaints among neighbors, whether on the phone, by email or in person.

Community cats ambassador and neighborhood canvasser

Function: These volunteers gather support for the CCP (and spay/neuter in general) at a community, neighborhood and resident level.

Core responsibilities: Distribute engagement materials door-to-door, speak to residents about the importance of spaying or neutering community cats (and residents' pets), provide referrals for low- and no-cost spay/neuter resources available for pet cats, and compile a detailed list of caregivers and complainants to share with staff.

Kitten and long-term foster parent

Function: These volunteers provide proper care for kittens and/or adult community cats until positive outcomes can be arranged.

Core responsibilities: Very young orphaned kittens need intensive basic care, including bottle-feeding every few hours along with frequent socialization sessions. (See Chapter 24, "Saving Kittens," for additional information about this topic.) Once the kittens are independent, foster volunteers have a couple options. They can turn the kittens over to the shelter for adoption (after they have been spayed or neutered) or they can find homes for the kittens themselves, so the kittens never have to go back to the shelter. For adult community cats requiring long-term foster care before being returned to their pickup location (e.g., while an injury heals), care generally involves basic feeding, cleaning and administering any prescribed medication.

In addition, several "behind the scenes" jobs are generally done by volunteers, including:

- Answering phones and returning calls
- Doing data entry and filing paperwork
- Cleaning (traps, transport vans, office space, etc.)

On the job

Volunteers are responsible for much of the work associated with a CCP's operation, and therefore are essential to its success. As a result, managers may set expectations and evaluate their performance. There are, however, key differences between volunteers and staff that must be recognized on the job.

For example, volunteers are typically required to sign an agreement and release form, outlining their duties and the legal framework underlying their work with the CCP. An additional release may be required for volunteer work in a shelter. Volunteers are also generally required to identify themselves by way of name tags or clothing. (Best Friends volunteers typically wear brightly colored T-shirts with "Volunteer" printed on them in large letters.)

Several examples of documents important for managing volunteers (volunteer release, safety protocols, etc.) are included in the appendix. See Chapter 21, "Staff and Volunteer Safety Protocols," for additional information.

“Thoughtful and planned engagement of volunteers in a community cat program helps to achieve the goals that are set, and allows an organization to do more work towards achieving its mission. Meaningful volunteer engagement fosters a shared sense of ownership so that all are invested in the program and its result.”

Pat Guerrero, national volunteer manager, Best Friends Animal Society

Retaining volunteers

Just as an organization strives to retain its most talented and passionate staff, a CCP must strive to retain its most talented and passionate volunteers. This means putting at least as much effort into training and retaining these remarkable individuals as is put into recruiting them.

Because Best Friends recognizes the enormous value that volunteers bring to a CCP (and any organization that relies heavily on volunteers), we’ve created a manual called *Volunteer Engagement: How to Engage and Retain Your Most Valuable Resource*. In it, readers will find 10 essential guidelines to help recruit, engage and retain exceptional volunteers in order to meet the goals and objectives of an organization.

Additional resources

- [Best Friends’ community cats page](#)
- [FAQs About Trap-Neuter-Return \(TNR\)](#)
- [Solutions to Cat-Related Issues](#)
- [Conflict Resolution for the Animal Welfare Field](#)
- [Best Friends’ humane deterrents video](#)
- [Best Friends Volunteer Handbook](#)

APPENDIX

Example: Volunteer agreement and general release

UT 5 REV. 12/12



Agreement and General Release for Adult Volunteers and Non-employee Interns

Thank you for offering your time to volunteer with Best Friends Animal Society. The work we do for the animals would not be possible without the help of our volunteers. Please read through the agreement below, complete the form at the bottom and return to the appropriate volunteer office.

- 1. VOLUNTARY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION.** I acknowledge that I have voluntarily agreed to serve as a volunteer for Best Friends Animal Society, a nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Utah ("Best Friends"), whose mission is to bring about a time of No More Homeless Pets. I am referred to as a "Volunteer." I offer to perform as a Volunteer of my own volition. No one has demanded that I participate in any activity with Best Friends.
- 2. NATURE AND SCOPE OF SERVICES.** As a Volunteer, I will be contributing my time and effort to various sanctuary and outreach programs of Best Friends and performing a wide range of Services (collectively, the "Services"). The Services will be performed by me as assigned by an officer, director, employee or another volunteer of Best Friends. In the course of performing the Services, I agree:
 - To read the Volunteer Handbook (if applicable) and otherwise complete all required orientation, training, and paperwork relating to my volunteer position(s).
 - To disclose any physical or psychological limitations to appropriate staff before participating in any activity. Since I may be interacting with animals, both healthy and sick, big and small, and may be lifting, carrying, moving, or otherwise engaging in physical labor, I will be respectful of my own limitations and will inform staff immediately of any such limitations.
 - To read and to obey all safety rules and regulations, especially at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. In the interest of the safety of the animals, staff, and volunteers, I acknowledge that Best Friends has the right to revoke volunteer privileges if these rules and regulations are not followed.
 - To treat all Best Friends staff, volunteers, the animals, property, tools, and equipment with respect and kindness. I will also return all Best Friends property when my volunteer relationship ends.
 - That either I or Best Friends can terminate this relationship at will.
- 3. NO COMPENSATION.** I agree to provide my Services without compensation. I will not be compensated for my efforts nor am I an agent or contractor of Best Friends Animal Society. I agree that I am not and will not become an employee, partner, agent, contractor or principal of Best Friends upon execution of this agreement or the performance of the Services.
- 4. RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY OWN ACTS AND OMISSIONS.** I hereby agree to be legally and financially responsible and will indemnify and hold Best Friends Animal Society harmless for my own acts and omissions relating to the service I am voluntarily providing to Best Friends Animal Society. I acknowledge that I am responsible for providing my own medical, liability, and auto insurance during my volunteer service. I understand that I am not covered by workers' compensation nor insured by Best Friends during the performance of my volunteer duties and tasks, including when driving a vehicle or transporting an animal.
- 5. ASSUMPTION OF RISK. I am voluntarily participating in the activities of Best Friends with full knowledge of the risks and dangers involved and hereby agree to accept any and all risks of injury, death, or damage to myself and/or my personal property.** As a volunteer, I may come into contact with and interact with animals, and such work entails risk of personal injury due to proximity to animals, dangerous equipment, long-distance driving, and other considerations. These include, but are not limited to, being bitten, kicked, clawed, tripped, and possibly exposed to zoonotic diseases.
- 6. PHOTO, VIDEO AND AUDIO RELEASE.** I understand that as a volunteer of Best Friends Animal Society, I may be recorded on film, video or other electronic recorded images or other media recordings of my name and likeness ("A-V Recordings") for any purpose related to furtherance of the objectives of Best Friends, including use in Best Friends media properties such as its magazine and websites. In particular, I grant Best Friends permission to copyright and use, reuse, publish, and republish A-V Recordings, without restriction as to changes or alterations, for art, advertising, trade, or any other purpose. Further, I understand that all work product I create in my capacity as a volunteer for Best Friends will be the property of Best Friends and that Best Friends will have the sole right to use, sell, license, publish, or transfer any such work product, in any and all media formats, including print, mechanical and electronic formats. I will disclose any such work product to Best Friends and assign all rights thereto to Best Friends.
- 7. RELEASE.** As consideration for being permitted by Best Friends to participate in activities and provide Services, I hereby agree that I, my assignees, heirs, distributees, guardians, and legal representatives will not make a claim against, sue, or attach the property of Best Friends for injury or damage resulting from any act, omission, negligence or other acts, howsoever caused, by any employee, agent, contractor, or representative of Best Friends as a result of my participation in activities and performance of the Services and any A-V Recordings.

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I hereby release Best Friends from all actions, claims, or demands that I, my assignees, heirs, distributees, guardians, and legal representatives now have or may hereafter have for injury or damage resulting from my participation in activities and performance of the Services and any A-V Recordings.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY. During my association with Best Friends and thereafter, I will keep confidential, refrain from disclosing to others, and use only in the performance of my volunteer duties, all confidential information of Best Friends Animal Society that I develop or learn about during the course of my association. I understand that this agreement covers all confidential business and technical information and know-how of or about Best Friends which is not generally known to persons outside of Best Friends and which I have not been specifically authorized to disclose or use. Examples of confidential information include, but are not limited to, information on finances, membership and donors, volunteer performance, research and development, the condition of sanctuary animals, campaigns, outreach programs and information received from others that Best Friends Animal Society has agreed to keep confidential.

9. I HAVE READ THIS RELEASE AGREEMENT AND FULLY UNDERSTAND THAT I WILL RELINQUISH ALL CLAIMS OR ACTIONS KNOWN NOW OR IN THE FUTURE AGAINST BEST FRIENDS ANIMAL SOCIETY. I am of legal age and legally competent to sign this agreement. I am signing this agreement of my own free will without the influence of a Best Friends Animal Society staff member. **If, for any reason paragraph 12 below is deemed unenforceable and this Agreement is construed in accordance with the laws of the State of California,** it is expressly understood and agreed that I am hereby waiving and surrendering my rights pursuant to § 1542 of the Civil Code of the State of California, which provides as follows: "A general release does not extend to claims which a creditor does not know or suspect exist in his favor at the time of executing the release, which if known by him must have materially affected his settlement with the debtor."

10. ARBITRATION. Any controversy or claim arising out of or relating to this agreement or its breach will be settled by arbitration in the State I first perform volunteer duties for Best Friends, even if it pre-dates the date of this agreement, and continuing as long as I continue to be a Volunteer and thereafter as is necessary to protect the interests and rights of Best Friends arising herein with respect to confidentiality and use of my work products and/or A-V material as authorized above.

11. TERM OF AGREEMENT. I acknowledge that this agreement will apply to the entire term of my volunteer relationship, starting with the date I first perform volunteer duties for Best Friends, even if it pre-dates the date of this agreement, and continuing as long as I continue to be a Volunteer and thereafter as is necessary to protect the interests and rights of Best Friends arising herein with respect to confidentiality and use of my work products and/or A-V material as authorized above.

12. GOVERNING LAW. This agreement will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Utah without regard to conflicts of laws or principles.

Name _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Mailing address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Volunteer Acknowledgement of Safety Rules at Best Friends Animal Society

By signing below I acknowledge that I have read, understand and will follow the safety rules for all areas in which I volunteer, including, but not limited to, all Sanctuary animal areas and other departments (Welcome Center, offices, Angels' Rest, etc.).

I further agree that **if I am volunteering for Best Friends Animal Society outside of the Sanctuary** (Los Angeles programs, Salt Lake City programs, New York programs, other events, etc.), I will read and abide by all guidelines as outlined in the Best Friends Volunteer Handbook.

Signature of Volunteer _____ Date _____

Community cats: Volunteer safety protocols



Community cats: Volunteer safety protocols

What to do about cat bites and scratches:

- Complete “proper handling” training for all new volunteers.
- If you are bitten or scratched, wash the wound immediately and see your personal physician for further care.
- Always take bites seriously. Cat bites are 10 times more likely to become infected than other animal bites.
- Always follow proper handling practices with cats, including the use of the isolator forks with traps.
- Never put your fingers inside the traps for any reason.
- Should you be injured while volunteering, our program coordinator will follow up with you after any visit to your doctor or a hospital.

Transmittable zoonotic diseases:

- Please notify staff immediately if you are bitten, scratched or injured in any way while volunteering.
- We are required to complete an injury report on any incident of biting or scratching, but such reports will not negatively affect a cat.

Important: Some zoonotic diseases can be transmitted via clothing and footwear. We strongly recommend that volunteers change their clothes and shoes prior to interacting with their own pets.

Rabies

- When someone is bitten by a cat, that cat will be quarantined for 10 days to monitor for rabies symptoms.
- Should the cat be inaccessible for quarantine, please seek medical advice from your doctor.

Cat scratch fever

- Indicators include swollen lymph nodes and flu-like symptoms. If you notice these after a scratch, see your doctor for further treatment.

Ringworm

- Highly transmittable, but not life threatening, ringworm’s common signs include circular areas of hair loss, with or without crusting. Usually there is a red ring present on the cat’s face, ears or feet. If you notice these signs, see your doctor for further testing and treatment. Ringworm test results typically take about two weeks.
- Cats and people can carry ringworm without symptoms.
- You can spread ringworm to your own pets (even if you are asymptomatic).
- Ringworm can be passed to others through direct contact with a substance or object (clothing, furniture, towels, food bowls) that are capable of spreading infectious organisms.
- Ringworm can be eliminated with bleach.

Parasites (fleas, ticks, mites, worms. toxoplasmosis)

- Please wear the recommended clothing (long pants) and footwear (closed-toe shoes).
- Volunteers should always wear gloves if they will be exposed to feces.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after handling each cat, and when cleaning traps or litter boxes.
- Water and hand sanitizer are available to volunteers, who are also welcome to bring their own hand sanitizer.

Bacterial infections

- Ensure thorough washing of any wounds to prevent infection.
- First aid kits are available if needed.

A tetanus shot is not required to volunteer, but it is always a good idea to be current with this vaccination.

Personal protective equipment

- Gloves and masks are available for all volunteers.
- All volunteers must wash their hands after handling each cat.
- Volunteers must wear gloves (nitrile if allergic to latex) any time they are exposed to feces.
- If needed, staff will have bite gloves and net on hand at all times.

Fostering animals

- All foster animals should be kept separate from personal pets (in a different room).
- Volunteers should be educated on signs and symptoms of disease.
- Volunteers must contact staff when kittens show clinical signs of disease.
- Volunteers should know how to properly disinfect their home and should always use gloves when doing so.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling foster kittens or cats.
- Proceed with proper vaccinations and spay/neuter (per staff instructions) if animal presents no clinical symptoms or diagnosis of disease.

Thank you so much for volunteering your time!

Please let our staff know if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Community cats: Volunteer trapping safety protocols



**Best
Friends**

Community cats: Volunteer trapping safety protocols

The following recommendations are for your own personal safety while working in the field.

When leaving your vehicle:

- Always park your car facing out so you can leave quickly if necessary.
- Always lock your car and carry your keys on you.
- Don't leave any valuables visible in your car (even spare change).

What to carry:

- Gloves
- Two-way radio (if available)
- High-powered headlight or flashlight
- Air horn (if available)
- Cell phone, which should be kept secure in a zippered pocket or bag

What to wear:

- Bright, easily-visible colored shirts with Best Friends logo (no dark shirts)
- Long pants
- Closed-toe shoes, such as tennis shoes or boots with thick soles
- Reflective clothing or vest for night work
- Wear layers and bring weather-appropriate gear.
- Do not wear expensive or valuable clothing or accessories, including items like sunglasses or jewelry (that you wouldn't want damaged or lost).

Trapping and communication tips:

- Work with a partner whenever possible.
- Check in with staff every 30-45 minutes via text or phone and anytime you move to a different location. Failure to check in could result in staff contacting the police department because of concern for your safety.
- Keep the phone number of the local animal control contact handy at all times.
- If a person or animal is acting aggressively (including dogs in the neighborhood) or you feel unsafe at any time, leave the area immediately. Call the police or animal control if appropriate.

Situational awareness tips:

- Continuously monitor the 360-degree area around you in a relaxed, but alert manner.
- "Watch your six" is a term used to remind you to always be aware of what's behind you. It's not just about what's in front of you.
- Before, during and after trapping, make sure to walk the area and keep an eye out for loose dogs, dogs reacting at fence lines, unsecured fencing with dogs behind it (broken or jerry-built areas), as well as potentially confrontational or aggressive people.

When handling traps:

- Only use humane box traps to trap feral cats.
- Always carry traps by their handles.
- Ensure that trap doors are secured until you are ready to return or release the cat.
- Never stick your fingers through the trap holes or interact with the cats.
- Never attempt to pick up a feral cat or try to put them in a carrier or trap.
- Always use gloves (provided for all volunteers) when handling traps.

*No matter how nice cats may seem, attempting to handle feral cats will frighten them and cause them unnecessary stress, which could provoke biting or scratching.

How to ensure the cats' safety and comfort:

- Keep all cats in a temperature-controlled area.
- Only transport trapped cats in a closed vehicle such as a van, SUV or truck with a camper shell. Never transport cats in the open bed of a truck.
- Ensure trap doors are secure until you are ready to release the cats from the traps.
- Immediately notify staff of any injured cats.
- Stay quiet, calm and conscious of the cats' well-being at all times.

Cats will not communicate their needs if they are hurt, frightened or in pain. If distressed, they likely will thrash about in their traps or shut down and huddle in the corner of the trap.

Final reminders:

- Immediately notify staff if you are bitten, scratched or injured in any way while volunteering. We are required to complete an injury report on any incident of biting or scratching, but such reports will not negatively affect a cat.

Community cats: Volunteer door hanger and neighborhood canvassing guidelines



**Best
Friends**

Community cats: Volunteer door hanger/ neighborhood canvassing guidelines

What to wear and what to bring:

- Wear comfortable shoes, sunscreen and weather-appropriate clothing.
- Always carry water.
- Bring a pen, paper, your cell phone and a bag or backpack for carrying materials.
- Make sure the phone number(s) for your team are programmed into your phone.
- Bring relevant info/materials to distribute, such as flyers with information on solutions to cat-related issues and spay/neuter services.

When canvassing a neighborhood:

- Always work in teams of two or more, and only during daylight hours.
- Teams can split the work by taking opposite sides of the street and working down the street together. This helps minimize having to walk the same street twice.
- Team members should always remain within sight of one another.

Guidelines for canvassing:

- Always get the name, phone number, email and street address along with relevant details for anyone who requires follow-up (for example, someone who has filed a complaint or is a caregiver).
- Unless you have completed trap/neuter/return (TNR) or conflict resolution training with us, please do not attempt to answer detailed questions for the public. Just let them know you'll be happy to have someone follow up with an answer to their questions.
- Never enter an area where you feel unsafe or uncertain in any way. Look for a convenient and safe place to leave the door hanger and make sure to jot down the address if you see cats on the property.
- If you see a "no soliciting" sign, do not knock or ring the doorbell. You can leave the door hanger (since it's offering a free service and is not a solicitation), but please respect the homeowner's privacy.
- If you see a "no trespassing" sign, do not enter that person's property. If you see a number of cats on the property, make note of the address and any other relevant details.
- In the rare occurrence that someone asks you to leave the property, please do so immediately.
- Important: Door hangers should never be placed inside of or attached to the outside of anyone's mailbox. This is against federal law. Place all door hangers on doorknobs, inside screen doors, under doormats or on gates — securing them when necessary to prevent them from blowing away.

When finished with your shift:

- Notify staff of the areas you covered and provide any other relevant information.
- Examples of noteworthy information are areas where you saw lots of cats, as well as addresses/contact info for anyone you spoke with who might require a follow-up.

Thank you so much for volunteering your time!
And feel free to let staff know if you have any questions or concerns.

Community cats: Conflict management and resolution tips



Community cats: Conflict management and resolution tips

Understanding the conflict

Conflict typically arises from a clash of goals, values, beliefs or understandings related to a particular issue. The issue often involves high stakes, as well as an emotional component for one or more parties involved. Conflict is not necessarily an issue of right versus wrong, but rather one of incompatible viewpoints.

In the case of community cats, some people enjoy the cats' presence in their neighborhood and want to ensure their comfort and safety. Meanwhile, others feel the cats are an unwelcome nuisance and want them promptly removed.

The primary aim of any conflict resolution or management technique is to identify a common goal between the parties involved. A common goal — to reduce the number of community cats and mitigate or eliminate nuisance behaviors created by these cats — exists among people on both sides of the issue. This includes those who want the cats removed, as well as cat lovers (staff, volunteers and caregivers associated with community cat programs). In fact, one of our most successful community cat efforts has been the distribution of informational materials for community members with the following title: "Whether you love or loathe cats, we can help you."

Five steps to resolving conflict

Step 1: Determine your involvement

First decide whether or not engaging with a particular person or conflict makes sense. Prioritize safety first. Avoid engaging with anybody who appears threatening or aggressive. If someone requests that you leave their property, do so immediately.

Step 2: Understand the other person

Avoid making assumptions about people and adopting negative impressions before gathering facts and hearing all sides of the story. Details are important.

Example: Cats have created a legitimate nuisance for a community member.

Consider the following script as an example of how to manage the conversation:

Volunteer: "So, I understand that some cats are creating some problems for you. I'd like to get some more info on specifically what the problem is so that I can help. Can you tell me what's happening?"

Community member: "They're going to the bathroom in my flowers and ruining them."

Volunteer: "Well that's no fun. OK, are the flowers in a garden area or in flower pots? I ask because we have several different solutions for keeping cats out of various types of gardens."

The person may even show you the area, which allows you to gather more information and formulate a solution suited to their particular problem.

Step 3: Influence opinion or behavior: Work toward gaining trust and finding common ground.

Appeal to thoughts and feelings

- Cat caregivers did not create the homeless cat problem. We're just the people responding to it.
- Cat caregivers and volunteers care about community cats, just as people do their own pets. We recognize that the cats have individual needs and personalities, and we care about their quality of life.
- None of us wants the cats to cause problems for our neighbors. But we also know that simply removing the cats is only a temporary solution that doesn't actually address the source of the problem.

Appeal to the common goal. We all want fewer cats on the streets. Lowering the community cat population means better overall welfare for the cats and fewer nuisance behaviors. (Don't bring up more specific nuisance behaviors (less howling, less spraying, etc.) unless the person has already referred to them.

An explanation of consequences

- Any environment offering sufficient food, water and shelter will eventually attract cats. By removing the cats, space becomes available for more unvaccinated cats to quickly move in, reproduce and recreate the original problem. Through trap/neuter/return (TNR), the cats are spayed or neutered and vaccinated, which eliminates the chance for population growth, and addresses a number of health concerns.
- Cats will always be present in the community, one way or another. Through TNR, we do all the work and provide free or low-cost humane cat deterrents.
- Attempting to bait and trap cats on your own typically results in attracting more cats to your property, rather than fewer, which only adds to your problem. Instead, we provide you with effective methods for keeping them away from your home.

Suggestions for other ways to think about the problem

- Acknowledge that it seems odd and counterintuitive that returning the cats to the same area would actually reduce the problems, and then offer further explanation. For example: "I completely understand that you just want the cats gone and that, obviously, the cats have caused some issues for you. I was also pretty skeptical about whether or not TNR would work when I first heard about it. And that's the case with most shelters, too. But shelters finally decided to give it a shot when it was obvious that the same people were trapping cats and bringing them in over and over again, year after year. They finally decided that removing and killing the cats wasn't working. One man I spoke to said he couldn't believe it actually worked, but

that after we did TNR in his neighborhood and gave him some information on how to keep cats out of his yard, he didn't have to spend time trapping or dealing with cats for the first time in 12 years. He admitted that a cat still wandered through once in a while, but it wasn't a big deal.

- Most community cat problems have only four possible solutions, but only one of them will be both convenient for you and ultimately solve your problem:
 1. Do nothing (which usually makes matters worse).
 2. Repeatedly trap the cats and take them to the shelter (a temporary solution at best).
 3. Repeatedly trap the cats and relocate them (often considered abandonment and is illegal).
 4. Let us do TNR and see how it works.

Step 4: Resolve the problem

Make sure to define any future expectations and mutually discuss solutions to the problem. Once you've reviewed all the facts with the other person and discussed the issue, map out a customized solution for that individual and ask to discuss it with them.

Be careful to not make any commitments that you might not be able to keep. If you offer to supply someone with a motion-activated sprinkler the following week, for example, make sure you follow through. If in doubt, say that you will work to see if you can find someone else to follow up. (Sometimes we want to protect the cats so much, we're inclined to overcommit.)

Be sure to follow up. See how the plan worked, and be prepared to develop a new one, if necessary.

Step 5: Recover and go on

Remember that you can never make everybody happy. You will occasionally encounter people who just can't be satisfied with any solution, and that's just the way it goes. Put the focus on all of the positive changes that you've already created for cats and community members, and then keep moving forward.

Engaging in active listening

Remember you can always express genuine empathy with someone without agreeing with their point of view. So make sure not to accidentally reinforce someone's beliefs or concerns by using phrases like "I agree" or "Yes, that's true." Instead, try rephrasing what someone said using phrases such as:

- "I hear you saying ..."
- "I understand that ..."
- "I think what you're saying is ..."

Any of the above phrases allow you to demonstrate to the person that you understand and empathize with their concerns, while giving you additional time to craft an appropriate response.

Managing yourself during conflict

Once things get heated, it can be challenging to stay calm and collected. Here are some suggestions (or perhaps, reminders) for when you find yourself in the middle of a difficult situation:

- Think before you speak or act. Be thoughtful and proactive, not reactive.
- Stay calm and objective (easier said than done). Emotional responses usually lead to more conflict and regrets.
- Be sincere and up front with the other person. Don't waste time or avoid addressing the issue.
- Make sure you're having a conversation, and not lecturing. It's important that the other person gets a chance to speak as well, and preferably earlier in the conversation. Allowing them to speak will help you gain their trust and gives you more information to work with when you respond.
- Put yourself in their place. You're more likely to resolve the problem if you're able to walk in the other person's shoes for a moment to appreciate their perspective.
- Be flexible and tolerant. Differences in opinion are what make the world go around. Keep an open mind. Embrace complex situations and think of everything as a learning experience.

Additional resources

- Solutions to cat-related issues
- Best Friends web page on community cats
- Best Friends' frequently-asked questions about trap/neuter/return (TNR)
- Conflict resolution for the animal welfare field



Photo courtesy of Christopher Crews



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 4 CCP Administration: Marketing and Public Relations

Marketing and Public Relations

Introduction

For a CCP to be truly effective, various stakeholders need to be aware of the services and benefits it provides to the community. Feeders and caregivers, for example, need to know whether CCP staff and volunteers are available for trapping and any associated costs. Residents who are unhappy about the cats, on the other hand, need to know about the benefits of TNVR (aka TNR) as compared to the traditional trap-and-remove approach. Elected officials, regardless of their position on the issue, need to know about the program's goals and overall effectiveness. A successful marketing plan and public relations (PR) campaign can accomplish all of this and more.

Broadly speaking, marketing is the promotion of a product or service directly to an intended audience. This can be done by way of traditional advertising, but also through unconventional grassroots marketing methods (e.g., postcards placed under windshield wipers in a busy shopping mall parking lot or going door-to-door in high-intake neighborhoods). PR, on the other hand, is all about developing ongoing relationships with your audience through various media outlets or channels. There is the conventional route (e.g., issuing press releases that newspapers and television news programs pick up) as well as effective social media avenues (e.g., a Twitter campaign to find homes for an orphaned litter of kittens).

CCP messaging

Regardless of how a shelter gets the word out about its CCP, the messaging must be consistent. It's much easier for the program to deliver on its promise if the messaging is clearly understood by all audiences. Clear, concise messaging can be very effective not only at building support for a program (through favorable policy decisions from elected officials, donations and grant funding, volunteer recruitment, etc.), but also for addressing opposition to it.

Different messages resonate with different audiences, however. Politicians, for example, are likely to respond most strongly to a message about the program being fiscally responsible, while members of the animal welfare community respond most strongly to a message about increasing positive outcomes in shelters. For conservationists, the strongest response might be to a message about how the CCP stabilizes and even reduces the number of free-roaming cats in the community long-term, with a subsequent reduction in predation on birds and wildlife.

To be clear, this is not merely a matter of telling each audience what they want to hear; the message must be supported by the evidence (e.g., grant funding, shelter statistics, the relevant science).

“Partnerships can change paltry to POW when it comes to promoting a community cat program — especially when a municipal agency is involved. Too often (and most unfortunately), municipal agencies are seen as uninformed, unqualified or just uninterested. Collaborations make feline programs work faster, harder — and better — for cats and the community.”

Lisa Norwood, public relations and outreach manager, City of San Antonio Animal Care Services

Developing clear, concise messaging is more difficult than many people realize, and efforts can be further hampered when policies and practices are undergoing dramatic changes. This is often the case when a shelter is making the transition from the traditional ineffective model for managing community cats to a CCP. Among the critical factors to consider:

- **Leadership buy-in:** Without the ongoing commitment of people in shelter and field services leadership roles, it's difficult to develop effective messaging efforts. Leaders must “practice what they preach” and require that their teams do the same.

- Staff and volunteer buy-in: As with all aspects of a CCP, it's critical that the people on the front lines are fully committed. This means not only knowing what the message is, but also appreciating its underlying rationale and conveying clear, consistent communication on the program.
- Style guide: To maintain consistency, develop a basic style guide that addresses the preferred name of the program (TNVR program, feral cat program, etc.), frequently used terms and phrases (community cats vs. feral cats, etc.) and common acronyms and abbreviations (CCP, TNVR, RTF, etc.). Although these might seem like trivial concerns — especially when seen against the numerous other challenges associated with the implementation of a CCP — the benefits of having a consistent way to reference the program are well worth the investment. This is especially important during times of transition. In addition, some of the acronyms used to describe these programs are inside knowledge. In your style guide, be sure to spell out the acronyms so they can be understood by everyone.
- Frequent check-ins: As the new program is rolled out, it will soon become clear what's working and what's not. It's very important to check in with various team members (CCP staff and volunteers, shelter staff, field services officers, etc.) on a regular basis, and adjust messaging efforts accordingly.



How to get the word out

Once clear and concise messaging for the CCP has been crafted and you have the necessary buy-in, it's time to get the word out. This generally involves some combination of marketing and PR. Note: It's important that these materials be translated into languages relevant to the community being served.

Marketing. Remember, marketing is simply the promotion of the CCP as a community service directly to the public. Among the various tools you might consider:

- Vehicle wraps, decals, magnets: CCP vehicles (typically vans) represent perhaps the best advertising opportunity for the program. Since these vehicles spend a great deal of time in the community, treat them as billboards. Use bright colors to attract attention and make sure key information (e.g., program name and telephone number) is clearly visible, even at a distance. Such markings also increase the safety of staff and volunteers using the vehicles. Field services vehicles should likewise be fitted with promotional decals and magnets to spread CCP messaging and reaffirm field services' involvement in the program.
- Public service announcements (PSAs): Local television channels and radio stations typically offer free or discounted airtime for nonprofits and government entities to promote their programs. The more professionally produced the PSA (including podcasts), the more effective it will be. You don't need to spend a lot of money; much can be done on a shoestring budget.
- Videos: Technology is making video production more accessible all the time, and some of the most successful videos are made with little more than a smartphone and a solid concept. Videos are easily shared via social media and can be used to tell a range of stories. For example, Palm Valley Animal Society has a [short video](#) that showcases their RTF and TNVR work in Edinburg, Texas, and the community support around it.
- Newspaper ads: Placing a regular ad in the local newspaper gives residents a "go to" resource when they need help or when referring friends and family. You might also want to include information about the CCP in ads promoting adoption events, spay/neuter promotions or other special events.

- Online classifieds: Placing postings that say “Free spay/neuter for free-roaming cats” (or something similar) on websites like Craigslist that allow free classified ads can be an effective way to reach potential volunteers and caregivers.
- Printed collateral and promotional materials: Although online options and broadcast media often get much of the attention today, printed collateral and promotional materials (brochures, postcards, posters, refrigerator magnets, etc.) remain an important part of marketing campaigns and can be a good reference for new staff and volunteers when engaging with the public. The more professionally produced the materials, the better. (See the appendix for examples.) With the availability of online tools and web-based printing services, high-quality, reasonably priced collateral is within reach of most organizations. Field service officers and outreach staff should maintain a stock of these materials. Note: These same materials will often be used for community outreach efforts. (See Chapter 8, “Community Outreach and Engagement,” for additional information.)
- Partnerships: Take advantage of mission alignment with other organizations within the community. Ask veterinary clinics and TNVR and rescue groups to distribute CCP brochures, for example. If you’re working with businesses (e.g., warehouses, breweries) or farms and boarding stables as relocation options, ask them to spread the word about your “barn cat” or “working cat” program. By reaching out to their peers, these partners can greatly expand a CCP’s network of support.
- Other opportunities: Among the many other marketing opportunities available are direct mail and billboards. Though these are more expensive options, they can be particularly effective because they can be very targeted. In the case of direct mail, responses can be tracked. Some communities also will include information about the CCP in residents’ utility bills. Municipalities can often take advantage of this option for free.



Public relations. PR is about developing an ongoing relationship with your audience through various media outlets or channels. Among the channels you might consider:

- Local newspapers: Local news outlets are always looking for a good story, and your CCP fits the bill. After all, it’s new (attractive in and of itself) and has broad appeal (to animal lovers, of course, but also to those whose primary interest is simply a more responsible use of their tax dollars). Develop relationships with producers and reporters, and do your best to make their jobs easy by having well-informed, articulate spokespeople available for interviews and sharing promotional materials, feel-good stories and quality photos.
- Local television news: As a local media outlet, television news is similar to newspapers, but obviously with a significant visual component. It’s especially important, therefore, that staff — and the facility — are prepared to be on camera. Ideally, you will have high-quality footage (showing staff or volunteers trapping cats, releasing cats, helping at a clinic, etc.) on hand that you can provide the producer, which can then be used to supplement live footage. Increasingly, newspapers are including videos and slide shows on their websites, so the same visuals you prepare for television producers will likely be attractive to newspaper editors.
- Social media: Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram offer unprecedented access to an organization’s supporters and the public in general. Used effectively, social media can increase a CCP’s profile within the community, generate donations, recruit volunteers and increase over-

all impact. (For more information, watch the Maddie’s Institute webinar “[Social Media: 6 New Things Animal Organizations Need to Know.](#)”)

- **Additional outlets:** Although print and broadcast news outlets are generally considered the most important PR channels for a CCP, these are rarely the only influential platforms in town. Magazines covering local issues are always looking for features and smaller “front-of-the-book” items (e.g., a story about a weekend spay/neuter clinic), and a number of bloggers focus exclusively on community and neighborhood issues. You might also consider a press conference or town hall meeting to launch your CCP.

The audiences you need to reach

Perhaps the most obvious audiences for a CCP to reach are volunteers and donors, two key sources of program support. But an effective marketing plan and PR campaign can deliver a CCP’s message to a much broader audience, including the following.

Residents in need of help. It’s not uncommon for residents needing help with trapping and/or managing cat communities to keep quiet for fear of drawing attention to the cats, thereby putting them at risk. In many communities, a call to animal control has traditionally meant impoundment for the cats and citations for the caregivers. These residents need to know that the CCP is offering a very different solution. It’s important that complainants also hear about the program. After all, it’s likely that much of their frustration stems from the failures of the traditional trap-and-remove approach. CCPs offer effective solutions that address and resolve neighborhood complaints. Finding these solutions is crucial to the success of the program.

Elected officials. Even if the CCP received initial support from politicians, their ongoing support is critical to the program’s success. It’s important that they hear — directly as well as from constituents — about the progress being made in the community (decreased intake and increased save rate statistics, fewer litters of kittens, grant awards, resolution of complainant issues, etc.).

Key influencers. Having influential members of the community (entertainers, popular sports figures, celebrities, etc.) spread the word (possibly through a PSA) about a CCP can raise the program’s profile and reach an entirely new audience.

Skeptics and opposition groups. Although CCPs generally have broad support from the community, there will be individuals and groups who do not agree with the program and its efforts. Typically, opposition groups do not support CCPs because of their unproven belief that cats have a deleterious effect on wildlife and the environment, or because of their concern for the welfare of cats living outdoors. When addressing these groups, it’s important to lean in to the science behind the failure of trap-and-kill and the success of TNVR efforts. Both sides are actually working toward the same goal: fewer cats outdoors.

Additional resources

- [Fillable door hanger \(English\)](#)
- [Fillable door hanger \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Fillable “working cat” flyer](#)

APPENDIX

Examples of marketing materials



Warm digs for some cool cats

Join Best Friends Animal Society at the Pennsylvania SPCA's new Fishtown location for a winter shelter building workshop.

Mr. Biscuits invites everyone to come out and learn how to construct simple, warm shelters for community cats in Philadelphia. All materials will be provided and the workshop is free. If you'd like to take home the shelter you build, there is a \$10 materials fee. Scholarships are available.

Please RSVP and contact us with any questions at philadelphiacats@bestfriends.org or 215-913-6013.

Thursday, October 22 • 7-9 p.m.

PSPCA Fishtown
1546 Frankford Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19125



Mr. Biscuits was rescued by Animal Care & Control Team of Philadelphia and The Grannie Project. He tried to get warm in a car engine, but was badly burned when the driver unknowingly started the car with him inside. Please be sure to #TapTheHood and save a life this winter!

The Philadelphia Community Cats Project, a partnership of Best Friends Animal Society and PetSmart Charities™, is the humane, effective way to reduce the number of cats living on our streets. Community cats are the stray or feral cats who live in our neighborhoods.



Trap/neuter/return: Better for cats. Better for the community.



In the first half of 2015, 38 percent fewer kittens entered the Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter than during the same period in 2012 — before our Community Cats Project* began.

***A partnership of Best Friends Animal Society, PetSmart Charities™ and the Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter**

Seeing stray cats? We can help!

Best Friends Animal Society’s free* Community Cats Project, a partnership with PetSmart Charities®, is the humane, effective way to reduce the number of cats living on our streets. Community cats are the unowned stray or feral cats who live outdoors in our neighborhoods.

THE COMMUNITY CATS PROJECT PROVIDES:

- Humane trapping of stray and feral cats, followed by spaying or neutering, vaccination and return of the cats to their home area. Over time, their numbers are reduced.
- Ear-tipping of spayed or neutered cats. A painless procedure, an ear-tip is the universal symbol of a spayed or neutered outdoor cat.

BENEFITS OF SPAY/NEUTER:

- Prevents unwanted litters
- Saves taxpayer dollars by keeping cats out of municipal shelters
- Decreases the number of cats dying in shelters
- Helps improve the health of outdoor cats
- Reduces nuisance behaviors like spraying, fighting, howling and roaming

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- Please tell us about stray cats with no ear-tip who need spaying or neutering.
- Call us to volunteer or to learn how you can feed and care for outdoor cats.



Together, we can Save Them All®.

*Some restrictions may apply.

**Don't like cats in your yard?
Please call or email us for details on humane deterrents to keep them out.**

Call 520-820-4492 or email tucsoncats@bestfriends.org

bestfriends.org/felines



¿Ve gatos callejeros? ¡Podemos ayudarlo!

El proyecto gratuito* para los gatos comunitarios de la Sociedad de Animales Best Friends, una colaboración con PetSmart Charities®, es una manera humanitaria y eficaz de reducir el número de gatos que viven en nuestras calles. Los gatos comunitarios son los gatos callejeros sin dueño o los gatos salvajes que viven en nuestros vecindarios.

EL PROYECTO PARA LOS GATOS COMUNITARIOS OFRECE:

- Métodos humanitarios para atrapar a los gatos callejeros, seguido de castración o esterilización, vacunas y el regreso de los gatos a sus comunidades. Con el tiempo, se reduce el número de gatos.
- Cortar la puntita de la oreja de los gatos castrados o esterilizados. El corte de una puntita de la oreja es un procedimiento que no duele y es el símbolo universal de los gatos callejeros que han sido castrados o esterilizados.

BENEFICIOS DE LA CASTRACIÓN/ESTERILIZACIÓN:

- Se evitan las crías no deseadas
- Se ahorra dinero de los contribuyentes al mantener a los gatos fuera de los albergues municipales
- Se reduce el número de gatos que son sacrificados en los albergues
- Esto ayuda a mejorar la salud de los gatos callejeros
- Se reducen los comportamientos molestos, como orinar para marcar su territorio, pelear, maullar y vagar

CÓMO USTED PUEDE AYUDAR:

- Díganos si hay gatos callejeros o salvajes que no tienen la punta de la oreja cortada en su comunidad, que necesiten ser castrados o esterilizados.
- Llámenos para servir como voluntario o para aprender cómo puede alimentar y cuidar a los gatos callejeros.

Trabajando juntos, podemos Salvarlos a Todos®.



* Se aplican algunas restricciones.

¿No le gusta tener gatos en su jardín? Llámenos o envíenos un correo electrónico y le daremos más detalles sobre métodos humanitarios para mantenerlos alejados.

Teléfono: 520-820-4492 • Email: tucsoncats@bestfriends.org

bestfriends.org/felines



Sew for community cats!

Join Best Friends Animal Society and Handcraft Workshop for a fun afternoon of sewing in support of trap/neuter/return (TNR) programs.

You can cut fabric, pin, iron or fold completed trap covers. There's something for everyone!

The covers we'll be making together help keep community cats calm in TNR traps, and make their journeys to the spay/neuter clinic and back to their outdoor homes less stressful.

Sunday, June 7
4:30 – 8 p.m.

Handcraft Workshop
7224 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19119



For more information, please email philadelphiacats@bestfriends.org or call **215-913-6013**

The Community Cats Project, a partnership of **Best Friends Animal Society** and **PetSmart Charities®**, utilizes TNR, the humane, effective way to reduce the number of cats living on our streets. Community cats are the free-roaming, ownerless or feral cats who live in our neighborhoods.





Helping animals in your community

Palm Valley Animal Society (PVAS), one of the largest shelters in the country, takes in more than 20,000 animals from the community each year. Our goal is to save every animal who can be saved through programs designed to help pets in the shelter and the community.

IF WE ALL PITCH IN, WE CAN SAVE MORE LIVES.

- Spay or neuter your pet.
- Adopt.
- Foster.
- Volunteer.
- Donate.
- Visit our Trenton center location to look for a missing pet.

Learn more at pvactx.org

ADOPT A NEW BEST FRIEND

Looking to add to your family? Stop in the **PVAS Trenton Center** (2501 West Trenton Road, Edinburg) or **PVAS Laurie P. Andrew Center** (2451 North Expressway 281, Edinburg) to find your perfect match. Both facilities are open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., 365 days a year. You can also view adoptable animals online at pvactx.org.

SEEING STRAY CATS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

Palm Valley Animal Society is working with Best Friends Animal Society to reduce the number of community cats (free-roaming, stray or feral cats) living outdoors. We humanely trap, spay or neuter, vaccinate, treat for fleas and ticks, and ear-tip community cats. (Ear-tipping is the universal symbol of a spayed or neutered outdoor cat.) Following spay/neuter surgery, cats are returned to the area where they were originally found, and since they are spayed or neutered, their numbers are reduced over time. Don't like cats in your yard? Please contact us for details about humane deterrents at 956-249-0117 (text preferred) or cats@pvactx.org.

BECOME AN ADVOCATE FOR ANIMALS

You can be a voice for dogs and cats in your community by joining PVAS' lifesaving efforts. Sign up for the 2025 Action Team at bestfriends.org/actionteam.



What to do if you find kittens



Are the kittens visibly sick or injured?

YES: Contact an animal welfare organization or shelter that can help you assess whether the kittens need intervention. If that isn't possible, take the kittens to a veterinarian immediately.

NO: Estimate the kittens' age by how they look.



Avoid handling the kittens and watch them from a distance for 10-12 hours. If the kittens seem healthy and content, mom will usually return when she feels it's safe. If the kittens are exposed, attempt to find a safe hiding spot nearby, move them and monitor them from a safe distance for 10-12 hours.

Great! Kittens this age usually don't need much from people or their mom. As long as they are not in immediate danger, you can contact a local provider to schedule spay/neuter surgery.

Did mom return?

YES
Great! Leave kittens alone for now. When the kittens are eight or more weeks old they can be scheduled for spay/neuter surgery along with mom.

NO
These kittens may need your help and you'd make a great rescuer. If you can't foster them yourself, contact a local animal welfare group for guidance.

Taking newborn kittens to your local shelter should be a last resort. Many animal shelters can't provide the kind of around-the-clock care that kittens need. In fact, within a few hours of arriving at many shelters, young kittens are at risk of being killed.

The best way to help most kittens is to leave them with their mother, and then when they are more than eight weeks old, contact your local shelter for spay/neuter resources.



¿Qué debe hacer si encuentra gatitos?



¿Están los gatitos visiblemente enfermos o heridos?

SI: Comuníquese con una organización o albergue dedicado al bienestar de los animales, donde pueden ayudarlo a evaluar si los gatitos necesitan alguna intervención. Si esto no es posible, lleve a los gatitos a un veterinario de inmediato.

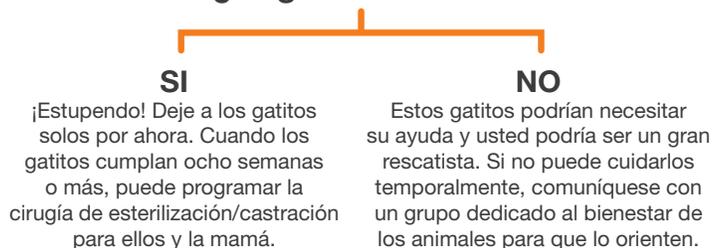
NO: Calcule la edad de los gatitos en base a la apariencia que tengan.



Evite tocar a los gatitos y obsérvelos de lejos durante 10-12 horas. Si los gatitos parecen estar sanos y tranquilos, por lo general la mamá regresará cuando sienta que es seguro hacerlo. Si los gatitos están expuestos, trate de encontrar un lugar cercano y seguro donde esconderlos, trásládelos ahí y obsérvelos desde una distancia segura durante 10-12 horas.

¡Estupendo! Por lo general, a esta edad, los gatitos no necesitan mucho de las personas ni de la mamá. Mientras no estén en peligro inmediato, usted puede comunicarse con un servicio local para programar la cirugía de esterilización/castración.

¿Regresó la mamá?



Llevar gatitos recién nacidos al albergue local tendría que ser la última opción que debería considerar.

Muchos albergues de animales no pueden proporcionar el tipo de cuidado que los gatitos necesitan durante las 24 horas del día. De hecho, los gatitos corren el riesgo de que los maten en las siguientes horas luego de llegar a muchos de los albergues.

La mejor manera de ayudar a la mayoría de los gatitos es dejarlos con su mamá y luego, cuando cumplan más de ocho semanas de vida, usted puede comunicarse con su albergue local para obtener información sobre los servicios de esterilización/castración disponibles.





Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 5 CCP Administration: Key Legal Issues to Consider

Key Legal Issues to Consider

Introduction

Before a CCP can be launched, it's important to understand how the various aspects of the program relate to all relevant state and local laws and regulations. Given the number and complexity of provisions and jurisdictions that can come into play, ensuring such compliance can be challenging, but not impossible.

Although this guide cannot address all possible legal and policy concerns, it does provide an overview of the key issues that must be considered by any organization interested in operating a CCP. When it comes to the laws governing CCPs, there is simply no such thing as one-size-fits-all. The overview of key provisions included in this section are therefore merely intended as guideposts along the legal landscape — to initiate discussion

and prompt further research among field services personnel, advocates, shelter staff, elected officials and others interested in the topic. The appendix provides several examples of actual code along with a brief description of their implications for CCPs.

Disclaimer: This document has been prepared for general information purposes only and is not intended to provide legal advice. An attorney licensed in your state should be contacted for advice on specific legal issues.

Key provisions of current laws and policies

Various provisions of state law — both statutes and regulations — and local ordinances and regulations determine the legal environment in which a CCP operates. For this reason, it's important to investigate all relevant laws and ordinances, as well as the relevant provisions of contracts and agreements that a municipal shelter has with the cities and counties it serves. State statutes and regulations can typically be found online at a state's website; ordinances can generally be found on a municipality's website. The Municipal Code Corporation website (municode.com) also provides a number of local ordinances in its Code Library.

It's important to determine what laws and contracts are relevant because many of them won't pertain to CCPs at all. They can also seem conflicting at times. State law might conflict with local law, for example; local laws sometimes seem to contradict the requirements of a shelter contract. Believe it or not, successful CCPs do exist in such legally precarious contexts. Ideally, it's best to try to identify potential conflicts before entering into a contract. If in doubt, contract provisions can often be included in order to resolve potential conflicts of law ahead of time or, at the very least, require changes in the law during the term of the contract. These types of agreements can lead to easier implementation and administration of CCPs, which will lead to sustained success in the future.

Indeed, because field services staff typically have considerable flexibility in how they carry out their duties (for example, field service officers are rarely required to impound healthy stray cats), CCPs can actually thrive despite outdated laws that at first appear to make operation of a CCP more difficult.

Please remember, however, that things could change with the next shelter director, mayoral election, budget cycle or any number of other factors. This may be frustrating not only for you, but also for field service officers, CCP staff and volunteers, and citizens, as well as donors and other funders,



who typically place great importance on a program's sustainability. To help mitigate these risks, create a formal agreement, such as a memorandum of understanding (MOU), that clearly lays out each party's obligations.

CCP stakeholders may even consider tackling issues surrounding weak laws to help create a more favorable legal environment. Often, these obligations to improve the laws during the term of the agreement can be included in the terms of the contract. By doing this, the CCP can be set up for sustained success into the future without as much concern about political turnover. (See "Working Toward TNVR-Friendly Laws and Policies" below.)

"The American Bar Association supports the adoption of laws and policies supportive of TNVR programs with the intent of de-creasing community cat populations and improving public health and safety through increased rates of vaccination, in addition to providing needed guidance to state, territorial, municipal government entities, as well as private entities and individuals."

American Bar Association¹

The best place to start research is with local animal control ordinances because TNVR (aka TNR) efforts and CCP operations are more likely to be affected by them than by state or federal laws or regulations. On first review, it's often useful to begin with identifying definitions and provisions that can clearly lead to trouble. The following list, while not exhaustive, is a good start. (Please remember, these "snapshots" are designed to give field services personnel, advocates, shelter staff, elected officials and others interested in the topic a cursory overview of key provisions relevant to CCPs.)

Definition of ownership: Definitions of ownership often can be construed as imposing on community cat caregivers the same duties of ownership required of pet owners. For this reason, explicit exemptions from the definition in an ordinance or statute will help protect caregivers from potentially being charged with the same duties that apply to owned animals in the community. For example, the mere act of feeding a cat could constitute ownership and "owner" definitions frequently refer to "keeper," "harbor" and similarly vague language, which also might have implications for caregivers.²

Definition of abandonment: CCPs neither involve nor promote abandonment. Nevertheless, some definitions of abandonment are broader than others, leading some people to suggest that returning cats to their "outdoor homes" violates this provision of most animal cruelty statutes or ordinances. Often, it may be prudent to include a provision that exempts the return of a community cat to the area where he was trapped from abandonment provisions in the relevant law.

Restrictions regarding animals running at large: Like definitions of ownership, these restrictions can be interpreted as imposing ownership duties of care on caregivers. They are similarly flawed because they presume that caregivers have control over community cats. Fortunately, many of these provisions, like leash laws, are restricted to dogs.



¹ ABA. (2017). Resolution 102B. American Bar Association. Retrieved from americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/policy/2017_am_102B.docx.

² Although such provisions are not uncommon, they are legally tenuous, as explained in *Community Cat Programs: Public Policy and Legal Issues*.

*Public nuisances:*³ Provisions governing public nuisance prohibitions — typically part of local ordinances or health code regulations — are often very broad, and can therefore sometimes be interpreted to mean cats at large are, by definition, public nuisances. (See Chapter 12, “Working with Field Services and Dispatch Staff,” for additional information on this topic.)

Restrictions on feeding: Even if the feeding of cats and all the associated duties of care are not directly tied to ownership, feeding restrictions (e.g., limiting the amount of time food can be left out, feeding only cats who have been sterilized and/or are part of a registered community, or banning the feeding of any outdoor animals) can be used to impede TNVR efforts and other CCP activities.

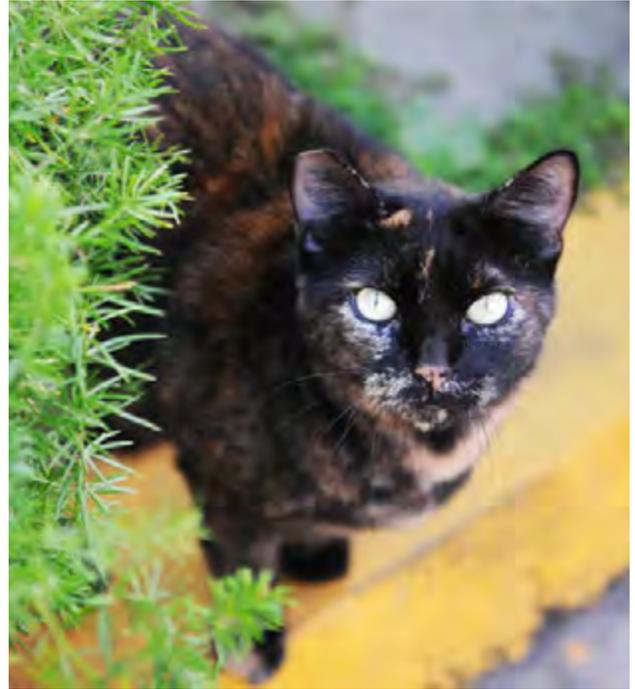
Licensing: Although common for dogs, few communities require licensing for cats. When they do, however, they might apply to both community cats and pet cats because of vague definitions of ownership.

Mandatory spay/neuter: Although sterilization efforts are at the heart of TNVR programs and CCPs, mandatory spay/neuter laws can impede such programs if they lead to the impoundment of unsterilized cats, which in turn can discourage caregiver participation. For such laws to not be detrimental to CCPs, the community would need access to sufficient low- and no-cost services.

Holding times: Although holding times are generally considered beneficial for reuniting dogs with their owners, this has not proven to be the case for cats and their owners. Indeed, surveys indicate that only 1% to 4% of cats are reunited with their owners by way of phone calls and/or visits to the local shelter.⁴ In most cases, the best option for community cats — and for many pet cats mistakenly impounded as strays — is to be sterilized, vaccinated and returned to the location from which they were trapped as soon as possible. Even better are laws with explicit exemptions for eligible community cats.⁵

Mandatory registered communities: Although some very successful CCPs exist in communities requiring community cats to be registered (i.e., cat and caregiver information is recorded and tracked by a sponsor organization), such arrangements can be detrimental to a program’s effectiveness. Such bureaucracy, sometimes accompanied by annual fees, tends to drive caregivers underground, likely reducing sterilization and vaccination rates in a community. In addition, sensitive cat and caregiver information might be made public via public records requests.

Microchipping: It’s unusual to see microchipping required for community cats or even pet cats, but some communities and caregivers consider the expense worthwhile if it means that cats who are impounded will be returned to their community or caregiver. (The expense is now much more within reach, with the cost of some microchips under \$3.) However, this requires a uniform community policy and practice regarding the scanning of cats, having the correct equipment on hand, having a notification system in place, and more — conditions that are rarely present. In any case, concerns over impounded community cats can generally be addressed by provisions making it clear that healthy ear-tipped cats will be impounded only when doing so is in the best interest of the cat and when a positive outcome is assured — for example, when a building is being demolished and the cats on the property are being relocated by way of a barn cat program.



³ The claim that the mere presence of a free-roaming cat constitutes a public nuisance is legally flawed, as explained in *Community Cat Programs: Public Policy and Legal Issues*.

⁴ Weiss, E., M. Slater, and L. Lord, “Frequency of lost dogs and cats in the United States and the methods used to locate them.” *Animals*, 2012. 2(2): p. 301–315; Lord, L.K., et al., “Search and identification methods that owners use to find a lost cat.” *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 2007. 230(2): p. 217–220.

⁵ Holding times, even more than some of the other provisions listed here, are highly context-dependent. Some shelters might use reduced or eliminated holding times to rationalize the immediate killing of all impounded cats deemed “feral.” For this reason, exemptions must apply only to eligible cats who will be returned to their outdoor homes as part of a TNR program, or for whom other positive outcomes are available.

Pet limits: If ownership provisions are applied to caregivers as described above, then pet limits can apply to caregivers.

Working toward TNVR-friendly laws and policies

As mentioned previously, successful CCPs do exist in communities where laws make their operation more cumbersome than might otherwise be the case. Of course, laws can be changed.

Remember, there is no such thing as “one-size-fits-all.” The best laws will fully reflect the values of a particular community. In some cases, this means lots of very specific protections for cats and caregivers; in others, no explicit protections are provided, but there are also few if any restrictions on the kinds of activities necessary for a successful CCP. Often, the best laws have no provisions related to cats, so that a program can be implemented and administered with the full impact being felt from the start.

In some communities, the best scenario might be laws that are “agnostic” when it comes to community cats — that is, no explicit protections, but also no restrictions that would discourage or prohibit TNR or CCPs.

Neither option is inherently superior to the other, although it might be argued that programs in communities with laws supporting TNVR are more likely to attract grant funding. What’s most important is that all the relevant laws work in concert with one another — and that CCP-related contracts, formal agreements and intergovernmental agreements work in concert with the laws and take advantage of supportive provisions to the fullest extent possible for the success of the program.

For information about changing laws to better accommodate such programs, please see the Best Friends’ *TNR Action Kit*.

Additional resource

- [Community Cat Programs: Public Policy and Legal Issues](#)

APPENDIX

Examples of state laws and local ordinances

The following examples are included merely to illustrate a particular point, and do not represent model language. Some are obviously detrimental to TNVR efforts and CCPs, while others are clearly beneficial. In any case, a law's meaning and implications are often open to the interpretation of those charged with field services and the courts, when challenged via lawsuit.

Again, the intent of the information below is not to endorse or criticize specific provisions, but to provide interested parties with some concrete examples that illustrate the legal landscape in which TNVR programs and CCPs operate. Some of these provisions would likely fail to withstand a challenge in court, as explained in *Community Cat Programs: Public Policy and Legal Issues*.

Key provisions relevant to TNVR and CCPs

Definition of ownership

“*Owner* means any person of any age, a firm or corporation owning, harboring, having an interest in, and/or control or ostensible control, custody and/or possession of any animal.” (Orland, California; Title 6, Chapter 4) This definition can have obvious implications for community cat caregivers on many levels. Potential abandonment issues are one possibility. However, a definition like that contained in the Illinois state statute avoids such issues:

“Owner’ means any person having a right of property in an animal, who keeps or harbors an animal, who has an animal in his or her care or acts as the animal’s custodian, or who knowingly permits a dog to remain on any premises occupied by him or her. ‘Owner’ does not include a feral cat caretaker participating in a trap, spay/neuter, vaccinate for rabies, and return program.”

These simple provisions have great relevancy in the sustained success of CCPs. Further, many local governments have adopted the definition from the state statute in their local ordinance, which makes field service operation more consistent throughout the state.

Another more subtle way of removing legal concerns regarding ownership is to make clear in a definition of “community cat” that such cats are by definition “unowned.” Osceola County, Florida, has such a provision:

“Community Cat means any free-roaming cat that may be cared for by one or more residents in the area, known or unknown. Community cats that are ear-tipped indicate the animal is sterilized and vaccinated against rabies at least one time. A community cat may also mean a cat that is found outside with no valid identification that is brought to the animal shelter and is not yet sterilized, ear-tipped, and rabies vaccinated. Ear-tipped refers to removing approximately a quarter-inch off the tip of the cat’s left ear in a straight line cut. Qualified community cats are exempt from licensing and at-large provisions of this ordinance and may be exempt from other provisions directed toward owned animals.”

Note that using this type of wording removes community cats, and their caretakers, from most, if not all, of the potential requirements intended toward owned animals. Further, using a definition such as this keeps it simple, in that one change of definition changes the landscape of the whole ordinance without requiring a massive effort to rewrite the whole law, which is often a hindrance when lobbying local officials.

Definition of abandonment

“*Abandon* means the leaving of an animal without adequate provisions for the animal’s proper care by its owner, the person responsible for the animal’s care or custody or any other person having possession of such animal.” (Aurora, Colorado; Chapter 14, Section 1)

Even though Aurora’s definition of “abandon” is very broad, extending to anybody “having possession of” a community cat, it’s likely that cats deemed eligible for a CCP — those with healthy body condition, for example — are not “without adequate provisions” upon return to the location at which they were trapped. On the contrary, the evidence would be clear, based on their healthy condition, that adequate provisions are being provided regardless of whether a caregiver has been identified. Furthermore, the legal concept of abandonment hinges, to some degree at least, on criminal intent, a concept obviously at odds with the very premise of a CCP. (See *Community Cat Programs: Public Policy and Legal Issues* for additional information on this topic.)

Restrictions regarding animals running at large

“It is unlawful within the incorporated areas of the city of Orland for any person owning, harboring or controlling any animal to ... permit the animal to run at large ...” According to Section 10 of the code, “at large” means “any animal not in an enclosed area, or not under restraint by leash, and/or not under the immediate and direct control of a responsible person” and Section 90 states: “It shall be the duty of the animal control officer to take up within the city of Orland and impound ... any animal at large ...” (Orland, California; Title 6, Chapter 4)

Even if one can reasonably argue that caregivers are not the owners of the cats they care for (see *Community Cat Programs: Public Policy and Legal Issues* for details), the provision requiring animal control and field service officers to impound any cat at large is obviously problematic for a CCP. An all-inclusive provision such as this could lead to unnecessary impounds, which will in turn increase intakes and reduce available shelter space. The time of these officers can be better spent focusing on bite cases and sick or injured animals. This shift in focus will maximize their time and ensure that only animals truly in need are being brought to the shelter.

The negative impact of provisions like the above can be avoided by including a provision that states: “Community cats shall not be impounded for being at large.” Alternatively, many ordinances contain a definition of the term “at large.” If so, the exemption for community cats can be placed there. Ideally, all cats would be excluded from this definition in order to simplify the jobs of field service staff, whose efforts could be applied to more pressing needs regarding public safety and health.

Nuisances

“The animal control officer may cite the owner or any person having custody of such animal(s) for violation of this Section when either the citing animal control officer has witnessed the commission of such habitual nuisance or the animal control officer has received at least one sworn affidavit from each of at least two unrelated adult witnesses from different residences ...” (Jacksonville, Florida; Title XIII, Chapter 462, Section 304(c))

For an animal control and field services officer to issue a citation for a community cat being a nuisance, which is largely at the discretion of the officer to begin with, the complaint must be corroborated, via sworn affidavit, from at least two adults who are neither related to each other nor living in the same residence. The following relatively common scenarios, therefore, will not, alone, result in such a citation: (1) repeated complaints from the same person, (2) similar complaints from two or more individuals living at the same address, (3) similar complaints from different addresses, but from related individuals.

Animal control and field service officers have a duty to protect public safety; nuisance complaints are low-priority calls. Jacksonville’s ordinance is unusual in that these priorities are codified in law. In any case, legitimate nuisance issues can often be identified and addressed without field service officers having to issue citations. See *Community Cat Programs: Public Policy and Legal Issues* for additional information on this topic.

Restrictions on feeding

“It shall be unlawful for any person to intentionally provide food, water, or other forms of sustenance to a feral cat or feral cat colony within the boundaries of the City. It is not a violation of this section for any person to feed or shelter feral cats while working with an animal control agency under contract with the City of Anaheim.” (Anaheim, California; Title 6, Chapter 44, Section 1301)

Although the language suggests that perhaps a network of registered cat communities is in place — and, by extension, only cats associated with such communities can be fed legally — no such system was in place when this ordinance was approved. As written, anybody knowingly providing “food, water, or other forms of sustenance” to a cat who is presumed to be without an owner (i.e., no collar) is in violation of the law.

Ideally, communities where CCPs are in place should not have restrictions on feeding, as these restrictions have been shown time and again to be difficult, if not impossible, to enforce fairly, and they criminalize kindness.

Licensing

“All cats that are part of community cat management programs must be sterilized, vaccinated against the threat of rabies, and ear-tipped (preferable on the left ear) for easy identification; if these requirements are met the community cat is exempted from licensing, stray, at-large and possibly other provisions of this ordinance that apply to owned animals.” (Jacksonville, Florida; Title XIII, Chapter 462, Section 312(b)(3))

The exemption from licensing as well as provisions related to “stray, at-large and possibly other provisions of this ordinance that apply to owned animals” are clearly articulated in Jacksonville’s ordinance, one of the most CCP-friendly codes in the country.

While this is a good example of an exemption from cat licensing provisions, licensing for cats has been shown overall to be difficult, if not impossible, to enforce. As with feeding bans, enforcement of provisions regarding cat licensing puts an unnecessary strain on field service staff while not providing any real benefit to the community.

Mandatory spay/neuter

“Except as otherwise provided in Section 7.14.020, it is unlawful for any person to harbor within the City any dog or cat over the age of four months that has not been spayed or neutered. For purposes of this Section, the term ‘harbor’ means to have legal ownership of, or to provide, on a regular basis, care, shelter, protection, refuge, nourishment, or medical treatment.” (Las Vegas, Nevada; Title 7, Chapter 14, Section 10)

Because of the very broad definition of “harbor” (e.g., providing regular nourishment to a cat), it appears that caregivers looking after even one unsterilized cat over the age of four months would be in violation of this provision. However, Chapter 22 of the ordinance addresses the issue more directly, which allows a clearer understanding of what is specifically expected of cat caregivers. This chapter notes that “feral cat colony caretakers shall be entitled to maintain and care for feral cats by providing food, water, shelter, medical care and other forms of sustenance if the colonies are registered with the sponsor and if the colony caretakers take all appropriate and available steps to ... trap each feral cat in the colony in order to have the cat sterilized, vaccinated for rabies, and ear tipped, and to monitor for new feral cats that join the colony.”

Allowing caregivers to use best efforts to sterilize cats in their communities gives leeway under the law for them to do their work without criminalizing the potential that not all cats in the community are sterilized. That is not the reason these laws were implemented in the first place.

Holding times

“Any impounded cat that is eligible for a sterilization program and that will be returned to the vicinity where the cat was originally captured may be exempted from the mandatory holding period required by this subsection. For the purposes of this subsection, ‘eligible’ means a cat that is living outdoors, lacks discernible identification, is of sound health and possesses its claws.” (Arizona Revised Statutes, Section 11-1013)

Using straightforward language, this provision makes it clear that cats returned to the location from which they were trapped as part of a CCP are exempted from the holding period required for impounded cats lacking identification, such as a collar with ID tag or microchip. By minimizing the amount of time these cats spend in shelters, such provisions can dramatically increase save rates.

Registered colonies

“Managed colony means a colony of free-roaming cats that is registered with the animal care and control division or its designee and is maintained by a colony caretaker using trap, neuter, return methodology.” (Indianapolis, Indiana; Title III, Chapter 531, Section 531-101)

Because registration is included in the definition of “managed colony,” unregistered cats and their caregivers are not afforded the protections found elsewhere in the ordinance. As stated in Section 531-205, for example: “It shall be unlawful for a person to provide food, water or shelter to a colony of free-roaming cats, unless ... the colony is a managed colony, registered with the animal care and control division or its designee ...”

Despite strict requirements imposed by the city’s animal control ordinance, Indianapolis has a very successful CCP due in large part to the efforts of IndyFeral and the Foundation Against Companion-Animal Euthanasia, organizations that have developed strong working relationships with Indianapolis Animal Care and Control.

Microchipping

“Community cat shall mean any un-owned free-roaming cat that has been sterilized, vaccinated, ear-tipped and microchipped and returned to field and may be cared for by one or more residents of the immediate area who is/are known or unknown.” (Palm Beach County, Florida; Chapter 4; proposed)

Because microchipping is linked to the definition of “community cat,” free-roaming cats who are not microchipped and their caregivers are not afforded the protections found elsewhere in the ordinance — including caregivers being exempt from ownership duties, cats being exempt from licensing, and the animal control agency’s duty to contact caregivers if a cat is impounded. In this case, the expense of microchipping was considered a reasonable trade-off for the protections.

Utah's Community Cat Act

The passage of Utah's Community Cat Act (Section 303 of the state's Animal Welfare Act) in 2011 was historic. No state legislature had ever so clearly articulated protections for unowned free-roaming cats and the people who care for them.

11-46-301 Title.

This part is known as the "Community Cat Act."

11-46-302 Definitions.

In addition to the definitions in Sections 11-46-102 and 11-46-202, as used in this part:

- (1) "Community cat" means a feral or free-roaming cat that is without visibly discernable or microchip owner identification of any kind, and has been sterilized, vaccinated, and ear-tipped.
"Community cat caretaker" means any person other than an owner who provides food, water, or shelter to a community cat or community cat colony.
- (2) "Community cat colony" means a group of cats that congregate together. Although not every cat in a colony may be a community cat, any cats owned by individuals that congregate with a colony are considered part of it.
- (3) "Community cat program" means a program pursuant to which feral cats are sterilized, vaccinated against rabies, ear-tipped, and returned to the location where they congregate.
- (4) "Ear-tipping" means removing approximately a quarter-inch off the tip of a cat's left ear while the cat is anesthetized for sterilization.
- (5) "Feral" has the same meaning as in Section 23-13-2.
- (6) "Sponsor" means any person or organization that traps feral cats, sterilizes, vaccinates against rabies, and ear-tips them before returning them to the location where they were trapped. A sponsor may be any animal humane society, non-profit organization, animal rescue, adoption organization, or a designated community cat caretaker that also maintains written records on community cats.

11-46-303 Community cats.

- (1) A cat received by a shelter under the provisions of Section 11-46-103 may be released prior to the five-day holding period to a sponsor that operates a community cat program.
- (2) A community cat is: (a) exempt from licensing requirements and feeding bans; an (b) eligible for release from an animal shelter prior to the mandatory five-day hold period in Section 11-46-103.
- (3) Community cat sponsors or caretakers do not have custody, as defined in Section 76-9-301, of any cat in a community cat colony. Cats in a colony that are obviously owned, as evidenced by a collar, tags, microchip, or other discernable owner identification, are not exempt from the provisions of Title 76, Chapter 9, Part 3, Cruelty to Animals.
- (4) Sterilization and vaccination records shall be maintained for a minimum of three years and be available to an animal control officer upon request.

American Bar Association Resolution on TNVR

**AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
TORT TRIAL AND INSURANCE PRACTICE SECTION
REPORT TO THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES
January 3, 2017**

RECOMMENDATION

RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association urges state, territorial, and local municipal legislative bodies and governmental agencies to adopt uniform laws and policies that allow the implementation and administration of trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) programs for community cats within their jurisdictions, so as to promote consistent interpretation of the legality of TNVR under the law.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association supports the recognition of TNVR as a population management technique by which community cats are humanely trapped, evaluated, sterilized by a licensed veterinarian, vaccinated against rabies, and returned to their original location from which they were found.

FURTHER RESOLVED That the American Bar Association supports the adoption of laws and policies supportive of TNVR programs with the intent of decreasing community cat populations and improving public health and safety through increased rates of vaccination, in addition to providing needed guidance to state, territorial, municipal government entities, as well as private entities and individuals.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association urges state, territorial, and local municipal legislative bodies and governmental agencies to recognize that the legality of TNVR programs has been challenged in areas of the country due to the inconsistent legal treatment of community cats by state statutes and local ordinances and policies and that consistent treatment allowing TNVR promotes the effective, efficient, and humane management of community cats and deters frivolous lawsuits

REPORT

Introduction

It is estimated that there are 74-96 million owned cats¹ and 30-40 million free-roaming² (“community”) cats living in the United States.³ Jurisdictions have struggled to manage the community cat population for many years using a traditional trap-and-remove technique that typically results in the killing of the cats. This technique has proven inefficient, ineffective and inhumane. Trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (“TNVR”) is a management technique, introduced in the U.S. in the 1990s, by which community cats are humanely trapped, evaluated, sterilized, by a licensed veterinarian, vaccinated against rabies and returned to their original habitat. Kittens and socialized adults are removed and placed for adoption when possible.⁴ In some situations, the returned cats are under the care of a volunteer who feeds, waters, and monitors the cats for illness or injury and for any new arrivals so that they may be TNVR’d. TNVR has been recognized as one of the most effective and efficient methods of reducing and controlling the population of community cats, as well as potential disease control.⁵ In these times of limited budgets for local animal control shelters, TNVR provides a humane, effective, cost-saving alternative for shelters seeking to limit the intake of community cats into their facilities and reduce the number of free-roaming cats in the neighborhoods they serve.

Legal challenges to TNVR programs have been raised in various areas of the country due to the inconsistent legal treatment of community cats by state statutes and local ordinances and policies. While some jurisdictions expressly recognize TNVR in their laws, most do not. As a result, traditional criminal and civil statutes create unnecessary obstacles for the implementation and administration of TNVR programs. Consistent drafting and implementation of laws throughout the country allowing for TNVR programs would provide much-needed guidance to state, territorial, and municipal government entities, as well as for private entities and individuals.

¹ ASPCA, *Pet Statistics*, <http://www.aspc.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics> (last visited Nov. 19, 2016).

² Humane Soc’y of the U.S., *Managing Community Cats: A Guide for Municipal Leaders* 4, https://www.animalsheltering.org/sites/default/files/content/ca_community_cat_guide_updates_6_15_lowres_final.pdf (last visited Nov. 19, 2016). Free-roaming, or community cats, are cats whose home is outdoors. Many are unsocialized to humans, while others may be stray, lost or abandoned. *Id.* at 1.

³ Humane Soc’y of the U.S., *Outdoor Cats: Frequently Asked Questions*, http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/feral_cats/ (last visited Nov. 19, 2016).

⁴ See, e.g., Julie Levy et al., *Evaluation of the effect of a long-term trap-neuter-return and adoption program on a free-roaming cat population*, 222(1) JAVMA 42, 44 (2003) (noting 47% of the 155 cats involved in the TNVR study were adopted over the course of the study), https://www.avma.org/News/Journals/Collections/Documents/javma_222_1_42.pdf.

⁵ See Sheilah A. Robertson, *A review of feral cat control*, 10(4) J. FELINE MED. & SURGERY 366–75 (2008).

TNVR programs are not without opposition. Some avid birders, conservationists, and others oppose TNVR as a management tool for community cats.⁶ These stakeholders claim that free-roaming cats have an adverse impact on birds and other wildlife and pose a threat to public health, and that TNVR programs are ineffective.⁷ However, the studies upon which they rely generally are flawed.⁸ In fact, there is considerable empirical evidence showing that TNVR is more effective, efficient, and humane than trap-and-remove programs for the management of community cats.⁹

Effectiveness of TNVR Programs

While there is no official count of the number of cats removed from neighborhoods each year, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (“ASPCA”) estimates that 3.4 million cats enter shelters annually and, of those, 1.4 million are euthanized.¹⁰ Given the massive numbers of community cats brought into shelters, the method of trapping and killing community cats should be reviewed. Studies have estimated that at least 50% of all community cats must be

⁶ See, e.g., Am. Bird Conservancy, *Trap, Neuter, Release*, <https://abcbirds.org/program/cats-indoors/trap-neuter-release/> (last visited Nov. 11, 2016); Wildlife Soc’y, *Final Position Statement: Feral and Free-Ranging Domestic Cats*, <http://wildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/28-Feral-Free-Ranging-Cats.pdf> (last visited Nov. 11, 2016).

⁷ See, e.g., PETER P. MARRA & CHRIS SANTELLA, *CAT WARS: THE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES OF A CUDDLY KILLER* (2016); Paul Barrows, *Professional, ethical, and legal dilemmas of trap-neuter-release*, 225(9) JAVMA 1365-69 (2004), https://www.avma.org/News/Journals/Collections/Documents/javma_225_9_1365.pdf; Scott R. Loss et al., *The impact of free-ranging domestic cats on wildlife of the United States*, 4 NATURE COMM. 1396 (2013), <http://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms2380>; Travis Longcore et al., *Critical Assessment of Claims Regarding Management of Feral Cats by Trap-Neuter-Return*, 23(4) CONSERVATION BIOLOGY 887-94 (2009), <http://drupal.wildlife.org/documents/policy/Critical.Assessment.Feral.Cats.Longcore.pdf>.

⁸ See, e.g., Laurie D. Goldstein, *All Dollars and No Sense: Critique of Dr. Pimentel’s Estimated Economic Impact of Domestic Cat Predation*, 2 MID-ATLANTIC J. ON L. & PUB. POL’Y 153, 158-63 (2013); Written testimony of Peter J. Wolf, Cat Initiatives Analyst, Best Friends Animal Soc’y, to D.C. Councilmember Mary M. Cheh, Chair of Comm. on Transp. & Env’t (Sept. 18, 2015) (discussing the Draft 2015 DDOE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN) (on file with author); see also GREGORY J. MATTHEWS, *A REVIEW OF THE STATISTICAL METHODS EMPLOYED IN THE ARTICLE “THE IMPACT OF FREE-RANGING DOMESTIC CATS ON WILDLIFE OF THE UNITED STATES”* (2013), <http://www.alleycat.org/alley-cat-allies-delivers-55000-signatures-to-smithsonian-to-protest-flawed-study-on-cats-and-birds/> (follow “analysis by an independent researcher that found major flaws in Smithsonian study” hyperlink).

⁹ See, e.g., F.B. Nutter, *Evaluation of a Trap-Neuter-Return Management Program for Feral Cat Colonies: Population Dynamics, Home Ranges, and Potentially Zoonotic Diseases* (2005) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, N.C. State University); J.K. Levy et al., *Effect of high-impact targeted trap-neuter-return and adoption of community cats on cat intake to a shelter*, 201(3) VETERINARY J. 269-74 (2014), <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1090023314001841>.

¹⁰ ASPCA, *Facts about U.S. Animal Shelters*, <https://www.aspc.org/about-us/faq/pet-statistics> (last visited Nov. 12, 2016).

killed to have any impact on the population and potential subsequent intake into shelters.¹¹ Since it has been proven to be impossible to catch all of the community cats in a population, the cats that are not caught and euthanized continue to reproduce and other cats enter the area vacated by those removed. The trapping and killing of community cats therefore must be sustained on an ongoing basis in order to simply prevent the population from growing. The more effective, efficient, and humane solution to manage community cats is TNVR.

TNVR has been shown to reduce the number of community cats in areas targeted by these programs.¹² A study conducted in Randolph County, North Carolina, showed a 36% average decrease in population of six community cat colonies due to targeted TNVR efforts. By contrast, three unsterilized colonies involved in the study experienced an average 47% increase over the same period. Once spayed and neutered, the community cats in these targeted colonies no longer reproduce, which effectively curtails the number of community cats in the population. A follow up census of these six community cat colonies, four years after implementation of the programs showed that one of the colonies was diminished from 10 cats to one cat.¹³

Additionally, TNVR has been shown to significantly decrease the intake of community cats into local animal shelters and can save the jurisdiction significant expense.¹⁴ For example, one study in Alachua County, Florida documented a 66% decrease in animal shelter intake of community cats from a TNVR program in a targeted ZIP code compared to a 12% decrease elsewhere in the county. Another study, in Orange County, Florida, showed the average cost of impounding and euthanizing a cat was \$139; while the average cost of surgery was \$56.¹⁵ The study also noted that the program in Orange County was a long-term program that spayed and neutered 7,903 community cats over a 6-year period, saving the county an estimated \$656,000. Further, because TNVR, through the sterilization of cats, reduces certain nuisance behaviors by cats, such as roaming for mates, fighting, and urine-spraying, TNVR case studies have documented a significant reduction in nuisance complaint calls to animal control.¹⁶ Thus, TNVR is more efficient, effective, and humane than lethal methods of control.

Finally, as of 2014, more than 330 local U.S. governments incorporate TNVR¹⁷ and almost all national animal welfare organizations endorse the use of TNVR programs in order to reduce the populations of community cats, including the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to

¹¹ Kate Hurley, *For Community Cats, a Change is Gonna Come*, ANIMAL SHELTERING MAG., Sept.-Oct. 2013, at 27, 27.

¹² See generally Nutter, *supra* note 9; Levy et al., *supra* note 9.

¹³ See generally Nutter, *supra* note 9.

¹⁴ See generally Levy et al., *supra* note 9.

¹⁵ Kathy L. Hughes et al., *The Effects of Implementing a Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Program in a Florida County Animal Control Service*, 5(4) J. APPLIED ANIMAL WELFARE SCI. 285-98 (2002).

¹⁶ See Best Friends Animal Soc’y, *How TNR Reduces Nuisance Complaints: What the Research Tells Us*, <http://bestfriends.org/resources/how-tnr-reduces-nuisance-complaints-what-research-tells-us> (last visited July 31, 2016) [hereinafter Best Friends, *Nuisance*].

¹⁷ Elizabeth Holtz, *Trap-Neuter-Return Ordinances and Policies in the United States: The Future of Animal Control*, ALLEY CAT ALLIES L. AND POL’Y BRIEF 3 (2014), <http://www.alleycat.org/document.doc?id=639&erid=0>.

animals,¹⁸ The American Humane Association,¹⁹ Best Friends Animal Society,²⁰ and the Humane Society of the United States, which supports "Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) and similar sterilization programs, legislation that allows for and supports non-lethal population control, and coalition-based approaches that involve community leaders, citizens, and stakeholders to implement effective community cat management programs."²¹ Also in support are the Association of Shelter Veterinarians²² and the Tufts Center for Animals and Public Policy.²³

Community Cats, TNVR and Traditional Animal Control Laws

Domestic cats exist on a wide spectrum of socialization to humans from feral cats, those cats born outdoors with no socialization to humans,²⁴ to stray cats who once lived in a home but find themselves lost or abandoned by their owner who are well-socialized, friendly cats. Accurately determining if a free-roaming cat is "feral" or a lost or abandoned pet, however, is full of uncertainty.²⁵ There is currently no universal method available to accurately categorize any cat as

¹⁸ ASPCA, *Position Statement on Feral Cat Management*, <http://www.asPCA.org/about-us/asPCA-policy-and-position-statements/position-statement-on-feral-cat-management> (last visited Sep 12, 2015).

¹⁹ Position Statement, Am. Humane, Cat Colonies (Aug. 26, 2016), <http://www.americanhumane.org/position-statement/cat-colonies/>. But see PETA, *What is PETA's stance on programs that advocate trapping, spaying, and neutering, and releasing feral cats?*, <http://www.peta.org/about-peta/faq/what-is-petas-stance-on-programs-that-advocate-trapping-spaying-and-neutering-and-releasing-feral-cats/> (last visited Oct. 10, 2016). While PETA argues that cats on the street "suffer and die horrible deaths" there is no evidence to support this outcome for the majority of cats who live outdoors. In fact, the health of community cats, in general, is quite good and cats are quite capable of thriving on their own. See No Kill Advocacy Ctr., *The Wild Life of Feral Cats*, 6 NO KILL ADVOC. 1, 2 (2008), http://www.friends4life.org/pdf/Feral_Fact_sheet.pdf.

²⁰ Best Friends Animal Soc'y, *Frequently Asked Questions About TNR*, <http://bestfriends.org/resources/faqs-about-trap-neuter-return-tnr> (last visited Sept. 14, 2015).

²¹ Humane Soc'y of the U.S., *The HSUS's Position on Cats*, http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/cats/facts/cat_statement.html (last visited Nov. 19, 2016).

²² Position Statement, Ass'n of Shelter Veterinarians, *Trap-Neuter-Return of Free-roaming and Community Cats* (April 2015), <http://www.sheltervet.org/assets/docs/position-statements/trapneuterreturn.pdf>.

²³ Genevieve Rajewski, *Feline Fixers*, TUFTS NOW (June 1, 2011), <http://now.tufts.edu/articles/feline-fixers>.

²⁴ Alley Cat Allies, *Feral and Stray Cats – An Important Difference*, <http://www.alleycat.org/resources/feral-and-stray-cats-an-important-difference/> (last visited Apr. 18, 2012).

²⁵ Margaret R. Slater et al., *A Survey of the Methods Used in Shelter and Rescue Programs to Identify Feral and Frightened Pet Cats*, 12(8) J. OF FELINE MED. AND SURGERY 592, 593 (2010). See also Julie K. Levy, *Number of Unowned Free-Roaming Cats in a College Community in the*

feral or tame.²⁶ Based upon these uncertainties, this report refers to all free-roaming cats living outdoors as community cats.²⁷

Regardless of differing categories of socialization and ownership status, all cats are defined in the Code of Federal Regulations as domestic cats of the species *Felis domesticus*.²⁸ This domesticated status provides certain legal protection to cats through many state and local animal cruelty provisions.²⁹

Moreover, under common and statutory law, pets – including cats – are considered personal property.³⁰ Local animal control laws define ownership of cats and impose obligations on all owners. Issues arise when governmental agencies attempt to define cats as feral for management or control purposes while disregarding ownership status, anti-cruelty provisions and public opinion. State laws which address issues related to community cats often authorize local governments to enact laws relative to community cats. This approach has led to drastically disparate treatment of community cats under the law even within the same state.

Traditional ordinances for local animal control departments vary widely in jurisdictions across the country and create problems for community cats. Community cats, as free-roaming cats, frequently are considered “stray” or “at-large” and subject to impoundment by the animal control department. Many jurisdictions require that an animal impounded be held for a specified period of time—the “stray hold” period—to allow the owner to reclaim the animal. Since the national average of owners reclaiming their cats at the animal control facility is approximately 2%³¹, and most community cats are not, in fact, owned, these cats are very rarely claimed. After the stray hold has expired, unclaimed community cats are often euthanized by the shelter. Not only does

Southern United States and Characteristics of Community Residents Who Feed Them, 223 J. AM. VETERINARY MED. ASS'N 202, 202 (2003).

²⁶ Slater, *supra* note 25, at 593.

²⁷ Some cats who live indoors with their owners are allowed outdoors to free-roam. It is often difficult to distinguish these cats from “community cats” whose home is on the street. These cats are not included in the definition of “community cat.”

²⁸ 50 C.F.R. §14.4 (2012) (“Domesticated animals includes...*Felis domesticus*...”). Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations is entitled “Wildlife and Fisheries” and this provision is defining terms for the laws governing the exportation, importation and transportation of wildlife.

²⁹ See, e.g., Thurston v. Carter, 92 A. 295, 295-96 (Me. 1914) (chronicling the historical and common law treatment of cats and finding that “[i]t is clear, therefore, from the popular meaning of the word “domestic” and from our knowledge of its habits gained from fact and experience that the cat is a domestic animal.”).

³⁰ See, e.g., Livengood v. Markusson, 164 N.E. 61 (Ohio Ct. App. 1928) (“The authorities generally support the proposition that at common law the owner of a domesticated cat or dog had such a property right therein . . .”); Van Patten v. City of Binghamton, 137 F.Supp.2d 98, 104 (N.D.N.Y. 2001) (“The source of a property right is determined by looking to the relevant state law . . . Under New York law, a dog is property.”); Kaufman v. Langhofer, 222 P.3d 272, 274 (Ariz. Ct. App. 2009) (“The majority of jurisdictions in the United States classify pets as personal property.”).

³¹ Am. Humane, *Animal Shelter Euthanasia*, <http://www.americanhumane.org/fact-sheet/animal-shelter-euthanasia-2/> (last visited Nov. 12, 2016).

the impoundment of community cats harm the cats, but it is expensive for the jurisdiction to trap, hold and kill the cats, and then dispose of the bodies.

Traditional animal control laws also create serious obstacles for TNVR participants as they may find themselves unwittingly in violation of a number of other laws. Specifically, if the TNVR participant is deemed an “owner” of the cat under the law, they could be subject to several obligations which may include licensing, pet limits, and at-large or leash laws, making it virtually impossible to perform TNVR activities. Even if not deemed an owner, feeding bans, nuisance laws, and laws prohibiting abandonment, may subject them to civil and/or criminal prosecution or potential liability to third parties. Legal recognition of TNVR and consistency in treatment are needed to protect participants in TNVR programs. These protections should extend to both government and private entities and individuals participating in these programs.

Ownership and Legal Obligations that Attach

Animal ownership is legally defined in many ways, but a common definition involves the provision of food and medical care over a period of time.³² Such a definition has the mostly unintended consequences of targeting community cat caregivers, as they regularly monitor and feed community cats. The ownership issue becomes even more complex when one considers the number of owned cats who are allowed to roam outdoors and receive handouts from generous neighbors.³³ Under some statutory interpretations, the same cat could be legally owned by several individuals, many of them most likely unaware of their legal ownership status.

Community cat caregivers, who often care for several cats residing together in colonies, if deemed owners, could be criminally and/or civilly liable for violations of a number of laws. For example, some jurisdictions require owners to license their cats³⁴ and limit the number of cats one may own.³⁵ The community cat caregiver would be seriously burdened to have to license each cat annually, and might then find herself in violation of a pet limit law. Additionally, some

³² The AVMA Model Dog and Cat Control Ordinance uses the following definition: “Owner- A person having the right of property or custody of a dog or cat who keeps or harbors a dog or cat or knowingly permits a dog or cat to remain on or about any premises occupied by that person.” Am. Veterinary Med. Ass’n, *AVMA Model Dog and Cat Control Ordinance*, <https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Documents/avma-model-dog-and-cat-control-ordinance.pdf> (last visited Nov. 12, 2016).

³³ Elizabeth A. Clancy et al., *Evaluation of Cat and Owner Characteristics and Their Relationship to Outdoor Access of Owned Cats*, 222 JAVMA 1541, 1543 (2003) (40 percent of the cats owned by respondents had some level of outdoor access); Verne R. Smith, *The Law and Feral Cats*, 3 J. ANIMAL L. & ETHICS 7, 8 (2009). Compare Shawn Gorman & Julie Levy, *A Public Policy Toward the Management of Feral Cats*, 2 PIERCE L. REV. 157, 157 (2004) (estimating between 9-12% of households feed strays), with BOB CHRISTIANSEN, SAVE OUR STRAYS: HOW WE CAN END PET OVERPOPULATION AND STOP KILLING HEALTHY CATS AND DOGS 18 (1999) (estimating 25% of households feed strays).

³⁴ See VA. CODE ANN. §3.2-6524(B), §3.2-6587(A)(2).

³⁵ See, e.g., PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY, MD. CODE § 3-148.01 (“No person may keep or harbor five (5) or more animals larger than a guinea pig or over the age of four months, without first obtaining an animal hobby permit. . .”)

jurisdictions prohibit owners from allowing their cats to run at-large.³⁶ Because community cats are, by definition, at-large, the community cat caregiver is in violation of this law as well. While these laws may serve useful purposes for true cat owners, they unnecessarily burden community cat caregivers and prohibit the implementation of TNVR programs. Because of these concerns laws defining owner should exempt community cat caregivers and at-large laws, stray-hold periods, and licensing requirements should exempt ear-tipped community cats.

Abandonment and Feeding Bans

Even if TNVR participants are not deemed owners, traditional laws may prohibit TNVR programs. State statutes and, often, local ordinances contain criminal provisions for “abandonment” of an animal. These provisions create myriad legal issues for administrators of TNVR programs; specifically when jurisdictions interpret the “return” aspect of TNVR to be abandonment.³⁷ The anti-cruelty laws proscribe conduct, including abandonment “under circumstances reasonably likely to result in the infliction of unjustifiable pain, or suffering, or cruelty upon [the animal].”³⁸ A typical definition of “abandon” is “to desert, forsake, or absolutely give up an animal without having secured another owner or custodian for the animal or by failing to provide the elements of basic care”³⁹ TNVR programs that return cats to their original location should not be deemed “abandonment,” as TNVR programs are deliberately designed to improve the cat’s overall health and well-being; there is certainly no intent to harm the cats which are the subject of TNVR programs. First, only cats determined to be healthy are returned to where they were found. Further, if the cats were healthy at the time they were trapped there is no reason to believe that returning them to where they were originally found would subject them to pain, suffering or cruelty. Second, the cats’ health and well-being is enhanced after spaying or neutering and vaccination for rabies.

Thus, these laws should not be interpreted by government agencies to prevent the “return” portion of TNVR.⁴⁰ In fact, for clarity, the abandonment law should expressly exempt TNVR “return” of ear-tipped community cats. The potential of criminal penalties due to varying interpretations of statutory schemes serve as a significant factor deterring potential caregivers from becoming involved in TNVR programs, thereby worsening a community’s “feral cat problem.”

³⁶ See, e.g., PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY, MD. CODE § 3-135 (“It shall be unlawful for the owner . . . of any animal . . . to permit the animal to run at large. . .”).

³⁷ Va. Att’y Gen., Opinion Letter on TNR (July 12, 2013), available at <http://www.mowbrayarch.com/images/StrayCats/VA%20AG%20to%20NSPCA2013-12-5.pdf>; (clarified May 4, 2015, available at <http://4fi8v2446i0sw2rpq2a3fg51.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Ltr-Norfolk-SPCA-Blizard.pdf>).

³⁸ People v. Untiedt, 42 Cal. App. 3d 550, 554 (Ct. App. 1974).

³⁹ VA. CODE § 3.2-6500; see also K.S.A. § 47-835 (“‘abandoned’ shall mean to forsake entirely, or to neglect or refuse to provide or perform the legal obligations for care and support of an animal by its owner, or its owner's agent”); F.S.A. § 705.19.

⁴⁰ Note that many TNVR programs provide care to the cats after they are returned. Clearly, under these programs, the cats have not been abandoned.

Additionally, ordinances are commonly enacted which provide sanctions for the feeding of community cats.⁴¹ Feeding bans cause a real dilemma legally for caregivers. By feeding the community cats they care for, caregivers could be violating such an ordinance, but by adhering to the ordinance they could conceivably find themselves in violation of a cruelty provision, by failing to provide care to those same animals. Further, for those cats who have become dependent on food provided by a caregiver, a feeding ban is inhumane, usually forcing cats to subsist on insufficient resources and/or create a nuisance by rummaging through dumpsters for food. To rectify this, feeding ban laws should expressly exempt ear-tipped community cats.

Liability to Third-parties

Liability to third-parties also is a concern for most governmental entities, private organizations and individuals involved in administering and participating in TNVR programs. Under common law, cat owners have no legal duty to keep their cat confined. Thus, if a cat caused harm to another, an owner was held responsible only if they knew the cat was dangerous and was likely to cause harm or damage to another.⁴² However, some courts have held a person (whether an owner or not) liable for damages if they did something that caused the cats to be attracted to an area owned by another and the cats did damage to and/or caused a private nuisance that affected the landowner's enjoyment of their property.⁴³ Moreover, some jurisdictions override the common law and hold owners strictly liable if their cat is "at-large" and causes any damage to a third-party.⁴⁴ Potential liability to any TNVR participant may hinge on how active a role they play in the TNVR process and interpretation of applicable statutes and ordinances and may affect their willingness to participate.⁴⁵

In sum, properly implemented TNVR programs serve multiple purposes, including stabilizing and reducing community cat populations, protecting public health and safety interests through vaccination efforts, and/or resolving nuisance behaviors and corresponding complaints. These

⁴¹ ANAHEIM MUNICIPAL CODE §6.44.1301 (stating that "It shall be unlawful for any person to intentionally provide food, water, or other forms of sustenance to a feral cat or feral cat colony within the boundaries of the City. It is not a violation of this section for any person to feed or shelter feral cats while working with an animal control agency under contract with the City of Anaheim.").

⁴² *McElroy v. Carter*, 2006 WL 2805141 at *5 (Tenn. Ct. App. 2006) (holding that there is no common law legal duty to confine cat generally regarded as domestic animals unlikely to do harm if left to themselves and incapable of constant control).

⁴³ *Kyles v. Great Oaks Interests*, 2007 WL 495897 (Cal. Ct. App. 2007) (finding that an apartment manager may be liable to landowner for overflowing garbage bins that attracted cats).

⁴⁴ *See, e.g.*, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD CODE § 3-135 ("The owner of any animal running at large shall be held strictly liable for a violation of this statute, . . . and for any damages caused by said animal.").

⁴⁵ In conducting TNVR an "owned" free-roaming cat may be trapped "accidentally." TNVR participants initially check for a microchip delineating the owner of the cat when brought to the clinic so as to sterilizing an "owned" cat without the owner's permission. However, if the cat is not microchipped the cat will likely be vaccinated, sterilized and returned. In this instance TNVR participants should not be held liable to the owner for sterilizing the cat.

are all goals worthy of government involvement, and the enacting legislation should make these interests and intents clear and remove any unintended legal obstacles that result from a misapplication of traditional animal control laws. Promoting the consistent drafting and interpretation of laws related to aspects of TNVR programs will only serve to further these interests.

Opposition to TNVR

TNVR is not without opposition.⁴⁶ Some wildlife and bird advocacy organizations primarily (or solely) concerned with the sustainability of native species and the ecosystem, have attacked its use citing a lack of scientific proof that it works and insisting that lethal methods be used to protect wildlife and public health.⁴⁷ Some have argued that feral cats are exotic or invasive species and do not fill an existing niche in the environment and that even well-fed cats significantly impact wildlife.⁴⁸ These opponents of TNVR vilify community cats for killing native birds, some of whom are threatened or endangered, citing predation estimates and economic impacts that are derived from flawed science.⁴⁹ For example, one widely publicized paper estimates that “cats in the contiguous United States annually kill between 1.3 and 4.0 billion birds.”⁵⁰ However, the total number of landbirds in the U.S. (not including Hawaii) is estimated at just 3.2 billion,⁵¹ less than the authors’ high-end estimate. The estimates are grossly exaggerated because the model from which the estimates are generated is seriously flawed.⁵² In

⁴⁶ Most recently the rhetoric of those opposed to TNVR and community cats in general, has become more drastic. In September 2016, a book entitled *Cat Wars: The Devastating Consequences of a Cuddly Killer* was released by Dr. Peter Marra and Chris Santella. MARRA & SANTELLA, *supra* note 7. In this book, the authors call for the removal of community cats from the outdoors “by any means necessary.” The book has caused a considerable amount of controversy for its bold assertions regarding the elimination of community cats. It has also received a great amount of criticism for its failure to recognize the flaws in the reasoning and methods for control of the community cat population. Katie Lisnik, *Cat Wars? Let’s call a ceasefire*, Animal Sheltering (Sept. 13, 2016), <https://www.animalsheltering.org/blog/cat-wars-lets-call-ceasefire>.

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Barrows, *supra* note 7 at 1367-8.

⁴⁸ See generally, e.g., Longcore et al., *supra* note 7.

⁴⁹ Vox Felina, *TNR Fact Sheet No. 2: Predation* (Aug. 2012), http://voxfelina.com/voxfelina/Vox_Felina_Fact_Sheet_Predation_v_1.1.pdf.

⁵⁰ Loss et al., *supra* note 7 at 2.

⁵¹ Partners in Flight Population Estimates Database (2013), <http://rmbo.org/pifpopestimates/Database.aspx>.

⁵² For example, identifying just a few of the problems, the model (1) inflates the estimate of unowned cats in the U.S. by using the frequently cited values which are not grounded in empirical data; (2) inflates the predation rate of unowned cats by relying on decades-old studies that did not use random-sampling of free-roaming cats but instead focused on hunting cats; (3) uses unproven methods for converting stomach contents of cats to annual predation rates, and (4) assumes that 80–100% of unowned cats successfully hunt birds, again inflated because of a heavy reliance on studies of rural cats, when in fact most unowned cats live in urban areas where

fact, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the United Kingdom has stated there is no scientific evidence that cat predation has any impact on bird populations in the U.K.⁵³ They explain that many millions of birds die naturally every year, mainly through starvation, disease, or other forms of predation. There is evidence that cats tend to take weak or sickly birds⁵⁴ who would have died in any event thus causing little additional predation. Further, research has shown that declines in bird populations are most commonly caused by habitat change or loss, particularly on farmland.⁵⁵

Although it is true that some cats kill birds and other small mammals, TNVR is designed to reduce the number of community cats and thus protect birds and other wildlife. Traditional trap-and-remove techniques have failed to effectively manage the population of community cats. In fact, the only cases where lethal methods of control of community cats have successfully eradicated the population of free-roaming cats are those on small oceanic islands using cruel and hazardous methods. For example, on Marion Island, 115 square miles, it “took 19 years to exterminate approximately 2200 cats—using feline distemper, poisoning, hunting and trapping, and dogs. . . . On Ascension Island, roughly one-third the size of Marion Island, it cost approximately \$1732 per cat to eradicate an estimated 635 cats over 27 months.”⁵⁶ However, as noted above, studies of targeted TNVR programs have shown success in reducing the numbers of free-roaming cats, humanely, and at a savings to local jurisdictions.

Opponents also claim that the presence of free-roaming cats creates a public health hazard given the potential for cats to transmit rabies and other diseases.⁵⁷ However, these claims too are exaggerated. “Since 1960 only two cases of human rabies have been attributed to cats.”⁵⁸ In 2014, 272 cases of rabid cats were reported to the CDC, representing 4.51% of all reported cases,

they are less reliant on prey. *See* Written testimony of Peter J. Wolf, *supra* note 8; *see also* MATTHEWS, *supra* note 8.

⁵³ Royal Soc’y for Protection of Birds, *Are cats causing bird declines?*, <http://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/community-and-advice/garden-advice/unwantedvisitors/cats/birddeclines.aspx> (last visited Nov. 19, 2016).

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ *Id.*

⁵⁶ Vox Felina, *Fact Sheet No. 1: Trap-Neuter-Return* (Aug. 2012) http://voxfelina.com/voxfelina/Vox_Felina_Fact_Sheet_TNR_v_1.1.pdf.

⁵⁷ *See, e.g.,* A.D. Roebeling et al., *Rabies Prevention and Management of Cats in the Context of Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Release Programmes*, ZOOSES & PUB. HEALTH 1, 4 (2013), <http://abcbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Roebeling-et-al.-2013-Rabies-prevention-and-management-of-cats-in-TNVR-programs.pdf>. Cats have also been linked to toxoplasmosis, certain intestinal parasites and flea-borne typhus, yet studies have shown they do not create any serious risk of transmission to humans; Alley Cat Allies, *Feral Cats and the Public—A Healthy Relationship*, <http://www.alleycat.org/resources/feral-cats-and-the-public-a-healthy-relationship/> (last visited Nov. 12, 2016) (citing various scientific studies on the cat-associated diseases and their transmission to humans) (hereinafter “*Feral Cats and the Public*”).

⁵⁸ Vox Felina, *TNR Fact Sheet No. 3: Rabies* (Aug. 2013), http://voxfelina.com/voxfelina/Vox_Felina_Fact_Sheet_Rabies_v_1.1.pdf (citing CDC, *Recovery of a Patient from Clinical Rabies—California, 2011*, 61 MORBIDITY & MORTALITY WKLY. REP. 61-64 (2012)).

with the number of rabid cats remaining largely unchanged over the past 25 years despite the increasing popularity of TNVR.⁵⁹ In fact, TNVR programs evaluate cats and return only healthy cats after vaccinating them for rabies, thereby reducing, for years, the risk of rabies in the returned cats.⁶⁰ Finally, community cats, many unsocialized to humans, rarely have contact with humans, thus making disease transmission highly unlikely.⁶¹

Opponents of TNVR have recently resorted to legal avenues to discredit TNVR. In early 2016, the American Bird Conservancy (“ABC”) filed a lawsuit against the New York Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (“Parks”) for violations of the Federal Endangered Species Act (“ESA”).⁶² In a case of first impression, ABC claims that Parks is responsible for the facilitating and maintaining of community cat colonies on Jones Beach State Park, and that these colonies are in close proximity to the nesting areas of piping plovers, which results in the “take” of the piping plovers. ABC makes this claim, despite the colonies of community cats on Jones Beach being maintained by volunteer caretakers, not by Parks’ employees.

Piping plovers are listed as “threatened” under the ESA. While neither the complaint nor the since amended complaint filed by ABC allege that any of the community cats at Jones Beach have killed any piping plovers in the area, they claim that just the mere presence of the cats is a threat to the nesting birds. This lawsuit is currently pending in the Eastern District of New York, awaiting a decision on a motion to dismiss filed by Parks.⁶³

Conclusion

The Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section urges the adoption of this recommendation seeking support for the recognition of TNVR as a population management tool for community cats which are humanely trapped, evaluated, sterilized by a licensed veterinarian, vaccinated against rabies and returned to their original location and urging state, territorial, and local municipal legislative bodies and governmental agencies to adopt laws and policies that support the implementation and administration of such programs for community cats within their jurisdictions. TNVR programs use humane methods to decrease community cat populations and increase public health and safety through increased vaccination at a savings to local jurisdictions. Adoption of such laws and policies will have the effect of minimizing legal obstacles to TNVR programs which have presented themselves due to the inconsistent legal treatment of community cats by state statutes and local ordinances and policies.

Respectfully submitted,
Sam H. Poteet, Jr., Chair
Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section

⁵⁹ Benjamin P. Moore et al., *Rabies Surveillance in the United States during 2014*, 248 JAVMA 777, 784 (Apr. 1, 2016), <http://avmajournals.avma.org/doi/pdfplus/10.2460/javma.248.7.777>.

⁶⁰ Vox Felina, *Rabies*, *supra* note 58 (citing veterinarian and community cat expert Dr. Julie Levy).

⁶¹ *Feral Cats and the Public*, *supra* note 57, at 1 (citing Jeffrey Kravetx and Daniel G. Federman, *Cat Associated Zoonoses*, 162 ARCH. INTERN. MED. 1945-52 (2002)).

⁶² American Bird Conservancy v. Harvey, Case 2:16-cv-01582 (E.D.N.Y. Mar. 31, 2016).

⁶³ *Id.*

GENERAL INFORMATION FORM

Submitting Entity: Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section

Submitted By: TBD

1. Summary of Recommendation.

This recommendation urges state, territorial, and local municipal legislative bodies and governmental agencies to adopt uniform laws and policies that allow the implementation and administration of trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) programs for free-roaming (“community”) cats within their jurisdictions, so as to promote consistent interpretation of the legality of TNVR under the law. TNVR is a population management technique for reducing the population of free-roaming community cats by which such cats are humanely trapped, evaluated, sterilized by a licensed veterinarian, vaccinated against rabies, and returned to their original location from which they were found. The legality of TNVR programs have been challenged in areas of the country due to the inconsistent legal treatment of community cats by state statutes and local ordinances and policies. Consistent legal treatment that allows TNVR promotes the effective, efficient, and humane management of community cats, deters frivolous lawsuits, promotes conservation efforts, and protects public health and safety.

2. Approval by Submitting Entity.

Approved by the Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section on _____.

3. Has This or a Similar Recommendation Been Submitted to the House or Board Previously?

No.

4. What Existing Association Policies are Relevant to This Recommendation and How Would They Be Affected By Its Adoption?

Not applicable.

5. What Urgency Exists Which Requires Action at This Meeting of the House?

It is estimated that there are 30-40 million community cats living in the United States. Jurisdictions have struggled to manage the community cat population for many years using a traditional trap-and-remove technique that typically results in the killing of the cats. This technique has proven ineffective. TNVR is a more effective, efficient, and humane method of control shown to reduce to the populations of community cats, reduce the intake of community cats to shelters, reduce the chances of transmission of disease in the communities through vaccination efforts, and reduce complaints to local police and animal control departments regarding nuisance and property destruction. Traditional criminal and civil statutes create unnecessary obstacles for the implementation and administration of TNVR programs. Consistent drafting and implementation of laws throughout the country allowing for TNVR programs would

provide much-needed guidance to state, territorial, and municipal government entities, as well as for private entities and individuals and save state and local governments' time, effort and capital unnecessarily spent in dealing with the inconsistent treatment of existing laws to TNVR programs.

6. Status of Legislation. (If applicable.)

Not applicable.

7. Cost to the Association. (Both Direct and Indirect Costs)

None.

8. Disclosure of Interest. (If applicable.)

Not applicable.

9. Referral.

This Report and Recommendation is referred to the Chairs and Staff Directors of all ABA Sections and Divisions.

10. Contact Persons. (Prior to the Meeting)

Joan Schaffner
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11. Contact Person. (Who Will Present the Report to the House.)

TBD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Summary of the Recommendation

This recommendation urges state, territorial, and local municipal legislative bodies and governmental agencies to adopt uniform laws and policies that allow the implementation and administration of trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) programs for free-roaming, e.g. community, cats within their jurisdictions, so as to promote consistent interpretation of the legality of TNVR under the law. TNVR is a population management technique for reducing the population of free-roaming community cats by which such cats are humanely trapped, evaluated, sterilized by a licensed veterinarian, vaccinated against rabies, and returned to their original location from which they were found. The legality of TNVR programs have been challenged in areas of the country due to the inconsistent legal treatment of community cats by state statutes and local ordinances and policies. Consistent legal treatment that allows TNVR promotes the effective, efficient, and humane management of community cats, deters frivolous lawsuits, promotes conservation efforts, and protects public health and safety.

2. Summary of the Issue that the Recommendation Addresses

It is estimated that there are 30-40 million community cats living in the United States. Jurisdictions have struggled to manage the community cat population for many years using a traditional trap-and-remove technique that typically results in the killing of the cats. This technique has proven ineffective. TNVR is a more effective, efficient, and humane method of control shown to reduce to the populations of community cats, reduce the intake of community cats to shelters, reduce the chances of transmission of disease in the communities through vaccination efforts, and reduce complaints to local police and animal control departments regarding nuisance and property destruction. Traditional criminal and civil statutes create unnecessary obstacles for the implementation and administration of TNVR programs.

3. Please Explain How the Proposed Policy Position Will Address the Issue

The proposed recommendation urges adoption of uniform laws and policies that allow the implementation and administration of TNVR to provide much-needed guidance to state, territorial, and municipal government entities, as well as for private entities and individuals, and save state and local governments' time, effort and capital unnecessarily spent in dealing with the inconsistent treatment of existing laws to TNVR programs.

4. Summary of Minority Views or Opposition Which Have Been Identified

Certain wildlife and bird conservation groups, such as the American Bird Conservancy, governmental agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and a very small minority of animal welfare organizations, such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, have

opposed the use of TNVR programs for the control of community cats. These stakeholders claim that free-roaming cats have an adverse impact on birds and other wildlife and pose a threat to public health. Moreover, free-roaming cats are subjected to threats such that their lives outdoors result in their pain and suffering. They argue that TNVR is ineffective and all free-roaming cats must be eradicated through trap and remove, e.g. kill, programs. However, the studies upon which they rely generally are flawed. In fact, there is considerable empirical evidence showing that TNVR is more effective, efficient, and humane than trap-and-remove programs for the management of community cats.



Photo courtesy of Christopher Crews



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 6 CCP Administration: Financial Considerations

Financial Considerations

Introduction

As with animal welfare in general, CCPs rely on a great deal of volunteer labor, donations and discounted services. Therefore, leadership is encouraged to take a good look at the financial requisites of their programs. Bills will need to be paid for veterinary services, operating supplies, staff salaries and overhead costs (facility lease, utilities, etc.). Adequate funding needs to be in place to achieve positive program results.

Financial considerations associated with a CCP include grant writing; fundraising from foundations, individuals and businesses; budgeting; and various other tasks. Each program is different, necessitating a detailed breakdown of every task. However, CCPs can succeed, given a variety of resources. The following overview provides information about basic funding and budgeting considerations. Rather than trying to provide readers with all the answers, the overview is intended to help them ask better questions of the key people in their organizations and communities.

Program funding

Funding for CCPs typically comes from a combination of public funding, such as city or county budgets, and private sources (e.g., individual donations and grants). Those involved in obtaining and allocating program funding must be aware of program needs (see “Budgeting” below) and be able to answer questions about the funds and funding sources. For example:

- In what ways can the organization’s existing funding be re-allocated? CCPs are often more fiscally responsible than the current practice in place for managing community cats, so the money from existing programs can often be re-allocated to serve the needs of the new CCP.
- How does a CCP seek funding (grant application, city council budget committee, donation solicitation, etc.)?
- What are the regular grant funding cycles? When does an organization apply for funding?
- Over what period will the grant funds be distributed?
- What is the deadline by which grant funds must be used? Are extensions permitted?
- Will the organization solicit individual donations? Is there an existing donor base or will one need to be built?
- Are there funding restrictions? (Some grants, for example, will pay for programming or equipment but not for operations or program overhead. Publicly funded spay/neuter programs will generally fund only surgeries.)
- What is the impact expected by the grantor or donor? How will the impact be tracked and measured?
- What type of reporting, publicity and other stewardship will the grantor or donor expect?



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Euzby Photography

While budgeting efforts tend to focus on monthly, quarterly and/or yearly objectives, funding efforts must focus on long-term sustainability. For example, knowing that a grant expires next year means you need to plan for how those funds might be replaced. An even more sustainable practice is thinking about replacement funds when the initial funds are applied for. And there will no doubt be unanticipated

fluctuations in the program's overall funding. In addition, grant applications are more appealing to funders if a clear sustainability plan is anticipated. By planning ahead, you can minimize the negative impact of such fluctuations. (See Chapter 10, "Program Sustainability," for more information.)

Budgeting

Developing a detailed CCP budget begins with a solid understanding of the current situation in a community and its shelter, which requires some research.¹ Among the questions to consider:

- How much of the workforce will be paid staff, and how much will be made up of volunteers?
- What are the costs for standard veterinary services?² What about additional services? (See Chapter 14, "Working with Veterinarians and Veterinary Clinics," for detailed descriptions of what's generally included.)
- Will it be necessary to rent office space? What about sufficient space for holding cats before and after surgery?
- How close to the shelter are the partner clinics? (Greater distance generally translates into more staff time and additional costs.)
- Will travel be required to train staff adequately?

Of course, it's impossible to know with certainty every cost a program will incur or to anticipate every challenge. A particularly long kitten season, for example, is likely to stretch resources. Regular tracking with reporting and flexibility are critical. Tracking lets you know exactly how much money is on hand at a given time, and flexibility allows you to juggle funds as necessary³ to protect the cats and kittens most at risk of dying. In addition, reviewing data is an important component of understanding overall program goals. For example, you could anticipate how many surgeries you'll need by reviewing shelter intake and death numbers. This will not only impact veterinary costs, but will also ensure that there's adequate staffing for the program.

It's also important to have input from various parts of the organization. In addition to representation from the finance and/or accounting departments and/or your board of directors (if applicable), be sure to seek input from key CCP, clinic and field services staff. Each group involved in the CCP must be consulted. Input from the organization's lead fundraiser (if applicable) should be considered, too. The best scenario is having whoever is leading fundraising as a member of the team that's building the budget.

Although no two CCP budgets are alike, there are a number of elements that CCP leadership must consider when developing a detailed budget. The organization may already have access to some of the following items, so it's important to consider re-allocation of resources from other areas of the organization if possible. Common line items include:

Veterinary services and care:

- Spay/neuter surgery
- Specialty surgery (for in-heat or pregnant cats, etc.)
- Extra medical services (amputation, removal of an eye, etc.)
- Vaccines
- Parasite treatment
- Medical supplies

¹ Some of this same research will be used to develop program targets, as these targets are based on the number of surgeries required to achieve a particular objective (specific levels of reduced intake or shelter deaths, reduced population of community cats, etc.) and the program's capacity.

² Although it's important to obtain the best price, be cautious about having price lead to having only one partner clinic. Should circumstances change with that clinic, you want the flexibility to shift surgeries to other clinics with minimal disruption to the program.

³ Note: If funds are restricted, it might not be possible to re-allocate them to other purposes.

Staffing:

- Regular staff
- Part time and/or temporary staff
- Contract or outside providers
- Overtime
- Benefits

Staff development and training:

- Staff training
- Travel (e.g., conferences)
- Volunteer training and appreciation

Program equipment and supplies:

- Traps, transport cages, feral cat dens
- Trapping supplies (food, trap covers, food trays, etc.)
- Transportation (van, fuel, maintenance, insurance, registration, modifications, etc.)
- Kennels
- Animal care supplies (food, litter, etc.)
- Animal-handling equipment (gloves, nets, etc.)
- Safety equipment and supplies (flashlights, whistles, first aid kits, etc.)
- Cleaning supplies
- Office supplies (printer ink, paper, etc.)
- Additional startup supplies (storage shed, computer, printer, Internet access, phones, etc.)
- Humane cat deterrents or repellents

Marketing and promotional efforts:

- Design and printing services
- Website and social media services
- Advertising (mailings, billboards, etc.)
- Events and related supplies

Additional resource

- ASPCA's [Spay/Neuter Mentorship Materials](#)



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 7 CCP Administration: Facility Considerations

Facility Requirements

Introduction

As is the case with most shelter operations, the majority of CCPs are run out of very modest facilities. Our highly successful Community Cats Projects are typically headquartered in rented office trailers or in re-allocated shelter offices or storage areas. Even the most modest facilities, however, must address key program needs.

The following provides an outline of the basic facility considerations for an effective CCP, as well as references to additional resources that give more detailed information.

Capacity

CCPs typically house cats being returned to their outdoor homes for no more than 48 hours, including pre-surgery holding and post-surgery recovery. This not only reduces the pressure on a shelter's capacity, but also minimizes the stress levels on all the animals (including non-CCP cats and dogs) potentially affected by crowded conditions. Trapped cats are generally kept at the shelter, stacked on shelves in an area designated for CCP cats. Alternatively, they could be kept at partner clinics or with volunteers, who set aside space in a spare room, basement or garage (assuming certain conditions are met, as described in Chapter 18, "Housing Cats and Kittens").

Housing of cats is perhaps the most obvious factor affecting CCP capacity and, by extension, facility needs, but there are many other factors to consider, including the following.

Animal care. CCP staff and volunteers must be able to provide adequate care (including all necessary cleaning) for all cats and kittens that come through the program. Regardless of other factors (e.g., space for housing), a CCP's capacity is limited by its capacity for appropriate care. The facilities provided must be able to accommodate such care, as described in the Million Cat Challenge's [Capacity for Care](#) resource.

Hours of operation. The facilities provided must be able to accommodate a CCP's hours of operation, which often means evening and even late-night trapping jobs and early-morning drop-offs. For programs operating out of a large municipal shelter, this is generally easy enough, but for programs that rely largely on volunteers and/or partner clinics, such accommodations can be more of a challenge (e.g., requiring after-hours access to a clinic).



Capabilities

If every program cat could be fast-tracked through a CCP — trapped, sterilized and vaccinated, recovered and returned to her outdoor home within 48 hours — the demand on housing, staff time and finances would be relatively modest. While this is the norm, a CCP and its facilities must be able to appropriately accommodate any exceptional circumstances.

Necessary preparation is reflected in both a program's capacity and its capabilities, including the following.

Long-term housing. Long-term housing should ideally be available for cats and kittens requiring additional medical care and/or monitoring (including quarantine).

24-hour care. Round-the-clock care is especially important for cats and kittens who need frequent medication and/or monitoring. It means that trained staff and volunteers must have 24/7 access to the area where the cats are being housed. Of course, 24-hour care can also be accomplished by foster volunteers who take the cats home for monitoring.

Ability to medicate. Trained staff, volunteers or foster volunteers must be able to address mild medical issues by administering necessary medications and other treatments (e.g., sub-cutaneous fluids), requiring access to certain medical supplies.

Kitten nurseries or care centers. Kitten nurseries can be assets to CCPs, but they can be very costly and staff-intensive. Although nurseries can make a significant contribution to lifesaving efforts, if an organization decides to implement a kitten nursery, it's important that the facilities are designed to meet their very specific demands. Kitten care centers, which act as both a foster care hub and a resource center, are becoming more popular. Neonates are admitted, assessed by a veterinarian and sent to foster homes until they can eat on their own. (See Chapter 24, "Saving Kittens," for additional information.)

Beyond animal care

A core component of a CCP is the care of cats and kittens by staff and volunteers, and the facilities generally reflect this focus (e.g., office space is sacrificed for a makeshift kitten nursery during the summer months). For a CCP to be truly effective, though, facilities must address (however modestly) non-animal-care needs as well, including the following.

Office space. A CCP requires a surprising amount of office work, including data entry, report writing, and phone calls to caregivers and complainants. It's important that these tasks are given the attention they deserve, and that means having dedicated (preferably private) office space.

Loading zone and parking. Loading and unloading traps should be made as efficient as possible, and ample parking (including reserved parking close to the building entrance for CCP vans) must be provided.

Trap storage. Storage space must be provided for traps, transfer cages, feral cat dens, trap covers and the like. Since this equipment will be in frequent use, it's important that it is easily accessible to staff and volunteers. There should be ample space to keep clean equipment and dirty equipment separate from each other.

Storage of supplies. Office equipment, cat food, humane deterrents and cleaning supplies must be on hand and stored appropriately (e.g., in a dry and temperature-controlled place, as necessary).

Washing facilities. Traps, transfer cages and feral cat dens need to be cleaned thoroughly to prevent the spread of infectious disease. Trap covers and any other sheets, blankets and towels used for trapping or transporting need to be laundered after each use. Staff and volunteers must have access to the supply wash areas and laundry areas so they can either drop off supplies and laundry for cleaning or wash the items themselves. (See Chapter 16, "Trapping Protocols," for additional information about cleaning equipment.)

Additional resources

- [Association of Shelter Veterinarians: Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters](#)
- [Million Cat Challenge Resource Center: Capacity for Care](#)



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 8 CCP Administration: Community Outreach and Engagement

Community Outreach and Engagement

Introduction

Much of the success of a CCP can be attributed to the relationship among staff, volunteers and the community the program serves. By developing and fostering these critical relationships, staff and volunteers build support for the program from the ground up. At the end of the day, of course, elected officials and other key players involved in shaping shelter policy and programming (e.g., shelter directors) must answer to the public.

Effective community outreach and engagement is therefore essential if a CCP is to develop the kind of public support necessary not only to get the program off the ground, but also to ensure its sustainability. We've already covered marketing and PR in Chapter 4, but another successful approach is grassroots marketing that relies on a "bottom-up" approach through direct outreach to the community. In this scenario, the people with the message deliver it in person, generally by way of community-based outlets such as walking the neighborhoods and distributing door hangers or interacting with residents at public events.

As with any marketing endeavor, the goal is to get the word out — to let people know about the CCP and its numerous benefits to the community. If done well, the people you reach will then spread the word, effectively extending the reach of your messaging. Clear, concise messaging can be very effective not only at building support for a program (through policy decisions from elected officials, donations and grant funding, volunteer recruitment, etc.), but also for addressing opposition. It's better to be proactive and own the conversation rather than finding yourself needing to defend the program.

A way to ensure that elected officials receive balanced feedback from constituents is to provide cards containing community officials' contact information that can be distributed to community members who actively support their CCP. Equipped with easy access to this contact information, CCP participants and supporters can relay their positive messages to politicians through direct conversation, voice mail or email. Politicians and elected officials are more likely to support CCP initiatives if they get positive feedback from the public because they want to keep their constituents happy. Involving and engaging as many people as possible in support of the program can empower community members to take the initiative when it comes to proactive TNVR efforts and responsible community cat management. It can ultimately lay the groundwork for the program's sustainability.

Don't forget: The CCP model is a radical departure from the traditional trap-and-kill approach to managing community cats. For some, it's the answer they've been waiting for; others will be more skeptical, or even opposed to the program. Community outreach and engagement is especially important for reaching this second group, some of whom are likely to become the program's most enthusiastic ambassadors, once they see its benefits firsthand.

Outreach materials and opportunities

Marketing materials such as brochures, flyers, postcards, door hangers, posters and refrigerator magnets can be used for community outreach and engagement. The greatest difference is in how the materials are delivered. Remember, community outreach and engagement is grassroots marketing. Typical activities include:

- Block-walking (distributing door hangers and talking to residents)
- Distributing materials at local fairs and festivals, or outside local businesses
- Participating in various community meetings (for public housing agencies, police "block watches," homeowners' associations, etc.)
- Hosting information sessions, TNVR workshops or winter shelter-building events
- Conducting cat food drives

The premise underlying community outreach and engagement is that significant social change is very much a group effort. Teaming up with individuals and organizations — especially those who are established and trusted in the community — can be a very effective way of extending a CCP’s reach. Among the many possible partners, consider these:

- TNVR groups
- Rescue groups (including dog rescue groups)
- Veterinary clinics and schools
- Community leaders and block captains
- Community organizations (e.g., Rotary Club or Girl Scouts)
- Public health agencies
- Schools
- Churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship
- Elected officials (who often host events)
- Mobile home community administrations
- Apartment complex administrations
- Homeowners’ associations
- Chambers of commerce



Resources for residents

There’s more to community outreach and engagement than handing out brochures and business cards. Residents look to CCP staff and volunteers for solutions to their problems, from the loan of traps and help with transporting cats to and from a clinic, to help with setting up humane deterrents. These are valuable opportunities! Resources that a CCP should be able to provide residents (some examples of which are included in the appendix) include:

- Brochures, flyers and other printed materials
- Door hangers (translated into other languages, as appropriate)
- Boilerplate presentations about the CCP for use at community meetings
- Humane deterrents, both homemade and commercial, and information about where to purchase them
- Caregiver-to-caregiver connections for community cat management assistance and support¹
- Guide to caregiver best practices (see Chapter 9, “Community Cat Management and Caregiver Resources,” for suggestions)
- Vouchers or coupons for spay/neuter surgery
- Information regarding pet-related resources (pet food pantry, dog training, etc.)

¹ While it can be invaluable for caregivers to connect with one another (sharing best practices, filling in for absences, etc.), it’s important that information about caregivers and colonies be shared judiciously, as doing so carelessly can expose people and cats to unnecessary risks.

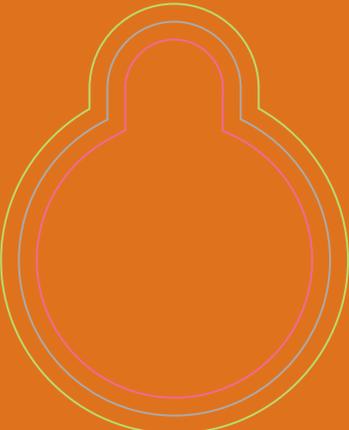
Community outreach and engagement requires professionalism, patience and empathy, so choose the right staff and volunteers for the job. This is relationship-building and customer service. When doing outreach, listen more than you speak and, whenever possible, be sure to offer residents something — even if it's only a follow-up phone call or visit. Often, this small effort will exceed their expectations and build trust. (See Chapter 23, “How to Address Various Complaints,” for additional information about this topic.) As with any relationship, an up-front investment is simply part of the process. For a CCP, the return on that investment can be significant: more lives saved.

Additional resources

- [Solutions to Cat-Related Issues](#)
- [Best Friends' community cats page](#)
- [FAQs About Trap-Neuter-Return \(TNR\)](#)
- [Conflict Resolution for the Animal Welfare Field](#)
- [Best Friends' humane deterrents video](#)

APPENDIX

Door hanger (Baltimore CCP)



SEEING STRAY CATS?

FREE SPAY/NEUTER FOR OUTDOOR COMMUNITY CATS!*

Community cats are the unowned stray or feral cats who live outdoors in our neighborhoods. Best Friends humanely traps, spays or neuters, vaccinates and ear-tips community cats. (Ear-tipping is the universal symbol of a spayed or neutered outdoor cat.) Once they recover, cats are returned to their area, and their numbers are reduced over time.

BENEFITS:

- Prevents unwanted litters
- Saves taxpayer money by keeping cats out of municipal shelters
- Decreases the number of cats needlessly dying in shelters
- Improves the health of outdoor cats
- Minimizes nuisance behaviors like spraying, fighting, howling and roaming

HOW YOU CAN HELP:
Contact us if you see community cats who aren't ear-tipped.

OTHER RESOURCES:
We can provide free or low-cost options for spaying or neutering your pet.

Don't like cats in your yard? Contact us for details on humane deterrents to keep them out!







**Seeing Stray Cats?
We can help!**

Ask about FREE* spay or neuter options.

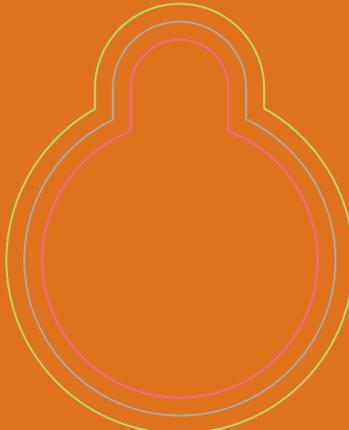
443-240-8530 or
baltimoreccp@bestfriends.org

felines.bestfriends.org

*Some restrictions may apply.



*Some restrictions may apply



¿VE GATOS CALLEJEROS?

¡SERVICIO GRATUITO DE ESTERILIZACIÓN Y CASTRACIÓN PARA GATOS COMUNITARIOS QUE VIVEN EN LA CALLE!*

Los gatos de la comunidad son los gatos callejeros o salvajes sin dueño que viven en la calle en nuestros vecindarios. Best Friends atrapa, esteriliza o castra y vacuna a los gatos de la comunidad y les corta las puntas de las orejas de manera compasiva. (Cortar la puntita de la oreja es el símbolo universal de que un gato que anda en la calle ha sido esterilizado o castrado). Una vez que se recuperan, los gatos son regresados al área donde vivían y el número de gatos se reduce con el tiempo.

BENEFICIOS:

- Se evitan las camadas no deseadas.
- Los contribuyentes ahorran dinero al mantener a los gatos fuera de los albergues municipales.
- Se reduce el número de gatos que se sacrifican innecesariamente en los albergues.
- Se mejora la salud de los gatos que andan en la calle.
- Se reducen los comportamientos molestos como marcar su territorio con orín, pelearse, maullar y vagar.

CÓMO PUEDE AYUDAR:
Comuníquese con nosotros si ve gatos callejeros que no tengan la puntita de la oreja cortada.

OTROS RECURSOS:
Podemos proveer opciones gratuitas o de bajo costo para esterilizar o castrar a su mascota.

¿No le gusta que los gatos vengan a su jardín? ¡Comuníquese con nosotros para que le demos información sobre maneras humanitarias de evitar que se acerquen!







**¿Ve gatos callejeros?
¡Nosotros podemos ayudar!**

Pregúntenos sobre las opciones GRATUITAS* de esterilización o castración.

443-240-8530 o
baltimoreccp@bestfriends.org

felines.bestfriends.org

* Se aplican algunas restricciones.



* Se aplican algunas restricciones.

Door hanger (Palm Valley Animal Society)



Helping animals in your community

Palm Valley Animal Society (PVAS), one of the largest shelters in the country, takes in more than 20,000 animals from the community each year. Our goal is to save every animal who can be saved through programs designed to help pets in the shelter and the community.

IF WE ALL PITCH IN, WE CAN SAVE MORE LIVES.

- Spay or neuter your pet.
- Adopt.
- Foster.
- Volunteer.
- Donate.
- Visit our Trenton center location to look for a missing pet.

Learn more at pvactx.org

ADOPT A NEW BEST FRIEND

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SEEING STRAY CATS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

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Ayudando a los animales de su comunidad

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SI TODOS COLABORAMOS, PODEMOS SALVAR MÁS VIDAS. LE PEDIMOS QUE:

- Castre o esterilice a su mascota
- Adopte un animal
- Cuide a un animal en forma temporal
- Ofrezca sus servicios como voluntario
- Haga un donativo
- Visite nuestro albergue en el centro de Trenton (vea la dirección más abajo) para buscar una mascota perdida. **Obtenga más información en pvactx.org**

ADOPTA A UN NUEVO MEJOR AMIGO

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¿HAY GATOS CALLEJEROS EN SU VECINDARIO?

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CONVIÉRTASE EN UN DEFENSOR DE LOS ANIMALES

Usted puede ser la voz de los perros y gatos de su comunidad, participando en los esfuerzos de PVA para salvar vidas. Inscríbese para formar parte del equipo de acción de Best Friends 2025, ingresando a la página web: bestfriends.org/actionteam.





Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 9 CCP Administration: Community Cat Management and Caregiver Resources

Community Cat Management and Caregiver Resources

Introduction

In the past, trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) — aka trap-neuter-return or TNR — has been largely a caregiver-centered endeavor. Caregivers did much of the trapping and transport, or at least made such arrangements with a local TNVR group. In fact, some shelter policies or local ordinances required the presence of one or more identified caregivers associated with each community cat. In many communities, this is still the case — though, of course, a great deal of TNVR activity also takes place “underground.”

This is changing, though, with the popularity of shelter-based CCPs, many of which (including those operated by Best Friends) routinely return healthy cats to their outdoor homes without first identifying a caregiver.¹ The rationale for this is three-fold:



1. If a cat is of healthy weight and body condition, then she probably has a reliable food and water source, and sufficient shelter (often provided by one or more residents).
2. The risks of shelter impoundment often outweigh significantly those associated with life on the streets. Community cats are well-suited to living outdoors and are able to thrive in a variety of locations and climates.
3. The most common way that lost cats are reunited with their people is when cats return home on their own, which improves the low return-to-owner rate often seen in shelters.

This in no way diminishes the important role that caregivers play in a successful CCP. In some ways, this shift in approach more fully honors their tireless efforts in caring for community cats, while also recognizing the fact that many of them are anonymous and perhaps prefer to remain so.

The following information is intended to help caregivers as they strive to provide the best care they can, even when circumstances are less than ideal.

Community cat management: best practices

Best practices are important not only for the cats and the people who care for them, but for the entire community. Tidy, organized feeding stations, for example, are less likely to lead to complaints from neighbors. And well-managed communities (i.e., having all, or nearly all, cats sterilized and vaccinated) are important for getting support from public health agencies and officials.²

The following guidelines are considered proven strategies for community cat management. However, situations in the field don't always allow for such guidelines to be followed precisely. Caregivers must therefore exercise their best judgment, always being aware that they increase the likelihood that the cats in their care will remain safe from harm if they can conform to these guidelines. (This can be a useful reminder when the extra effort involved seems unnecessary or unfair: If you won't do it for any other reason, then do it for the cats.)

¹ One important exception is kittens eight to 12 weeks of age, who are returned only if a caregiver agrees to provide ongoing care and monitor the kittens after they're returned.

² It's also true that some communities have ordinances outlining various requirements for caregivers. Best Friends does not encourage such policies, as they tend to drive caregivers underground, thereby hampering efforts to effectively manage community cats.

Feeding practices. Neighbors might not be aware of how many of the cats in your care have been spayed or neutered, but they tend to notice the feeding — especially if the feeding site or station is messy. Be courteous to residents by:

- Feeding in discreet locations that are unlikely to attract attention.
- Feeding on a regular schedule, as this allows you to be more discreet (since the cats will likely appear only at feeding time) and to monitor the cats.
- Distributing only as much food as will be eaten, so as not to attract wildlife. If nocturnal wildlife are eating the food, consider feeding the cats during the day; on the other hand, if the food is attracting birds, consider feeding the cats at night. (Admittedly, it's tricky knowing just how much food to distribute so that all the cats get enough to eat. Some cats will be waiting for the food while others sit back and wait their turn, or show up only after you've left. Caregivers must use their best judgment.)
- Using bowls or plates, rather than placing the food directly on the ground.
- Cleaning up uneaten food, bowls, cans and anything else that might be considered trash (and which, if left unattended, might draw attention to the cats).
- Replacing water regularly, using clean bowls.

What I emphasize most is this: If you feed 'em, fix 'em. This is most easily accomplished with a designated feeding time and a limited amount of food — that way, you know exactly which cats you are feeding. And if you're free-feeding, locate the feeding station in a place where traps can safely be left overnight — this makes the 'fix 'em' part much easier!"

Jayne Sage, executive director, Street Cat Hub

Vaccination against rabies. All Best Friends CCPs vaccinate cats against the rabies virus, even though rabies in cats is extremely rare. Considering the minimal costs involved (assuming the vaccines are purchased in bulk from the manufacturer) and the enormous public health benefit, this is a practice every CCP should adopt.

Health monitoring. Although it can be challenging to re-trap a sick or injured cat, it's important that caregivers monitor the cats for health issues (upper respiratory infection, abscesses, wounds, etc.). As mentioned above, it's much easier to monitor the cats if you feed on a regular schedule. (See Chapter 19, "Post-surgery Recovery," for information about monitoring cats immediately following their return.)

Feces and urine accumulation. Consider installing a litter box or sandbox — in as discreet a place as possible — for the cats, and be sure to clean it regularly. Not only will this practice keep your own yard clean, it will help maintain neighborhood relationships, since the cats will be less likely to urinate and defecate in areas where they aren't wanted.

Flea management. In some parts of the country, fleas can be a problem for community cats. In Texas and Southern California, the fleas can be infected with murine typhus. Although the risk to humans is relatively low, and it's more likely that infected fleas will be found on rats, caregivers should treat cats and their immediate environment for fleas if necessary.

Shelters. Use shelters to protect cats from extreme weather. (Do-it-yourself options can be found online.) Be sure to keep shelters clean and in good condition, and locate them discreetly to avoid drawing attention to the cats. Shelters shouldn't be placed on property without permission from the property owner.

Tracking of cat communities. Each stray cat brought to a shelter should be considered a "red flag cat," a signal that there are other cats in the area in need of TNVR. Having detailed cat community data (original population, current population, number of cats sterilized, kitten births, number of cats pulled, etc.) can

be invaluable for managing the numbers and demonstrating the effectiveness of TNVR. (See “Additional Resources” below for links to examples of tracking systems.)

Note: Special care must be taken to ensure that cat community and caregiver records are protected, which might mean that they remain the property of a nonprofit organization that is not considered a designee of a government agency.³ Otherwise, this sensitive information might be made public via public records requests.

Caregiver resources

As TNVR grows in popularity, more resources are available to caregivers.

Outreach materials. Many of the same materials developed for a CCP’s community outreach efforts can be of use to caregivers. Targeted door-hanging, for example, can be very effective for locating and connecting with other caregivers in an area (important for sharing good practices, filling in for absences, etc.). An example of a Best Friends door hanger is shown in the appendix. (See Chapter 8, “Community Outreach and Engagement,” for additional information.)

Food banks. Some communities have pet food banks and can provide caregivers with cat food.

Microchips. Some caregivers are willing to pay to have their community cats microchipped, if it means that any cat who’s impounded will be returned to his neighborhood. Some microchip providers offer a cheaper, simplified microchip designed specifically for community cats. (See the sidebar below and Chapter 9, “Key Legal Issues to Consider,” for more information.)

Microchipping benefits and risks

It’s important for shelters and caregivers to weigh the benefits and risks of microchipping community cats. Here are things to consider:

Costs (in no particular order):

- Purchase price and/or registration fee
- Potential ownership duties (e.g., leash laws)
- Potential implication for rabies revaccination requirements
- Might negate important protections (e.g., Utah Community Cat Act)

Benefits (in no particular order):

- A virtual “paper trail” is available (e.g., to resolve disputes regarding date of sterilization, vaccination, location).
- Medical records are traceable (e.g., rabies vaccination).
- The shelter has access to useful information (e.g., the location to which an RTF cat was returned).
- Field service staff can obtain this information in the field (where the technology is available).
- There’s potential for tracking and analyzing data (e.g., DOA cats).
- It’s leading by example, using all available tools for transparency and evidence-based programming.

Regarding legal guidance around microchipping community cats, organizations implementing CCPs should consult state and local laws that address ownership matters for animals in their jurisdiction. Specifically, organizations should look at what legal impact microchipping has for a cat in a CCP. For example, is a microchipped community cat considered to be “owned” by someone? The legal classification of a cat as “owned” can bring in other considerations under state or local laws — such as licensing, abandonment and extended stray holds — that could complicate or prevent successful implementation of a CCP.

³ The specific factors used to determine whether a nonprofit is subject to public records requests varies state by state.

Guide to key legal issues. Too often, caregivers are cited (or threatened with citations) for feeding cats — either because of poorly written or legally tenuous laws, or because of misunderstandings surrounding the provisions of a local ordinance. Best Friends’ web page on [community cat public policy and legal issues](#) provides caregivers (and others interested in the topic) with a cursory look at some of the most common legal issues faced by caregivers.

Conflict resolution. Although TNVR and CCPs continue to increase in popularity, some people object to free-roaming cats in their community — and especially on their property. Caregivers, therefore, sometimes find themselves in tense situations. Fortunately, Best Friends and other organizations have developed resources designed to help resolve these situations. (See “Additional Resources” below and Chapter 23, “How to Address Various Complaints.”)

Additional resources

- [Community Cats: Conflict Management and Resolution Tips](#)
- [Solutions to Cat-Related Issues](#)
- [Best Friends’ community cats page](#)
- [Conflict Resolution for the Animal Welfare Field](#)
- [Best Friends humane deterrents video](#)
- [Alley Cat Allies’ Community Cat Colony Tracking System](#)
- [Cat Stats online database](#)

APPENDIX

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Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 10 CCP Administration: Program Sustainability

Program Sustainability

Introduction

Based upon the trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR, aka TNR) method of population management, CCPs play a critical role in helping shelters and communities achieve and sustain a higher save rate. This means that the CCP must continue long after the energy (and often the funding) that launched the program has been depleted. In addition, it is essential to maintain effective community outreach and engagement throughout the duration of the program to ensure its sustainability. Collaboration with community members allows organizations to more easily identify and address issues and provide constituents with long-term solutions.

Planning for program sustainability should begin before the CCP is launched and may be a key requirement from organizations that offer grant funding. Once the program is underway, management and staff must monitor its progress, regularly comparing key metrics against the goals articulated in the plan, making necessary adjustments and reporting results to various stakeholders. The plan for sustainability is therefore likely to change over time, reflecting the dynamic environment in which CCPs operate.

Although no two CCPs are alike, some key factors contribute to their sustainability. The following provides an overview of these factors and indicates how they relate to a program's sustainability.

Key factors

It's easy to think of sustainability purely in financial terms, since a program will last only as long as the funding needed to support it remains available. Although many other factors affect a CCP's sustainability (see below), funding is a good place to start.

Funding and budget. It's not uncommon for a CCP to receive a significant portion of its initial funding from nonprofit organizations interested in seeing the program implemented. Even before the CCP is up and running, though, substantial thought must be given to how future funding will be secured. Increasingly, municipalities are being asked to pay for such programs from the outset, as part of their animal services budget, thereby eliminating the need for a future "hand-off" of the program from an original funder. And because such an approach requires significant buy-in from public officials responsible for overseeing budgeting, it increases the likelihood that a CCP will become part of a shelter's standard operating procedures. (See Chapter 6, "Financial Considerations," for additional information.)

TNVR is not only the method preferred by citizens, in many instances it's cheaper than disposing of cats or housing them over a long period of time. This knowledge could help public officials understand the up-front costs versus the long-term gains, especially since cat intake and population decrease with the presence of a CCP.

Key shelter and program statistics. A CCP's effectiveness is most often measured in terms of key shelter and program statistics (e.g., reduction in the intake and shelter deaths of cats and kittens, reduction in the number and size of carefully monitored colonies). All CCPs should have clear, quantifiable goals set from the start.¹ Although there might be very legitimate circumstances that prevent a CCP from achieving its goals, not setting goals can jeopardize the program's future.

Community cat management. A reduction in the number and size of carefully monitored cat communities is a key measure of a CCP's effectiveness.² Spaying or neutering at least 75% of the cats in a community is recommended for there to be a significant reduction in the size of the community over time.³ Ensuring that communities can be properly managed long-term is therefore critical to the program's sustainability. (See

¹ For example, our Community Cats Projects (partnerships of Best Friends, PetSmart Charities™ and local municipalities) have the following goals: year 1, reduce shelter deaths of cats and kittens by 25 percent; year 2, reduce intake of cats and kittens by 10 percent; year 3, increase the live release rate by 35 percent.

² This focus is also the basis for the "red flag cat" CCP model: CCP staff and volunteers consider each stray cat surrendered to a shelter as a likely indicator (i.e., a "red flag") that additional cats are living in the same area.

³ See the study on high-intensity sterilization done by the Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program: <https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/2019/07/31/study-high-intensity-tnr/>.

Chapter 9, “Community Cat Management and Caregiver Resources,” for additional information.)

Note: Special care must be taken to ensure that cat community and caregiver records are protected, which might mean that they remain the property of a nonprofit organization that is not considered a designee of a government agency.⁴ Otherwise, this sensitive information might be made public via public records requests.

Staff and volunteer training. The philosophical shift to the CCP model is a significant one, requiring some of those involved to rethink their job responsibilities and various measures of success. Although there is often a strong emphasis on training all the organization’s staff and volunteers during the early days of a CCP, it’s important to recognize that training must be ongoing. Key concepts need to be reinforced periodically, and processes and protocols must be revised and refined as lessons are learned. What’s considered best practice one day might be outdated the next.



A commitment to training not only makes for a more effective CCP, but also ensures that the people involved feel invested — all of which has a positive impact on the program’s sustainability. (For more information, see Chapter 12, “Working with Field Services and Dispatch Staff”; Chapter 13, “Working with Shelter Staff and Volunteers”; and Chapter 15, “Working with Local TNVR and Rescue Groups.”)

Effective communication. A CCP’s sustainability relies on the commitment of staff, volunteers and other stakeholders, which relies heavily on how much trust people have in CCP leadership. One of the most effective ways to build and maintain trust is through honest, open communication. It’s vital to provide facts and statistics to all stakeholders so that they can see for themselves the impact the program is having in the community. This may be especially true and relevant for anyone experiencing stress related to the program or for program detractors.

Transparency might take the form of regular meetings with staff (ideally, representing various departments and/or organizations), a monthly newsletter to supporters of the shelter, or any number of other channels (some high-tech, some low-tech). What’s important is that the communication be honest and open, and that it involves the broad range of stakeholders, including the public. Community support can provide essential benefits in maintaining a program’s sustainability. A positive public image promotes volunteer recruitment and encourages donations. In addition, honest, straightforward communication with community residents and elected officials stems the flow of inaccurate information.

Processes and protocols. Standardizing (to the extent possible) various processes and protocols will not only improve a CCP’s efficiency and effectiveness, it can also reduce stress levels among staff and volunteers. It’s perfectly normal to struggle early on, sorting out what works and what doesn’t. Once the learning curve has been overcome, though, key processes and protocols should be streamlined and standardized, allowing for straightforward daily operations. The following should be reviewed on a regular basis:

- Voicemail script (outlining key CCP points)
- Forms and templates (e.g., intake and clinic drop-off forms)
- Scheduling and record-keeping systems
- Surgery vouchers

⁴The specific factors used to determine whether a nonprofit is subject to public records requests varies state by state.

- Trapping, recovery and return protocols
- Caregiver best-practice recommendations
- Resources for addressing complaint calls
- Relocation policies and protocols

Service areas. CCPs are most effective when they serve targeted areas (e.g., specific neighborhoods) that are the source of highest shelter intake. These service areas will shift or expand as “hot spots” get under control, but it’s important that a CCP’s service area be matched to its capacity. Expanding too far or too soon, or using a scattered approach rather than a targeted one, can greatly reduce the program’s effectiveness — which can easily lead to a loss of morale, public support and funding.



Burnout and “compassion fatigue.” Shelter staff are exposed to an enormously stressful environment. During the beginning stages of a CCP, the way forward might be clear and the results might look promising, but far too many lives are still being lost. Given the critical role that a program’s staff and volunteers play in its long-term success, management must be aware of the risks of burnout and “compassion fatigue” — and take appropriate steps to minimize the risks (see “Additional Resources” below).

Working toward sustainability

Ensuring a CCP’s sustainability is an ongoing effort requiring stakeholder engagement at a deep level. The more the program can become embedded in the shelter and the broader community (and thought of simply as “the way we handle community cats here”), the greater its chances of long-term success. To achieve this kind of engagement, consider doing the following:

- Conducting regular cross-training, which can include shelter staff and volunteers riding along on trapping jobs and returns, and CCP staff and volunteers “shadowing” intake staff and field service officers
- Collecting and sharing testimonials from caregivers and from complainants whose issue was addressed by the CCP staff or volunteers (perhaps as video clips on the shelter’s website and shared via social media)
- Holding media events showcasing the program and its impact in the community (“spay days,” vaccination clinics, etc.)
- Hosting regular “town hall” meetings that are open to the public and designed to educate the community about the program and allow residents to voice their concerns
- Demonstrating best practices at TNVR workshops

This list is hardly exhaustive, of course; it’s meant only to be a starting point. What’s important is engaging stakeholders at a deep level. CCPs are encouraged to experiment with various ideas and techniques that are likely to result in such engagement. (See Chapter 8, “Community Outreach and Engagement,” for additional information about this topic.)

Additional resources

- [Best Friends’ community cats page](#)
- [FAQs About Trap-Neuter-Return \(TNR\)](#)
- *The Power of Joy in Giving to Animals* by Dr. Linda Harper (book available on amazon.com)
- [“Feeding the Fire \(Without Burning Out\)”](#) (article in *Animal Sheltering* magazine) by Carrie Allan



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 11 CCP Operations: Working Toward Positive Outcomes

Working Toward Positive Outcomes

Roughly two of every three animals dying in U.S. shelters are cats. CCPs are based upon the trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) method of population management (aka trap-neuter-return, TNR), so they play a critical role in increasing lifesaving in shelters and communities. These shelter-based programs offer a common-sense, animal-friendly, effective and economical alternative to the traditional method of managing community cats (i.e., impoundment followed, in many cases, by lethal injection).

A CCP's effectiveness depends on several factors, including stakeholder buy-in, program funding, clinic capacity and more. Some of these factors are beyond the control of CCP staff, while others are the direct result of the policies and practices they develop and implement. A clear, guiding principle can be used to shape these policies and practices to maximize positive outcomes.



This guiding principle serves as a kind of compass for the CCP and those involved, providing clear direction in what can often be a rather chaotic environment. It also keeps the organization's staff and volunteers headed in the same direction. Each decision is made with a clear objective in mind. Agreeing on eligibility before implementing a program will help avoid misunderstandings and mistakes after the program begins. For example, Best Friends follows a guiding principle (see box below) for all of its CCPs.

Key factors affecting outcomes

Given the number of factors involved — and the dynamic nature of some of them — determining the best option for a cat might appear to be overwhelming. In fact, the process is relatively straightforward. Although various aspects of a CCP will vary from program to program, the basic process remains largely the same.

Program admission. CCPs typically offer a range of positive outcomes regardless of whether a cat was trapped in the field or brought to the shelter as a stray. A friendly cat brought into the shelter as a stray, for example, would ideally be returned to the place where he was found outdoors, instead of being adopted, since that place is the cat's true home where he has already been living and thriving. We know from experience that such cats are community cats in the most literal sense, with multiple caregivers providing for the cat's needs and concerned for his well-being.

The best option for an individual cat (given the information available at the time a decision must be made) should be determined by a range of factors, including (in no particular order):

- Cat's health
- Cat's age
- Location from which the cat was trapped
- Availability, capability and capacity of caregivers
- Availability of various resources (space, funds, medical care, etc.)
- Legal climate (e.g., laws governing holding times for strays)
- Potential impact on other animals in the shelter's care
- Ways in which the option chosen supports the CCP's overall goals

Assessing eligibility. Program eligibility generally depends primarily on age and health. Cats eligible for Best Friends' CCPs, for example, must be:

- Free-roaming and lacking traceable owner identification
- Of a healthy weight (a good indicator that they have someone in their neighborhood feeding and caring for them) and injury-free (as determined by veterinary staff)

Cats with treatable health issues can also be returned, under the right circumstances — such as if a caregiver provides daily thyroid medication or someone fosters an injured cat until he has recovered.

Freeing up kennel space is a key benefit of CCPs. It allows shelters to care for cats with medical issues or shy owner surrenders, as they may not have had adequate time or space previously to ensure positive outcomes for these cats.

Assessing RTF eligibility for kittens. We encourage shelters to implement kitten intake diversion whenever possible. In most cases, kittens can and should remain with their mother in the community that they originated from. In some cases, however, kittens or a mother cat with a litter of kittens are brought into the shelter. For these situations, there are special considerations when assessing the eligibility of the kittens for return-to-field (RTF). This is not an exhaustive list of all scenarios and, as always, each situation should be examined individually and consideration will need to be made for local ordinances that may have additional requirements, such as rabies vaccinations for cats at a specified age.

In general, kittens four months and older should be assessed for RTF using the same criteria as an adult cat. By this age, kittens are self-sustaining and, in our experience, do well when returned to their community. However, many kittens younger than four months still qualify and are good candidates for RTF. Our recommendation is that healthy kittens coming from an area near an established community of cats, or with a caregiver, be considered for RTF. This is especially true if the mother cat is still in that community or she can be returned at the same time as the kittens.

Kittens who are not thriving, who are born in the shelter or who are brought in without the ability to confirm their original location may not qualify for RTF. Kittens who do qualify should be returned within a short window of time. They should not be away from their location longer than a couple of days.

There are also considerations for ensuring a safe return at the location. For example, you should always assess the surroundings when returning kittens. A tall fence that can easily be climbed by an adult cat may be more difficult for a kitten to navigate, so adjustments to the location may be needed. Whenever possible, we also recommend that kittens be returned with their littermates or another cat from the community. When returning an adult cat at the same time as kittens, we recommend releasing the kittens first, followed shortly by the adult. Adult cats often run home without looking back, so ensuring that the kittens see where the adult goes, and that the adult knows the kittens are there, will help everyone reunite safely after you leave.

Assessing context. Determining the best options available to a given cat requires an assessment of the location from which the cat originated. The decision to return a healthy cat to a managed cat community with a trusted caregiver is generally quite straightforward. Even if no caregiver has been identified, the typical decision is to return the cat since his healthy condition indicates that he's receiving adequate food, water and shelter.

The situation is more complicated if the cat community has been the source of multiple nuisance complaints. In this case, a site assessment should always be conducted. A shelter or field service staff member or volunteer should meet with the complainant to get to the root of the problem and even offer the loan of a humane deterrent. If all efforts to resolve the situation are exhausted, other outcomes besides returning the cat can be considered. If the cat is a good adoption candidate, consider whether the shelter has space or if a foster home is available.

Relocation should be considered only if returning the cat to his original location will put him in immediate danger and no other outcome is possible. See Chapter 20, “Returning Cats,” and Chapter 23, “How to Address Various Complaints,” for additional information.

Shelter policies are another factor that should be considered. A lengthy stray holding period, for example, can be a barrier to moving eligible cats quickly through the shelter and back to their outdoor homes.

These factors, and many more, must be weighed carefully in order for those involved (shelter staff and volunteers, field service officers, members of local TNVR and rescue groups, etc.) to identify and provide the best option for an individual cat.



Positive outcomes. Among the possible positive outcomes are:

- Return-to-field (for the majority of cats)
- Adoption through the shelter or its foster network (only if a cat does not qualify for RTF — for example, if the cat is too sick or injured to be returned)
- Transfer to a rescue group through the CCP or shelter partners (again, only if a cat does not qualify for RTF)
- Relocation through barn or working cat programs (only if returning a cat will put him in immediate danger and no other outcome is possible)

Note: Euthanasia may be the right outcome if it is used to truly relieve an animal’s irremediable suffering or unacceptable quality of life.¹

The process in practice. As this section of the *CCP Handbook* makes clear, the process to ensure a positive outcome for each program cat involves several decisions. Often, these decisions must be made quickly, based upon limited information. The thought of taking on such a challenge can be unsettling.

With some experience, though, a deep commitment to lifesaving and a good understanding of quality of life, staff and volunteers will find that many of these decisions are quite straightforward. This is especially true as the organization gathers and applies critical knowledge about the program, the shelter and the community it serves (see the section below). The basic CCP process lends itself to evolving as creative problem-solving expands the range of possible positive outcomes.

Knowledge is power

To make the decisions necessary to save more lives — and to do so in a timely manner, amid the daily pressures of a CCP — staff and volunteers must have a solid understanding of how the shelter operates and interacts with the community it serves. A detailed analysis of some of the shelter’s key metrics, going back two or three years, is a good start.

Questions to ask include:

- What is the current save rate for cats and kittens? For the shelter as a whole?
- How has it changed (or not changed) over the past couple of years?

¹ For example, euthanasia is considered the best option for a cat who cannot be given his required medication and for whom there is no other positive outcome (e.g., sanctuary).

- What are the annual intake numbers?
- How many cat nuisance calls are received each year?
- How many and which cats don't make it out of the shelter alive each year? Why?
- How many feline intakes are neonatal kittens?
- When does kitten season typically begin and end?
- Which neighborhoods in the community are the most significant sources of kittens each year?
- What is the shelter's average length of stay for cats and kittens? How does this vary seasonally?
- What other lifesaving programs does the shelter have in place?
- How do local and state laws and regulations (e.g., specific holding time for strays) affect lifesaving programs?
- Does the shelter accept cats from commercial trappers (i.e., private companies that offer "feral cat" removal services to residents for a fee)? If so, how many does it accept annually?

Although the idea of analyzing data makes some people uncomfortable, a careful review of the shelter's key statistics is essential to understanding its current performance and future progress. This understanding also helps staff and volunteers to develop policies and processes that maximize positive outcomes. "Empty the shelter" promotions, for example, might be scheduled to coincide with the peak of kitten season, thereby freeing up precious kennel space. Or it might be decided — again, based on the data — that a robust kitten foster program is the most effective way to save more lives during the program's first year. See Chapter 24, "Saving Kittens," for additional information on this topic.

Moreover, the institutional knowledge developed over the course of regular data reviews and reporting is invaluable in helping staff and volunteers make lifesaving decisions quickly and with confidence, thereby improving the CCP's overall success. Lessons learned are applied, and some surprises can be anticipated and even planned for. When kitten season is just around the corner, for example, staff and volunteers know that kennel space available this week may be unavailable next week, and they can make decisions accordingly. See Chapter 22, "Data and Statistics," for additional information.

Additional resources

- [Best Friends' community cats page](#)
- [FAQs About Trap-Neuter-Return \(TNR\)](#)
- ["Making the Decision on Whether or Not to Return a Cat to Field"](#) (Million Cat Challenge blog post)



Photo courtesy of Karen Hollish, Pima Animal Care Center



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 12 CCP Operations: Working with Field Services and Dispatch Staff

Working with Field Services and Dispatch Staff

Introduction

Working closely with field services officers (often called animal control officers or ACOs) and dispatch staff is critical to the success of any CCP. ACOs and dispatch staff frequently find themselves on the “front lines,” fielding complaint calls and serving as an indispensable resource for community outreach and education. Often, the public first learns about a CCP through conversations with ACOs or dispatch staff.

However, successful collaboration requires some understanding of the role that field services and dispatch staff have played historically in municipal animal control. For many years, some animal control agencies have responded to complaints about stray, abandoned and feral cats by rounding them up, contributing to low save rates in shelters. This practice persists today in some places, although in many other communities ACOs will now respond only in cases deemed high-priority (e.g., a sick or injured cat, a bite incident).



Photo courtesy of Karen Hollish, Pima Animal Care Center

The philosophical shift to TNVR (aka TNR) and return-to-field (RTF) is a significant one, requiring some of those involved to rethink their measures of success. Although it’s unlikely to happen overnight, this shift has the potential to transform an organization. The same staff who regarded the CCP with great skepticism can become its greatest ambassadors, and the program’s emphasis on lifesaving efforts can cause field services and dispatch staff to view every aspect of their jobs through this new lens.

Some staff already share the underlying philosophy of the CCP and will immediately embrace their new role. So, those leading the CCP should be prepared for a broad range of responses.

Training

Guidelines recently adopted by the National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA) acknowledge the philosophical and cultural shift taking place within animal control agencies across the country, as these organizations increasingly adopt a CCP model. According to [NACA Guidelines](#): “NACA recognizes that methods such as ‘trap and remove’ have proven to be ineffective at lowering community cat populations and reducing cat nuisance complaints. The association recommends humane management programs, including trap-neuter-return (TNR). Furthermore, animal care and control personnel should be trained in effective conflict resolution techniques to help mitigate nuisance complaints by residents. NACA advocates for effective public education related to cats, active cost-effective spay and neutering initiatives, and responsible care for all cats.”



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography

While no two organizations are exactly alike, the structure of the field services and dispatch departments of most animal control agencies tends to be similar in that there is a clear chain of command. Those in charge must be committed to the philosophy and goals of the CCP for it to achieve

success. And they must communicate their buy-in to the rest of the team through initial training sessions and regular team meetings.

Those leading the CCP can play a critical role in this training, especially in the early days of a program — or better still, before the program launches. Among the various training resources to consider are the following:

- Presentations that explain the CCP’s rationale, describe the benefits to staff and showcase the results of model programs
- Brochures, door hangers and other collateral that will help ACOs as they describe the program to residents (See the appendix for examples of documents explaining that the CCP complies with all relevant laws and has the support of the municipal shelter and elected officials.)
- Scripts and complaint-mitigation training for interacting with residents



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography

Some of the best training tips will come from field services officers and dispatch staff. After all, they have the direct experience and interact with the community on a daily basis. Some will embrace the program more eagerly than others, so encourage these individuals to share tips about what works (as well as what doesn’t) with the team regularly.

In a CCP, problem solving is no longer about “taking the cat away.” ACOs and dispatch staff are required to better understand the nuance — and underlying cause — of nuisance complaints, and they often play the role of diplomat, negotiator or counselor. Training ACOs and dispatch staff in such skills is therefore essential to the success of the CCP. (See Chapter 23, “How to Address Various Complaints,” for more information.)

Benefits to ACOs and dispatch staff

In some cases, the benefits of the CCP may not be immediately obvious to field services officers and dispatch staff. This is especially true for agencies in which field services and dispatch services are separate from sheltering services. (Sheltering staff typically observe a reduction in intake and an increase in save rate almost immediately upon launching a CCP.) However, experience demonstrates that all staff will benefit considerably, as:

- The policies regarding community cats (impoundment, response to nuisance complaints, etc.) are clarified, reducing ambiguity and misunderstanding — and the associated stress — among staff and residents alike
- There’s a decrease in the number of cats and kittens picked up in the field and/or impounded via over-the-counter intake, thereby reducing workload
- Resources once allocated to impounding community cats are re-allocated to other tasks — for example, at-large dogs, injured animals and cruelty investigations
- Caregivers and the rest of the community start seeing ACOs in a different light

- CCP-related public relations and community outreach efforts help inform residents about the program, reducing the burden on field services and dispatch staff
- Workload is further reduced because healthy ear-tipped cats are only rarely impounded
- There is reduced risk of scratches and bites because officers aren't required to trap or catch healthy outdoor cats
- Staff will no longer be required to dispense with large numbers of healthy cats
- Officers are able to provide long-term solutions to nuisance complaints, which reduces the number of calls to field services and dispatch staff, therefore reducing the number of times that officers need to visit a location

Communication

As with any collaborative endeavor, a successful CCP depends on effective communication. Because they serve on the front lines, field services officers and dispatch staff often act as the conduit between residents and those leading the CCP. It's important, therefore, that they receive proper training and are given appropriate resources (as described above).

Language tip: Be consistent in the terminology used to describe your community cat program. It's probably best to avoid referring to it as TNR, since trap-neuter-return is actually just the method being employed by the program, not the larger program – which typically includes community outreach, adoption and foster opportunities. Furthermore, the term has negative connotations for some people, and can therefore become a barrier to effective collaboration. The terms most often used are shelter-neuter-return (SNR), return-to-field (RTF) and community cat program (CCP).

Processes and protocols should ensure consistent communication wherever possible. Callers should receive the same information regardless of whether they speak with a field services officer, a dispatcher or other staff. Among the various questions to consider are:

- How do residents obtain information about the CCP?
- Who receives incoming calls about the CCP (e.g., dispatch, customer service representatives, 311 operators)?
- What information do callers receive?
- Is key incoming information about community cats passed effectively and efficiently from ACOs and dispatch staff to those leading the CCP?
- How will all staff involved in the CCP program understand their role in the network of communication?

Measures of success

The philosophical shift necessary to launch and operate an effective CCP will require some field services officers and dispatch staff to rethink their measures of success. Their traditional role in animal control efforts often involves responding to complaint calls by removing cats or kittens from a location, often with fatal consequences. Removal of the cats or kittens completes the call and the completion of that call's request is the measure of success. However, removing cats from an area often creates a "vacuum effect," which means other unsterilized cats move into the now-available area. The likely result is more complaint calls in the future.

A successful CCP may very well lead to fewer complaint calls,¹ but this is just one favorable outcome. Among the others are:

- Reduced intake of cats and kittens and increase in positive outcomes
- Reduced number of young kittens brought to the shelter (an indication that the population of community cats is being stabilized or reduced)
- Reduced number of cats at a particular location
- The number of positive interactions with residents who support the CCP and, perhaps more important, those who were skeptical of the program but who have seen its impact in their neighborhood
- Improved relationships with shelter staff, caregivers, elected officials and the community overall



Admittedly, some of these measures are difficult to quantify and track. However, the value they represent to various stakeholders far exceeds anything captured merely by tracking impoundments. In any case, some process of documenting and tracking an agency's performance must be implemented if stakeholders expect to see ongoing future improvements.

Finally, collecting and sharing success stories can be remarkably effective at demonstrating to ACOs and dispatch staff the significant contribution they're making to the agency and the community. Such stories can also be integrated into an agency's training program. For example, in this [video clip](#), ACOs talk about TNR and how it helps communities.

Innovative tools

In addition to the shelter intake tools commonly used by field services officers and dispatch staff (e.g., Chameleon/CMS for tracking intake and outcome data), a number of new mapping tools, such as Google Maps and Microsoft MapPoint, and geographic information system (GIS) technology allow CCPs to track intake and locations of cat communities. Cat Stats offers management tools capable of tracking populations over time, using auto-generated maps and spreadsheets.

Visualizing such data can be enormously valuable not only to various staff members, but also to elected officials and the general public, as a compelling way to demonstrate a CCP's progress. (See Chapter 22, "Data and Statistics," for additional information on this topic.)

Additional resources

- [Best Friends' community cats page](#)
- [FAQs About Trap-Neuter-Return \(TNR\)](#)
- [Fact vs. Fiction: What Shelter and Field Services Staff Should Know About Free-Roaming Cats](#)
- [Video: Community Cats — Mitigating Feline Nuisance](#)
- [Video: RTF from an ACO's Perspective](#)

¹The absolute number of calls is an incomplete — and very likely misleading — metric, however, as such calls vary considerably. A call from an overwhelmed caregiver is obviously very different from a call from a resident frustrated with cats climbing on his car, and each requires a very different response. See Chapter 23, "How to Address Various Complaints," for more information.

APPENDIX

Letter of Support from Municipality: San Antonio, Texas



Animal Care Services
 4710 State Highway 151
 San Antonio, TX 78227
 210.207.4PET www.saacs.net



CITY SUPPORTS TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN FOR COMMUNITY CATS

The City of San Antonio Animal Care Services Department supports and embraces Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), a program for community cats. We currently support this program by providing free spay/neuter services for community cats in targeted zip codes. The services for selected zip codes are funded by both a grant from Best Friends Animal Society as well as the Department's Budget. For the other zip codes in San Antonio and the surrounding areas, The San Antonio Feral Cat Coalition (SAFCC) provides subsidized low-cost surgeries, resources and volunteer assistance. SAFCC is a local non-profit, all volunteer organization. Find out more at their website www.sanantioferalcats.org. You can also contact them by calling their helpline at 210-877-9067 or by sending an email to info@sanantioferalcats.org.

TNR has assisted many communities across the United States in dealing with their cat overpopulation challenges. In accordance with Chapter 5 of the City of San Antonio Municipal Ordinance, spayed or neutered outdoor cats are legal. As part of this program, any feral or community cats brought into the shelter as strays will be spayed or neutered, vaccinated, ear tipped and returned to the area that they were taken from, provided they are healthy and appropriate for surgery (weight and age).

As part of this nationally accepted program, cats are returned back to their original territory fully vaccinated and sterilized. They have no more kittens, their population stabilizes, declining over time. Bad behaviors associated with mating, such as yowling, spraying and fighting, decreases. The cats live out their lives and over time, the colony reduces in numbers as the cats naturally die off while no new kittens are born into the colony.

The typical trap-and-kill methods used in the past were cruel, inhumane and ineffective at solving the cat overpopulation issue. It just doesn't work. Worse, trapping and killing actually perpetuates the problem due to the "vacuum effect". This "vacuum effect", which happens when cats are trapped and removed from the colony, allows other cats to move in and take advantage of the newly available resources and to breed as early as 4 months. Attempting to relocate cats also creates a vacuum effect. Think about this--if just 3 kittens survive in a litter, those kittens and their descendants can produce over 11,000 cats in 5 years! TNR solves the problem at its root by making sure the cats are healthy and cannot reproduce.

Below are a few frequently asked questions:

What if the cat is sick or injured?

All cats brought into our shelter receive a medical examination. Sick/injured cats will not be returned to their colony.

Who is going to care for the cat, once it returns?

Cats coming into the program that are a healthy weight most likely have someone in the neighborhood feeding and helping care for them. If you want to learn how to care for community cats, visit the website at felines.bestfriends.org

What if I don't want the cat back in my neighborhood?

The law allows for outdoor cats. It does not require that a cat have an owner or a care taker. As such, the cat will be returned to where it was impounded or trapped. ACS and the program coordinator can assist you with humane, legal deterrents to keep cats off your property.

TNR Resolution: Arlington, Texas

Resolution No. 13-208

A resolution authorizing and approving the community cat initiative Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program whereby nonprofit organizations help manage feral cats

- WHEREAS, feral cats currently exist in large numbers and roam free throughout the City of Arlington with no comprehensive effective means of controlling their population; and
- WHEREAS, the City currently addresses nuisances caused by feral cats through trapping and humane euthanasia; and
- WHEREAS, the City recognizes the potential for a Trap-Neuter-Return program as a mechanism to reduce existing feral cat populations; and
- WHEREAS, in the interest of instituting a successful TNR program to control feral cat population control, sponsoring organizations and individuals approved as caretakers with the sponsoring organizations have agreed to act to minimize feral cat nuisances; and
- WHEREAS, sponsor organizations including the Arlington Feral Cat Coalition, Friends of Arlington Animal Services, the Texas Coalition for Animal Protection, and Alley Cat Allies, Inc. have volunteered to provide the TNR program and coordinate with Arlington Animal Services; NOW THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ARLINGTON, TEXAS:

I.

That all of the recitals contained in the preamble of this resolution are found to be true and are adopted as findings of fact by this governing body and as part of its official record.

II.

That the City of Arlington adopts the community cat initiative Trap-Neuter-Return program whereby organizations or individuals sponsored by certain organizations take actions to control the City of Arlington feral cat population.

III.

That the organizations designated by the Arlington City Council as community cat sponsoring organizations to work with Arlington Animal Services are the Arlington Feral Cat Coalition, Friends of Arlington Animal Services, the Texas Coalition for Animal Protection, and Alley Cat Allies, Inc.

IV.

That the community cat sponsoring organizations have agreed to publicize information about the Trap-Neuter-Return program, provide a single point of contact for Arlington Animal Services, and will attempt to notify the appropriate sponsoring organization when notified by Animal Services about an impounded TNR designated cat. Animal Services will notify the single point of contact about any apparent feral cat colonies in order that the sponsoring organization can take action to limit any nuisances caused by feral cats.

V.

That the sponsoring community cat caregivers have agreed to obtain cats in public areas only or with property owner permission using humane measures, ensure veterinarian care including vaccinations, and coordinate with City Animal Services. Sponsoring organizations and their caregivers have affirmed that all cats that are part of the Trap-Neuter-Return program will be sterilized, vaccinated against the threat of rabies, and ear-tipped for easy identification. If these requirements are met, properly identified TNR cats have an affirmative defense to the requirements of licensing, stray, at-large and other city ordinance provisions if there is no nuisance created by the TNR cats.

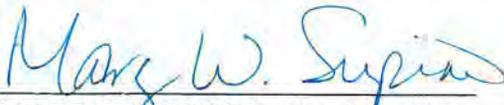
VI.

That the City Council authorizes and approves the Community Cat Caretaking Sponsor organizations relative to control of feral cat populations.

PRESENTED AND PASSED on this the 20th day of August, 2013, by a vote of 9 ayes and 0 nays at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Arlington, Texas.


ROBERT N. CLUCK, Mayor

ATTEST:


MARY W. SUPINO, City Secretary

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
JAY DOEGEY, City Attorney

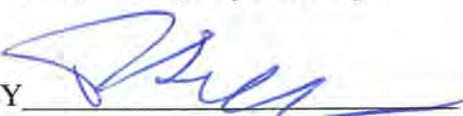
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Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 13 CCP Operations: Working with Shelter Staff and Volunteers

Working with Shelter Staff and Volunteers

Introduction

Like field services officers and dispatch staff, many shelter staff and volunteers find themselves on the “front lines” of CCP operations. Whereas the role of animal control officers and dispatch staff typically involves outreach and education, the role of shelter staff more directly involves caring for animals, staffing the intake desk, and making life and death decisions.

Regardless of the role, implementation of a CCP involves a significant philosophical shift for some staff and volunteers. This can take some time. Once the shift is underway, however, the results are often quite striking. Indeed, once buy-in hits a tipping point, an organization can be transformed. Developing innovative ways of creating positive outcomes (for cats and dogs alike) becomes standard operating procedure. Progress is celebrated, and the status quo questioned.

For a CCP to be as effective and efficient as possible, then, it’s clear that staff and volunteers must work closely with their field services, dispatch and shelter colleagues. Each relationship has its own challenges, but also its own rewards, not only for the people involved, but also for the animals entrusted to their care. Guidelines for working with field services and dispatch staff are provided in Chapter 12. The following guidelines are intended to help those leading the CCP and volunteers in their collaboration with shelter staff.

Training and retraining

As described in the training section of Chapter 12, the staff leading the CCP and volunteers can play a critical role in training those who will be involved with the program by:

- Doing regular presentations that explain the CCP’s rationale, describe the benefits to staff and showcase the results of model programs
- Sharing brochures, door hangers and other collateral that will help shelter staff as they describe the program to residents¹
- Providing scripts and role-playing exercises for interacting with a variety of people, including residents and commercial trappers² who bring cats to the shelter
- Offering complaint mitigation training
- Holding practice sessions for using cat deterrents



No doubt, some of the best training examples and situational response will come from the shelter staff themselves. Naturally, some will embrace the program more eagerly than others; these individuals should be encouraged to share tips about what’s working (as well as what’s not working) with the team regularly.

Benefits to shelter staff and volunteers

Many shelter staff and volunteers experience the impact of a CCP immediately. One day, the shelter is accepting strays from residents and commercial trappers, for example, and the next day the only cats being accepted in traps are those that will be sterilized, vaccinated and returned to their outdoor homes

¹ See the appendix for examples of documents explaining that the CCP complies with all relevant laws and has the support of the municipal shelter and elected officials.

² These are the private companies that offer residents “feral cat” removal services for a fee, often dropping off the cats at the local shelter, where they are likely to be killed.

(assuming they are eligible for the program). The daily struggle for kennel space is suddenly less of a struggle — and soon enough, little struggle at all.

It's important that all shelter staff and volunteers — however removed from the day-to-day activities of the CCP — are at least aware of the progress being made once a CCP is implemented. Volunteer dog walkers, for example, will likely appreciate (and brag about) a shelter's improved save rate even if they aren't directly involved with the CCP. Moreover, they might feel more connected to the program if they realize that the improved kennel conditions for dogs are a direct result of the reduced number of cats being housed in the shelter. The more people can relate to the CCP, the better.

The following are among the benefits most often observed by shelter staff and volunteers.

Reduction in the intake of cats and kittens. A key objective of any CCP is to stabilize and eventually reduce the number of community cats in an area. The impact of large-scale, focused sterilization efforts will not, however, be immediately evident in intake statistics. The decline typically observed shortly after the implementation of a CCP is the result of policy changes regarding which cats will and won't be accepted by a shelter's intake staff. Among these policy changes, three that will make an immediate impact are:

- Revamping a shelter's trap-loan program, thereby ending the common practice of allowing residents to drop off cats (in some cases, on an ongoing basis). Residents can borrow traps, but only for cats who will go through the TNVR process.
- Discontinuing relationships with commercial trappers (e.g., pest control companies) who, in many communities, profit from their ability to trap cats for a fee and then drop them off at the local shelter, where they are likely to be disposed of at taxpayer expense.
- Implementing policies that are indirectly related to the CCP (or indirectly affect the CCP), such as kitten diversion, managed intake and pet retention.

Availability of kennel space. By accepting fewer cats at intake, a shelter frees up valuable kennel space. This in turn frees up resources (e.g., staff time, budget) to care for cats whose behavior or medical condition (e.g., ringworm, broken limbs) would likely have resulted in euthanasia upon intake in the past, and for an improved level of care for all the animals in the shelter. In addition, reducing or eliminating the stray hold period will result in quicker outcomes and open up kennel space.

Increase in the save rate of cats and kittens. As with the decrease in the intake of cats and kittens, the increase in save rate is an obvious consequence of a CCP's implementation. If community cats are being returned to their outdoor homes rather than being held (with little hope of adoption) until "their time is up," it's no surprise that a shelter's save rate would improve. More than any other measurement, this statistic is celebrated by shelter staff (who are often tasked with ending the lives of healthy cats), volunteers and others, including community advocates, elected officials and the general public. With its direct, immediate impact on live release rate, a CCP can truly transform the way a shelter operates.

Improved relationship with field services officers. Because CCP policies generally lead to a decrease in the number of cats and kittens picked up in the field and impounded via shelter intake, resources can be re-allocated to other tasks that benefit both field staff and shelter staff, such as handling at-large dogs, injured animals and cruelty investigations. In addition, field services officers' public relations and community outreach efforts help inform residents about the program and associated policies, which reduces complaint calls.

Improved public image. Once various stakeholders — including elected officials, the general public and donors — become aware of a shelter's success in saving more lives, they are more inclined to show their support and spread the word. Such support tends to have a "snowball effect," attracting

positive media attention and additional support from the community and beyond (e.g., increased donations from the public).

Benefits for local rescue and TNVR groups. The benefits associated with a CCP are often felt quite acutely by local rescue and TNVR groups in at least two important ways:

- The number of spay/neuter surgeries provided is increased dramatically.
- These organizations can focus their efforts on providing foster care and adoption opportunities for kittens and cats with special needs, as there is now little need to pull healthy adult cats from the shelter.

Communication

Because CCPs are shelter-based, effective communication with shelter staff and volunteers is essential. Indeed, this one factor alone can make the difference between a highly successful CCP and one in which every step of the process is a struggle. It's very important, therefore, that shelter staff and volunteers receive proper training and are provided appropriate resources (as described above).

If a CCP is to have a strong start, effective communication is critical from the very outset, even before the program itself is launched. For example, each party's expectations (eligibility requirements for program cats, process for deciding outcomes, sharing of medical records, statistics tracking, etc.) and level of commitment must be made clear. Developing trusted, open communication channels also sets the stage for a program's long-term sustainability, as each party's expectations, objectives and resources are subject to change over time.

A series of meetings involving shelter leadership, staff, volunteers, field services officers and key CCP leadership can help get everybody on the same page prior to program implementation. Framing the discussion around the shelter's statistics, and how the CCP is expected to improve various key metrics, can keep participants focused on the improvements ahead regardless of the shelter's performance historically. This is also a good time to acknowledge any progress made thus far (often despite a lack of resources).

Communication can also be enhanced by cross-training. Although this can be a challenge in the shelter environment, where resources are typically scarce, it's a worthwhile investment. There are few techniques better than "walking a mile in another person's shoes" to build trust and develop a common language. At the very least, those leading the CCP should attend regular meetings with other shelter staff and field services staff.

In addition, processes and protocols should be established to ensure consistent communication wherever possible. Residents, elected officials, the media and others should all receive the same information regardless of whether they speak with shelter staff, those leading the CCP or volunteers. Among the various questions to consider are:

- How do interested parties obtain information about the CCP?
- What collateral will be available to share with the public, and who will distribute it?
- How will the intake process for stray cats change under the CCP?
- Will the shelter loan traps to residents? If so, under what circumstances?
- How will requests and drop-offs by commercial trappers (e.g., pest control companies) be handled?
- How will decisions be made regarding outcomes of individual cats? Who will be involved? (See Chapter 11, "Working Toward Positive Outcomes," for additional information.)
- How will shelter staff and volunteers work with field services officers and dispatch staff to maximize positive outcomes?

- How will all individuals involved (e.g., shelter personnel and volunteers, those leading the CCP) understand their role in the network of communication?
- Who will have authority to make decisions surrounding various elements of the program?
- How will disagreements be handled?

Measures of success

Many of the key benefits of a CCP will be evident in the measures of success typically tracked by a shelter (e.g., reduced intake numbers, increased save rate). Be sure to set benchmarks at the outset of the program and at periodic intervals, and track progress. And don't forget to celebrate even modest improvements.

Another metric of great interest is intake of young kittens (i.e., under eight weeks of age). We observed a decrease of 40% over three years in Albuquerque's Community Cats Project, a public-private partnership among Best Friends, PetSmart Charities™ and the Albuquerque Animal Welfare Department. Although it's difficult to attribute such dramatic results solely to the number of surgeries performed in these high-volume, focused programs, they are nevertheless a strong indicator that the number of outdoor cats breeding in these communities is being reduced significantly. For detailed case studies, see *PetSmart Charities Community TNR: Tactics and Tools* (can be purchased on Amazon.com).

Some measures, of course, are easier to quantify than others. Reduced intake and euthanasia, for example, lend themselves to careful documentation and tracking. The improved staff morale that often accompanies these improvements, on the other hand, is more difficult to pin down numerically. Still, indirect measures can be used to shed some light on such factors. Staff turnover, for example, and the number of sick days taken by staff are easily quantified and, if significant decreases are observed, can be used as reasonable measures of a CCP's positive impact on a shelter.

Regardless of which metrics are considered, it's important that any comparisons made to other shelters are fair. Comparing statistics from a large municipal open-admission shelter, for example, to those from a small private shelter is generally not helpful (and might result in poor decision-making).

Specific situations may also require attention, such as when shelter staff or volunteers are hesitant about returning friendly cats to the outdoors. Or there may be times when individuals are not motivated to collect accurate information at intake. Solutions to these and other potential concerns include leadership holding all staff accountable and motivating and encouraging others by example. Building relationships with shelter staff and volunteers is vital to achieving the CCP's goals.

Finally, collecting and sharing success stories can be remarkably effective at demonstrating to shelter staff and volunteers, as well as various stakeholders throughout the community, the significant contribution they're making to the shelter and the community it serves. Short blurbs such as the one below can also be integrated into a shelter's training program.

“Pat, affectionately known as both Patricio and Patricia because the caregivers never knew the gender, is thrilled to be back home. The caregivers love him so much that they tried to keep this neutered boy inside only. But he is a true free spirit and needs to be outside. We love that he can continue to live his best life.”

Allison Agnello, CCP coordinator

Innovative tools

In addition to the shelter intake tools commonly used by shelter staff and volunteers (e.g., Chameleon/CMS or PetPoint), new mapping tools (e.g., Google Maps, Microsoft MapPoint) and geographic information system (GIS) technology allow CCPs to track intake and cat community locations.³ Visualizing such data can be enormously valuable not only to various staff members, but also to elected officials and the general public, as a compelling way to demonstrate a CCP's progress. (See Chapter 22, "Data and Statistics," for additional information.)

Additional resources

- *PetSmart Charities Community TNR: Tactics and Tools* (can be purchased on Amazon.com)
- [RACI Charting: racichart.org](http://racichart.org)

³See, for example, "A Novel Approach to Identify and Map Kitten Clusters Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS): A Case Study from Tompkins County, N.Y." (ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24766036)

APPENDIX

Letter of Support from Municipality: San Antonio, Texas



Animal Care Services
 4710 State Highway 151
 San Antonio, TX 78227
 210.207.4PET www.saacs.net



CITY SUPPORTS TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN FOR COMMUNITY CATS

The City of San Antonio Animal Care Services Department supports and embraces Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), a program for community cats. We currently support this program by providing free spay/neuter services for community cats in targeted zip codes. The services for selected zip codes are funded by both a grant from Best Friends Animal Society as well as the Department's Budget. For the other zip codes in San Antonio and the surrounding areas, The San Antonio Feral Cat Coalition (SAFCC) provides subsidized low-cost surgeries, resources and volunteer assistance. SAFCC is a local non-profit, all volunteer organization. Find out more at their website www.sanantonioferalcats.org. You can also contact them by calling their helpline at 210-877-9067 or by sending an email to info@sanantonioferalcats.org.

TNR has assisted many communities across the United States in dealing with their cat overpopulation challenges. In accordance with Chapter 5 of the City of San Antonio Municipal Ordinance, spayed or neutered outdoor cats are legal. As part of this program, any feral or community cats brought into the shelter as strays will be spayed or neutered, vaccinated, ear tipped and returned to the area that they were taken from, provided they are healthy and appropriate for surgery (weight and age).

As part of this nationally accepted program, cats are returned back to their original territory fully vaccinated and sterilized. They have no more kittens, their population stabilizes, declining over time. Bad behaviors associated with mating, such as yowling, spraying and fighting, decreases. The cats live out their lives and over time, the colony reduces in numbers as the cats naturally die off while no new kittens are born into the colony.

The typical trap-and-kill methods used in the past were cruel, inhumane and ineffective at solving the cat overpopulation issue. It just doesn't work. Worse, trapping and killing actually perpetuates the problem due to the "vacuum effect". This "vacuum effect", which happens when cats are trapped and removed from the colony, allows other cats to move in and take advantage of the newly available resources and to breed as early as 4 months. Attempting to relocate cats also creates a vacuum effect. Think about this--if just 3 kittens survive in a litter, those kittens and their descendants can produce over 11,000 cats in 5 years! TNR solves the problem at its root by making sure the cats are healthy and cannot reproduce.

Below are a few frequently asked questions:

What if the cat is sick or injured?

All cats brought into our shelter receive a medical examination. Sick/injured cats will not be returned to their colony.

Who is going to care for the cat, once it returns?

Cats coming into the program that are a healthy weight most likely have someone in the neighborhood feeding and helping care for them. If you want to learn how to care for community cats, visit the website at felines.bestfriends.org

What if I don't want the cat back in my neighborhood?

The law allows for outdoor cats. It does not require that a cat have an owner or a care taker. As such, the cat will be returned to where it was impounded or trapped. ACS and the program coordinator can assist you with humane, legal deterrents to keep cats off your property.

TNR Resolution: Arlington, Texas

Resolution No. 13-208

A resolution authorizing and approving the community cat initiative Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program whereby nonprofit organizations help manage feral cats

- WHEREAS, feral cats currently exist in large numbers and roam free throughout the City of Arlington with no comprehensive effective means of controlling their population; and
- WHEREAS, the City currently addresses nuisances caused by feral cats through trapping and humane euthanasia; and
- WHEREAS, the City recognizes the potential for a Trap-Neuter-Return program as a mechanism to reduce existing feral cat populations; and
- WHEREAS, in the interest of instituting a successful TNR program to control feral cat population control, sponsoring organizations and individuals approved as caretakers with the sponsoring organizations have agreed to act to minimize feral cat nuisances; and
- WHEREAS, sponsor organizations including the Arlington Feral Cat Coalition, Friends of Arlington Animal Services, the Texas Coalition for Animal Protection, and Alley Cat Allies, Inc. have volunteered to provide the TNR program and coordinate with Arlington Animal Services; NOW THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ARLINGTON, TEXAS:

I.

That all of the recitals contained in the preamble of this resolution are found to be true and are adopted as findings of fact by this governing body and as part of its official record.

II.

That the City of Arlington adopts the community cat initiative Trap-Neuter-Return program whereby organizations or individuals sponsored by certain organizations take actions to control the City of Arlington feral cat population.

III.

That the organizations designated by the Arlington City Council as community cat sponsoring organizations to work with Arlington Animal Services are the Arlington Feral Cat Coalition, Friends of Arlington Animal Services, the Texas Coalition for Animal Protection, and Alley Cat Allies, Inc.

IV.

That the community cat sponsoring organizations have agreed to publicize information about the Trap-Neuter-Return program, provide a single point of contact for Arlington Animal Services, and will attempt to notify the appropriate sponsoring organization when notified by Animal Services about an impounded TNR designated cat. Animal Services will notify the single point of contact about any apparent feral cat colonies in order that the sponsoring organization can take action to limit any nuisances caused by feral cats.

V.

That the sponsoring community cat caregivers have agreed to obtain cats in public areas only or with property owner permission using humane measures, ensure veterinarian care including vaccinations, and coordinate with City Animal Services. Sponsoring organizations and their caregivers have affirmed that all cats that are part of the Trap-Neuter-Return program will be sterilized, vaccinated against the threat of rabies, and ear-tipped for easy identification. If these requirements are met, properly identified TNR cats have an affirmative defense to the requirements of licensing, stray, at-large and other city ordinance provisions if there is no nuisance created by the TNR cats.

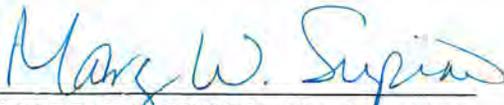
VI.

That the City Council authorizes and approves the Community Cat Caretaking Sponsor organizations relative to control of feral cat populations.

PRESENTED AND PASSED on this the 20th day of August, 2013, by a vote of 9 ayes and 0 nays at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Arlington, Texas.


ROBERT N. CLUCK, Mayor

ATTEST:


MARY W. SUPINO, City Secretary

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
JAY DOEGEY, City Attorney

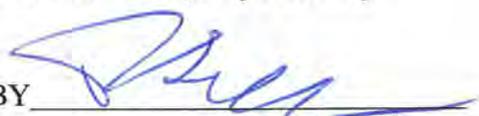
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Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 14 CCP Operations: Working with Veterinarians and Veterinary Clinics

Working with Veterinarians and Veterinary Clinics

Introduction

Veterinary professionals play a key role in the success of any CCP. Developing a close working relationship from the outset of a program's implementation is critical. It's far better to have processes and procedures agreed upon and in place ahead of time than to be sorting them out "on the fly." There are many successful models that can be adopted, including these:

- Using the shelter's in-house veterinary suite
- Using a network of vets in private practice who agree to do a certain number of spay/neuter surgeries per week
- Partnering with one clinic that does a community cat day
- Partnering with a high-volume spay/neuter clinic
- Using a combination of both in-shelter and private practice services

The following guidelines are intended to help create a positive working relationship with veterinary clinics.

Note: A significant portion of the information that follows was excerpted from the ASPCA's *Special Considerations for Community Cats at Spay/Neuter Clinics: Best Practices for Medical and Management Protocols*, and used with permission.

Service agreement

The first step in establishing a healthy working relationship with veterinary clinics and their staff is to compile a list of veterinarians and/or clinics to approach. Pay particular attention to the following:

- Philosophical alignment with the CCP: It's important for partner clinics to share the CCP's overall philosophy, policies and practices. A veterinarian uncomfortable with the idea of returning cats to their outdoor homes, for example, is a poor candidate for a CCP partner regardless of surgical skill, capacity, price or any other factor.
- Communication style and client rapport: There's more to veterinary medicine than surgery. Identifying a veterinary practice whose communication style aligns with that of the rest of the CCP is important, as the program largely relies on successful and clear communication between the veterinary staff and the rest of the CCP team.
- Surgical capacity: Investigate partnering with high-volume spay/neuter clinics in the area because they may be best equipped to handle the large numbers of community cat surgeries that these programs often need.

It's expected that veterinary staff will be familiar with, and proficient in, all necessary surgical procedures and vaccine and pain management protocols. Veterinarians often have preferred procedures and protocols. Rather than trying to impose consistency for the sake of consistency, it's generally best to emphasize the need for a high quality of care.

When deciding whether a clinic is the right fit as a CCP partner, the organization operating the CCP will want to ask the clinic a series of questions. (See the appendix for an example of a checklist.) If the organization chooses to move forward with the partnership, the details of the agreement should be spelled out clearly, in writing and up front, to avoid misunderstandings down the road. Ideally, this will take the form of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the clinic and the organization before the clinic starts providing services for the CCP. (See the appendix for an example of an MOU.)

It's best for the organization running the CCP to work closely with the vet clinic, especially in the beginning. This will ensure that any barriers are removed on both ends and that each agency involved is comfortable participating in the CCP and is satisfied with the execution.

Pricing

Costs for standard CCP services. The next step is to agree upon the veterinary services and fees. Best Friends' CCPs generally budget a fixed per-cat cost for standard services, which typically include:

- Sterilization surgery (with dissolvable sutures)
- Ear-tipping
- Tattoo
- FVRCP vaccination¹
- Rabies vaccination²
- Pain medication
- General health check
- Pregnant or in-heat spays
- Pre- and post-surgery holding periods

It's also important to determine agreed-upon costs for umbilical hernias and cryptorchids, as well as whether additional services such as tail amputations will be provided.

FIV and FeLV testing. While the tests for feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukemia virus (FeLV) are combined into one test, the viruses themselves are very different, so it's important to understand the symptoms, transmission routes and effects of each virus.

We strongly recommend refraining from testing any CCP-eligible cats for FIV or FeLV because the tests are unreliable and are no longer considered industry standard. Several studies are providing lifesaving scientific data that many shelters are using to drop their previously mandatory testing processes. Exceptions to this are cases in which you are trying to diagnose a medical condition, or when the cats are sick from an undetermined illness and a euthanasia decision may need to be made. See the [retrovirus guidelines of the American Association of Feline Practitioners](#) for more detailed information.

In addition, these tests are costly. The CCP's goal is to spay or neuter as many program-eligible cats as swiftly and efficiently as possible, so spending program funds on testing cats for FIV and FeLV warrants serious consideration. FIV and FeLV testing should never be used as standard practice to determine which cats are eligible for a CCP.

Appointments and scheduling

Setting up a CCP clinic may seem challenging at first, due to the possibility of having to alter usual clinic operations and having to take on additional surgeries. However, there are countless ways it can be done so that these new operations hardly affect normal clinic operations. Although the procedure for scheduling surgery appointments varies somewhat by program and clinic, the following two scenarios are common:

- The CCP has a standing number of appointments scheduled each day with a particular clinic. (How to handle cats exceeding this number or not filling all scheduled appointment slots is something that must be agreed upon ahead of time.)

1. The FVRCP vaccine, sometimes called the distemper vaccine, protects against feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and panleukopenia (aka feline distemper).

2. As determined by state law.

- The CCP calls the clinic in advance to make appointments based on the anticipated need (based on information from staff and volunteers, trap loans, caregiver input, etc.).

Consider scheduling appointments on a day when the clinic is closed and making it a community cat spay and neuter day. Or schedule a specific time frame when CCP surgeries will be completed that doesn't interfere with public appointments. For example, perform surgery on 5–10 cats per day in the morning before the bulk of public appointments start. There's no correct way to set up scheduling. What's important is that, to the extent that's possible, all arrangements are agreed upon by all parties ahead of time.



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography

After cats enter a CCP through the intake process (see Chapter 17, “Guidelines to Consider”), the next step is getting them to surgery. Once the people involved are familiar with the standard procedures and protocols, dropping off program cats at the clinic becomes a routine activity. However, this is also a critical step in the process because it's often the only opportunity to convey important information to veterinary staff from CCP staff and volunteers, shelter staff and volunteers, field services officers, residents turning in a stray cat or anybody else involved with the cat's intake. For example, a caregiver's note could indicate that the cat has mild stomatitis and may need extra services (e.g., dental work, extractions). Surgery sheets (completed legibly) are used to document such information. (See the appendix for an example.)

One of the best things to help accommodate the high number of cats is consistency. We have established trust and good working relationships with Best Friends' staff. We all do our best to accommodate one another, and we go out of our way to communicate clearly, concisely and in a timely manner. It all boils down to respect.

Karter B. Neal, DVM, Santa Cruz Veterinary Clinic, Tucson, Arizona

Beyond the clinic

It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day activities associated with a CCP and clinic partnership, but it's important to pay attention to long-term sustainability as well. Consider, for example:

- Supplemental funding sources: Some organizations that don't necessarily fund other aspects of a CCP's operation will fund medical care and services. Such grants can make a significant difference to the program's overall budget.
- Customer surveys: To ensure that the cats are receiving the best medical care — and that the people involved get the best customer service — consider conducting periodic customer surveys. The results can be invaluable for improving this critical component of a CCP's operation.

For veterinary clinics: The benefits of working with a CCP

By partnering with a shelter or organization with a CCP, you're playing a major role in supporting what's best not only for the cats, but for the entire community. There are many benefits to working with a CCP or TNVR group and playing a role in this work. Here are some of them:

- These programs improve the lives of free-roaming cats by ending the trap-and-remove method of population control.
- These programs create safer communities and promote public health by reducing the number of unvaccinated cats.

- These programs help reduce shelter admissions and operating costs.
- Having fewer community cats in shelters increases adoption rates, because there's more cage space open for adoptable cats.
- Sterilizing community cats reduces or even eliminates the behaviors that can lead to nuisance complaints from community members.

Please see the “Additional Resources” section at the end of this chapter for research studies highlighting the successes of RTF and TNVR programs.

Note: The following information is intended for surgery providers as guidelines for general CCP veterinary procedures.



Trap handling

To ensure that cats are not mixed up, each trap or transfer cage should be labeled with an ID card that includes key information such as an ID number, a description of the cat, the name of the individual or organization picking up the cat, and the intended outcome. See the appendix for an example of an ID card and cage tag.

There are many manufacturers and models of humane traps and transfer cages. Veterinarians and the clinic staff who will spay or neuter cats arriving in traps should be familiar with the way most common types work and know how to most easily remove and replace cats. The doors of the traps should always be secured during transport to and from the clinic to ensure that the cats cannot escape. Clinics should ideally have a trap divider to make sedation easier, animal-handling gloves and a cat net for safety, and sheets to cover traps to keep the cats calm.

Physical exam

When possible, each cat should receive a visual examination by a veterinarian or a veterinarian's staff before the administration of any medications or anesthetic induction. Such an assessment can yield significant information regarding the patient's physical status, such as:

- General body condition
- Hair coat and skin condition
- Mucous membrane color
- Presence or absence of ocular and nasal discharges
- Breathing rate and effort, or congestion
- Pregnancy
- Lactation status
- Presence of wounds or injuries

Before any pre-surgery medication is administered, cats should be double-checked for an ear-tip (which indicates that the cat has already been spayed or neutered). Although it's unlikely that an ear-tip would have been overlooked by the trappers and/or CCP staff, it can happen — and it's best to avoid anesthetizing a cat unnecessarily.

Patient selection

Obviously, spaying and neutering are elective procedures. A veterinarian typically chooses to perform these procedures only on cats who are healthy and free of any medical concerns, either from injury or infectious disease. And, just like CCP staff and volunteers, the veterinary and clinic staff with whom they work should always base their decisions on what's in the best interest of the cat. Nevertheless, a somewhat different set of criteria apply to spay/neuter surgery for community cats. Below are some basic guidelines to determine a community cat's fitness for surgery.

Surgery is usually performed when:

- There is mild or moderate URI
- Patient is pregnant
- Patient is thin
- Patient has an abscess or wounds
- Patient has an unkempt coat

Surgery is not performed when:

- Conditions are severe and anesthesia or surgery would be life-threatening
- Euthanasia is considered the best option because of irremediable suffering or an unacceptable quality of life

See the Best Friends RTF Medical Guidelines in the appendix for what medical conditions are candidates for feline return-to-field programming. Chapter 11, "Working Toward Positive Outcomes," has additional information on this subject.

Anesthesia and analgesia

There are many acceptable anesthesia protocols for cats being held in traps. The most important factors in choosing a protocol for community cats are that the induction agents must be administered by intramuscular injection and the medical staff must be comfortable with the anesthetic induction, monitoring and recovery. In addition, it's best if the drugs used can be reversed for quicker recovery. Administration of pre-medication and the induction agent can be done with accuracy by using a trap divider to hold the cat still in the trap.

Any anesthesia protocol chosen must include adequate pain management; a multi-modal approach is considered to be the most effective. Initial pain medication should be given to the cat prior to surgery and far enough in advance to be in effect when surgery begins. Since these cats will not be able to receive ongoing oral medication following surgery, special care should be taken to ensure that pain management is provided by long-acting injection while the cat is sedated at the clinic. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are a good choice for community cats because these drugs provide up to 24 hours of post-op pain relief without any sedation effect (which would pose a risk once the cat is released).

See the "Additional Resources" section for more information on this topic and some examples of anesthesia protocols for spay/neuter clinics.

All cats must be carefully monitored for body and neck position while in the trap during induction and recovery. It is possible for a sedated cat in a trap to so severely flex her neck that the trachea will kink and become occluded. This must be corrected immediately by the staff, since a cat can suffocate in this position.

Identification

As each sedated cat is removed from his trap, it's important to label or tag him in a way that his identity is clearly visible. This label or tag should remain attached to the cat throughout the preparation, surgery and recovery phases, and until the cat is placed back in the trap. Some programs use a paper band around the cat's chest, which is more visible than a neck band and therefore reduces the chances that the band will be accidentally left on the cat when he's returned. Plastic bands are not recommended because they can be dangerous if accidentally left on a cat.

Other programs use a standard kennel card with the trap number written on it; still others use Scotch or medical tape with the relevant information written in permanent marker. In the event that the tape is left on the cat, it will fall off easily enough after the cat is returned.

Surgery

Spay and neuter surgery procedures for community cats are no different than for other cats. Each spay or neuter must be performed with sterilized instruments. Suture material should be dissolvable and can be taken in a sterile fashion from a reel of sterilized suture and used with a sharp sterile needle, or individual packs of suture with swaged-on needles can be used. In either case, once suture material is exposed to a cat, it must be discarded.

Patients should be carefully monitored during surgery. Medical support staff must be trained to monitor anesthesia carefully using physical parameters. Monitoring equipment such as pulse oximeters is also recommended. Possible challenges encountered during surgery on community cats:



- **Pregnancy:** CCP staff need to work with their providers, deciding together whether to spay community cats who are pregnant when they come to the spay/neuter clinic. In general, Best Friends advocates for this outcome because of the impact of the impending litter on the local population of community cats, and because this cat may now be trap-shy, leading to multiple additional litters.
- **Lactation:** A cat who is actively lactating and believed to be nursing young kittens dependent on her for nutrition should be spayed and the time frame for return should be accelerated. (Be sure to return to the trapping site to search for her kittens, as they are especially vulnerable in her absence. You will also want to keep tabs on them until they are old enough to be sterilized and vaccinated. See Chapter 16, "Trapping Protocols," and Chapter 20, "Returning Cats," for additional information on this subject.)
- **Post-partum friable uterus:** When a cat's uterus becomes infected, it may become friable (easily torn or ruptured, resulting in hemorrhage). After surgery, additional care must be taken, as the animal usually must remain on antibiotics for a period of time prior to being released.
- **Incision size:** Minimize the incision size since it will typically be possible to monitor the incision for no more than 12 hours.
- **Irritation to the incision site:** Obviously, e-collars cannot be worn by community cats, so it's important to avoid anything that will cause irritation to the incision site and cause the cat to lick or scratch at the incision. For example, do not use peroxide to clean the skin after surgery because this is irritating. And avoid crushing sutures in the body wall; tighten them to apposition only to avoid

tissue necrosis and discomfort for the cat. Overly tight sutures can cause discomfort, which can lead to excessive grooming, increasing the likelihood of wound dehiscence. Failure to properly clean the surgical site (e.g., leaving blood and/or dried chlorhexidine scrub) can also lead to excessive grooming and wound dehiscence.

Ear-tipping

An ear-tip is the universal symbol of a community cat who has been sterilized. Ear-tipping is generally performed after surgery, because doing so generally ensures better surgery flow and, more important, ensures that cats go into surgery as soon as they are fully anesthetized. Another reason for ear-tipping cats after surgery is if there is a complication that prevents the cat from being sterilized. This will avoid any confusion with having an unsterilized cat with an ear-tip.

Best Friends recommends the following ear-tipping protocol:

- Before proceeding, the cat must be anesthetized.
- Examine the cat's ears for ear mites and ticks. (Careful examination of community cats is important because this may be their only opportunity for medical care.) Clean the ears using gauze or a cotton swab soaked in Epi-Otic or another ear-cleaning solution. (Never pour liquid into the ears of an anesthetized cat.) Apply Revolution, Frontline or Advantage Multi topically between the shoulder blades, as prescribed by a veterinarian.
- Using gauze or cotton balls soaked in a sterile scrub solution, scrub the tip of the left ear.
- Hold a straight hemostat across the top quarter-inch of the left ear, applying gentle pressure. To avoid damaging tissues beneath the ear tip, never clamp the hemostat beyond the first set of interlocking teeth (the lightest pressure setting), as shown in the photo.
- The top quarter-inch of the left ear should be removed,³ cutting straight across with sharp, straight-edge scissors. (Using scissors will cause less bleeding than using a scalpel blade, but scissors will need to be wiped down with a sterile scrub after each use. Scalpel blades must be replaced after each use.)
- For kittens, the amount removed will be less than a quarter-inch. The actual amount is determined by the size of the kitten (less on young kittens and more on older kittens). A spayed or neutered community cat is identified by the straight edge on the top of the ear, not by the amount removed. So no more than a quarter-inch of the ear-tip should be removed.
- If you're using a cautery tool (the preferred method), apply light pressure to the cut edge of the ear to cauterize the cut area. Otherwise, prepare a hemostatic paste ahead of time by mixing Kwik Stop or other styptic powder with just enough lidocaine to make a thin paste. Apply the paste across the cut surface with a cotton swab to reduce the amount of head-shaking that occurs during recovery. The paste should stop the bleeding once the gentle pressure of the hemostat is removed. If bleeding continues, apply more paste and, if necessary, reapply pressure for a short time.

See the appendix for a poster outlining these steps.

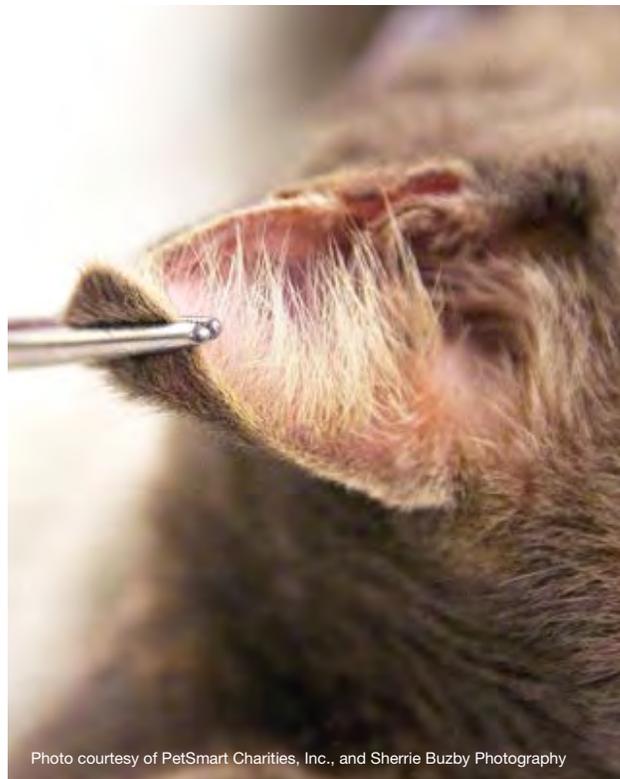


Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography

3. If the left ear is damaged or unhealthy, it may be necessary to tip the right ear. Although it's standard practice to tip the left ear, it's still common practice in some regions of the country to tip the right ear. It's important to conform to local norms. If there is no right-ear local norm, the left ear should be tipped by default.

Recovery

Because of the physical and health challenges community cats face in their outdoor homes, it's vital for these cats to recover to full strength quickly. It's therefore very important to provide all necessary medical support during and after surgery, if needed. Examples might include subcutaneous (sub-q) or intravenous (IV) fluids, supplemental oxygen, antibiotics and heat sources. Caution: Do not leave anesthetized cats unattended while exposed to heat, as this can result in burning.

Cats who are pregnant or lactating at the time of surgery require additional support and monitoring during recovery. Also, any skin wounds or abscesses should be addressed during recovery, if they were not already addressed during surgery. Clip the fur around the wound, cleaning and suturing if needed.

Cats should be returned to their traps before they begin to exhibit behaviors that will make handling difficult. Remove any collars or bands placed on them, and carefully position the cat in the trap with his body and neck extended and, if possible, positioned for easy monitoring.

See Chapter 19, "Post-surgery Recovery," for additional information on this subject.

Discharge

Community cats being returned to their outdoor homes should be discharged to the appropriate individual or organization (e.g., caregiver, CCP staff or volunteer, field services officer) and discharge instructions provided, if necessary (for individuals new to the CCP and new CCP partners). Standard discharge instructions should include the following information:

- Conditions and behaviors to expect while the cats continue to recover from anesthesia
- Basic timeline regarding recovery, release and feeding
- Guidelines for in-trap care
- Unexpected situations requiring immediate attention

See Chapter 19, "Post-surgery Recovery," for additional information and see the appendix for an example of typical discharge instructions. In addition, the discharge notes will need to be modified for cats with special issues discovered during surgery or while at the clinic. Special issues include:

- Pregnant or lactating female cats or those with pyometra
- Other health issues identified (wounds, infections)
- Additional medications administered or needed
- Change in standard post-op care
- Change in standard post-op holding time

Keep the cats in a quiet space, separate from client animals. This not only helps to limit stress on the CCP cats but can also increase surgical efficiency and organization. If your clinic is a high-volume one, hold CCP cats longer than client animals, and release them to the CCP organization's staff, volunteers or caregivers after mass public checkout. Another possibility is holding the cats overnight and releasing them in the morning before the start of public appointments.

Additional resources

- [ASPCA's Special Considerations for Community Cats at Spay/Neuter Clinics: Best Practices for Medical and Management Protocols](#)
- [FIV and FeLV FAQs](#)
- [Retrovirus Guidelines of the American Association of Feline Practitioners](#)

- [ASPCA's Updates to Spay/Neuter Clinic Anesthetic Protocols](#)
- [The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' 2016 Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs](#)
- [The Impact of an Integrated Program of Return-to-Field and Targeted Trap-Neuter-Return on Feline Intake and Euthanasia at a Municipal Animal Shelter](#)
- [The Impact of Return-to-Field and Targeted Trap-Neuter-Return on Feline Intake and Euthanasia at a Municipal Animal Shelter in Jefferson County, Kentucky](#)
- [High-Intensity Sterilization of Free-Roaming Cats Reduces Populations with Least Death of Cats](#)
- [ASPCA anesthetic protocol sample](#)
- [Banfield anesthetic protocol sample](#)

APPENDIX

Checklist for choosing a partner clinic

Costs for standard CCP services. All parties should agree upon the veterinary services that will be provided and the fees that will be charged to the program.

- What is the cost of sterilization surgery (with dissolvable sutures)?
- What is the cost of ear-tipping?
- Is tattooing included in the price?
- What is the cost for FVRCP vaccination¹?
- What is the cost of rabies vaccination²?
- What is the cost for post-surgical pain medication or injections?
- Is there a fee for a general health check?
- Will there be a charge for pre- and post-surgery holding periods?
- Is the clinic open to charging a fixed per-cat amount that includes all the above standard services?

Costs for additional services.

- Are there additional fees for late-term spays?
- Are there additional fees for cryptorchid sterilization?
- Are there additional fees for flea treatment?
- Are there additional fees for deworming?
- Are there additional fees for abscess treatment?

The following costs (and needs) could be determined on a case-by-case basis, however questions regarding the following could still be asked up-front.

- What is the cost of an enucleation (removal of an eye)?
- What about a tail or leg amputation?
- What is the price range for dental work, including extractions?
- How much would it be to microchip a cat?
- Will there be additional fees for overnight stays for special circumstances?

Factors associated with clinic operations.

- What is the surgical capacity (daily, weekly, etc.)?
- Will appointments be required for CCP cats? If so, how far in advance should appointments be made?
- Will there be a limit of cats per day per caretaker?
- Do all community cats need to be in a trap? If so, how will it be handled if a cat comes in a carrier or two in one trap?

- How will postponements (e.g., when more cats than anticipated are brought to the clinic, staff absences) be handled? What about if all scheduled appointment slots aren't filled?
- How often will invoicing be done (weekly, monthly, etc.) and what form of payment is required or preferred?
- What is the required or preferred drop-off and pick-up times for CCP cats? Can the cats be housed overnight?
- Will clinic staff work directly with shelter staff, volunteers, and caregivers, or will there be a designated drop-off and pick-up location with limited personnel contact?
- Is the clinic open to accepting surgery vouchers directly from caregivers instead of staff being present at time of drop-off?
- How will medical emergencies (e.g., cat hit by a vehicle, cat has severe complications during surgery) be handled?
- How will unexpected clinic closures (e.g., power outages, illness) be handled?

Factors associated with the philosophy and premise of the CCP.

- What is the minimum weight required for surgery?
- What is the minimum age required for vaccines?
- Is the clinic agreeable to pregnant spays? If so, what about late-term spays?
- How will cats found to be already sterilized, or unable to be sterilized, be handled?
- Is the clinic willing to contact a CCP point person if medical emergencies occur or if the vet staff deems a cat too unhealthy to be returned to their trapping location prior to making a final decision on the cat's outcome?
- Is the clinic willing and able to follow recommendations conventionally associated with CCPs (such as using a trap divider, covering traps, etc.)?
- Is the clinic agreeable to providing surgery on and ear-tipping CCP cats regardless of temperament?
- Will the clinic be able and agree to house traps in a quiet area?
- How open are clinic management and staff to learning and/or attending training on new procedures and protocols (such as how to safely handle community cats)?
- Is the clinic agreeable to refrain from testing all cats for FIV/FelV?

1. The FVRCP vaccine, sometimes called the distemper vaccine, protects against feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and panleukopenia (also known as feline distemper).
2. As determined by state law.

Clinic charges MOU template

Schedule of Charges for Best Friends Animal Society and _____

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to outline the terms of the agreement for _____ participation in a Community Cat Program in _____ conducted by Best Friends Animal Society. Cats will be billed as follows:

- Spay/neuter package - all cats get S/N, FVRCP, Rabies vax, pain med, eartip (unless noted): \$____
- Pregnant, In Heat, Cryptorchid, Pyometra - included in s/n package
- Convenia Injection \$ _____
- Revolution Treatment (mange) \$ _____
- Tail Amputation \$ _____
- Limb Amputation \$ _____
- Abscess \$ _____
- Enucleation \$ _____ (single) - \$_____ (both)
- Hernia Repair \$ _____ - \$_____
- IV Catheter (if needed) \$ _____

Special packages/charges at doctor's discretion:

- Ear Mites Package (cleaning, Diphenhydramine Inj) \$ _____
- Sick Cat Treatment Package (SQ fluids, Vit B12, Gentomicin drops applied) \$ _____
- Injectable med not part of a package (Depo, Droncit, etc) \$ _____
- X-ray \$ _____ - \$ _____
- Dental or tooth extraction when time permits \$ _____ - \$ _____

By Request Only Services:

- Euthanasia \$ _____
- Body Disposal \$ _____
- Microchip N/A
- FeLV/FIV test (by approval only) \$ _____
- Nail Trim (tame only) \$ _____
- Flea Treatment \$ _____
- Additional take home meds TBD dependent on medication dispensed

Trappers must bring cats in feral cat traps and tame cats in an appropriate sized plastic airline-type carrier with a towel for post-surgery recovery.

In the event a cat from the Best Friends Program is being recommended for euthanasia, and time allows without further risk of suffering, we will contact CCP coordinator for direction. All other surgical procedures will be carried out at the discretion of veterinary staff.

The clinic will invoice Best Friends for procedures on a monthly basis. Payment shall be made net-30 days and sent to:

Please sign below indicating your acceptance of these terms.

Signature

Date

Print Name

Surgery sheet example



COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAM

Best Friends Animal Society Clinic

Kanab, Utah 84741
 Clinic: 435-644-2001 ext: 4210
 Community Cat Program: 435-644-4469



First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____
 State: _____ Zip: _____ Contact #: _____

Cat Info

Is this cat a: Pet Shelter Community Cat Carrier or Trap# _____
 Has this cat had any vaccinations? Yes No Unknown Breed _____
 If yes, what and when: Combo Rabies Date: _____ Color _____
 Age _____

Consent for Surgical Sterilization

I hereby request and authorize Best Friends Animal Society through whomever veterinarians and assistants they may designate to perform an operation for the sterilization of the animal described on this admission form.

I understand that the operation presents some hazards and that injury to or death of such animal may conceivably result; for there is some risk in the procedure and the use of anesthetics and drugs used in providing this service.

I understand that Best Friends Animal Society has the right to refuse service to any animal to whom surgery is deemed a health risk.

I hereby release Best Friends Animal Society, the veterinarian, assistants and all of its officers, directors, employees and members of its staff from any and all claims arising out of or connected with the performance of this operation or procedure and/or any transport of the animal. I agree that I have not or will not claim any right of compensation from them, or any of them, or file action by reason of such sterilization of such animal or any consequences related thereto.

Signature _____ Date _____

All cats will receive a small ear tip unless otherwise approved.

MEDICAL USE ONLY	
<div style="border: 1px dashed black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> Vaccine stickers here </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Medical findings</p> <p>In Heat <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant <input type="checkbox"/> Lactating <input type="checkbox"/> Cryptorchid <input type="checkbox"/> Already Fixed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Done <input type="checkbox"/> Reason: _____ Condition Noticed: _____ Medications: _____ Weight: _____ Other: _____</p>	<p>Vaccinations</p> <p>FVRCP (Combo) <input type="checkbox"/> Rabies <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Surgery performed</p> <p>Spay <input type="checkbox"/> Neuter <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Weight: _____ Ear tip: yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Clinic tag example



PVAC COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAM
Best Friends Animal Society
 Community Cat Program: [\(956\) 249-0117](tel:9562490117)

Clinic Date: _____
Clinic Provider: _____

Shelter Cat (RTF) <input type="checkbox"/> Community Cat (TNR) <input type="checkbox"/>	A#	Sex: M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/>	Trap #
Breed/Color:	RW: YES Exposed NO	Age/DOB:	

Trapper/Org:	Emergency #
Colony Address:	City:
Caregiver Name (if known):	Caregiver #:

MEDICAL USE ONLY	
Services needed: Eartip _____ FVRCP _____ Rabies _____ Flea/tick _____ Microchip sticker:	Surgery Info: Weight: _____ Spay <input type="checkbox"/> Neuter <input type="checkbox"/> Postponed <input type="checkbox"/> Already Fixed <input type="checkbox"/> Heat <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant <input type="checkbox"/> Lactating <input type="checkbox"/> Cryptorchid <input type="checkbox"/>
Medical Notes:	



COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAM
Best Friends Animal Society
 Community Cat Program: [\(760\) 507-1228](tel:7605071228)

Clinic Date: _____
Clinic Provider: _____

Pet Cat <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter Cat <input type="checkbox"/> Community Cat <input type="checkbox"/>	Shelter #	Sex: M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/>	Trap #
Breed/Color:	Hair Length: Long Medium Short	Age/DOB:	

Trapper/Org:	Emergency #
Colony Address:	City:
Caregiver Name (if known):	Caregiver #:

MEDICAL USE ONLY	
Services done: FVRCP _____ Rabies _____ Eartip _____ Microchip sticker:	Surgery Info: Weight: _____ Spay <input type="checkbox"/> Neuter <input type="checkbox"/> Postponed <input type="checkbox"/> Already Fixed <input type="checkbox"/> Heat <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant <input type="checkbox"/> Lactating <input type="checkbox"/> Cryptorchid <input type="checkbox"/>
Medical Notes:	

Best Friends RTF medical guidelines



SAVE THEM ALL

Return-to-Field Medical Guidelines

Author: Erin Katribe, DVM

Date: 7/2020

Revisions: n/a

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for what medical conditions are candidates for feline return-to-field programming.

Background:

The primary goals of community cat programming (including return-to-field and trap-neuter-return programs) are humane population control and disease prevention. CCPs operate with limited resources, and to be most effective at reducing free-roaming populations, they must provide targeted and intensive sterilization. This need for intensive sterilization and disease prevention should be balanced with the medical needs and best interest of individual cats. When the adverse and unintended effects of ongoing treatment for various medical conditions are considered, the option to forego that ongoing medical treatment in lieu of sterilization and rapid release becomes a much better option, both for the individual cat and for the overarching programmatic goals.

Chronic stress weakens the immune system and makes cats more prone to infection and more susceptible to disease, including common shelter-acquired illnesses like upper respiratory tract disease. This becomes even more important when we look at unsocialized community cats. For mild to moderate illness, most cats will recover better and more rapidly outside of the stressful shelter environment. Additionally, when we perform sterilization, we remove the added stresses that pregnancy, lactation, and problems associated with roaming and fighting can cause, allowing cats with some degree of illness a better chance at recovery. Attempting to treat an unsocialized cat in the shelter is also likely to cause mental distress and subsequent decreased welfare that outweighs the potential benefit of treatment.

Handling under-socialized or frightened cats poses an injury risk to shelter staff; reducing that exposure provides a staff safety benefit. Additionally, by preventing bites, the need for rabies bite quarantines that further extend a cat's stay (and the staff time and resources required to care for them) is also eliminated.

Guidelines:

Outcome Decisions

Possible approaches/outcomes to consider for each case include (in conjunction with sterilization and vaccination, in most cases):

- Release without treatment
 - Consider this option when treatment is of long duration and/or there is a reasonable chance that the cat will remain stable with reasonable quality of life or will recover without treatment.
- Perform a single treatment, release
 - Consider this option when there is a single treatment that will significantly improve the cat's condition but does not require keeping the cat in the shelter.



SAVE THEM ALL

- Hold for a short period for treatment, then release
 - Consider this option for conditions that are compromising welfare, are likely to have complications, or are not likely to resolve without a course of treatment, but where treatment is finite and of short duration.
 - Maximum duration to consider treatment will be variable depending on the socialization status of the cat. For unsocialized cats, mental welfare is compromised by long holding periods.
- Prolonged holding for treatment with consideration of alternative outcomes (adoption, working cat programming)
 - Consider this option only for somewhat socialized cats, due to the mental distress that sheltering can cause to unsocialized cats. Outcome options will vary based on socialization of the cat.
 - Only consider this option if the cat's welfare is significantly compromised and is unlikely to improve without the course of treatment.
- Humane euthanasia
 - Consider this option for unsocialized cats requiring extensive treatment or for unsocialized cats where the cause of clinical signs is not clear without extensive diagnostic testing.
 - If clinical signs suggest a chronic illness (whether or not it can be managed) in an unsocialized cat, humane euthanasia should be considered.

Conditions where it is reasonable/recommended to release cats **without** treatment:

- Dermatophytosis: Treatment times are of long duration and this condition is exacerbated by stress; cats are likely to worsen if they remain in the shelter and, particularly if unsocialized, have a very poor chance of adoption.
- Mild to moderate upper respiratory: A key factor in the development of feline URI is stress and length of stay in the shelter; this is a condition that is very likely to be exacerbated by time in the shelter.
- Dental disease with reasonable body condition
- FIV positive or FeLV positive in reasonable body condition/without significant concurrent illness (routine FeLV/FIV screening of community cats is not recommended)
- Diarrhea without weight loss

Conditions where a **single treatment** is warranted, followed by immediate release:

- Mild mange: Treat with a single dose of topical medication (e.g. selamectin/Revolution)
- Abscesses or wounds: Lance abscesses or consider repair of extensive wounds with intradermal sutures or leave open to heal by second intention, long-acting cefovecin injection
- Surgical procedures, such as enucleations, tail amputations, or mass removals, where clinical cure is expected to be achieved with the procedure. Closure with intradermal patterns and dissolvable sutures is favored, so no holding for suture removal is necessary.
- Limb amputation may fall into this category if the environment is such that the cat is monitored and is not in danger from predators due to decreased ability to climb. Often, it is required that a committed caregiver be identified for this to be an option.



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Conditions where some degree of **ongoing treatment** is warranted prior to release:

- Severe mange with concurrent dehydration – begin topical selamectin treatment every 2 weeks; releasable when improving significantly.

Severe conditions where **humane euthanasia** may be considered (dependent on availability for treatment, ability for follow-up, and potential working cat placement or adoption candidacy/socialization):

- Severe dental disease with poor body condition: even if dental procedure is an option, there is frequently a high level of concern for concurrent disease contributing to body condition that may not be practically treatable, dependent on socialization status.
- Severe diarrhea with poor body condition and dehydration, particularly in an older cat: Infiltrative bowel disease is a likely differential and carries a guarded to poor prognosis.

Spay/Neuter Considerations

Age at the time of surgery

- Spay/neuter surgery is performed as early as 6 weeks of age for healthy, robust shelter kittens and is also frequently performed on shelter cats with mild infectious disease (with decision making similar to that which is outlined in the above section for RTF decisions).
- Return-to-field should absolutely be considered for unsocialized kittens that are 8 weeks or older.
- If other conditions mean that another live outcome cannot be found (e.g. ringworm), kittens as young as 6 weeks, with an identified community caregiver so that kittens know where to find food and shelter, should be considered for return-to-field.
- Because the opportunity to sterilize an individual animal may not be available in the future, the benefits of surgery generally outweigh any anesthetic risk associated with pediatric status or mild medical conditions.

Lactation status

- Lactating females should be spayed and released as quickly as possible in order to allow them to return to caring for their kittens
- In practice, this is performed with a less than 24-hour turnaround whenever possible.

References:

Dinnage JD, Scarlett JM, Richards JR. Descriptive epidemiology of feline upper respiratory tract disease in an animal shelter. *J Feline Med Surg* 2009;11(10):816-825.

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' 2016 Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs. <https://avmajournals.avma.org/doi/pdf/10.2460/javma.249.2.165>

Little, Susan, DVM, DABPV (Feline). Cats, Stress, and Illness. Atlantic Coast Veterinary Conference 2013. <https://www.vin.com/members/cms/project/defaultadv1.aspx?id=5956220&pid=11390&>

Protocol for ear-tipping community cats



Ear-tipping community cats

(Adapted from protocols developed by Neighborhood Cats, and used with permission.)



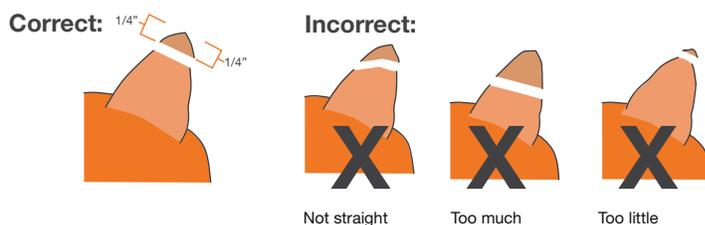
1. Before proceeding, the cat must be anesthetized.
2. Examine the cat's ears for ear mites and ticks. (Careful examination of community cats is important because this may be their only opportunity for medical care). Clean ears using gauze or Q-tips soaked in Epi-Otic or other ear-cleaning solution. Apply Revolution, Frontline or Advantage Multi topically between the cat's shoulder blades, as prescribed by veterinarian.
3. Using gauze or cotton balls soaked in a sterile scrub solution, scrub the tip of the **left** ear.
4. Hold a straight hemostat across the top quarter-inch of the **left** ear, applying gentle pressure. To avoid damaging tissues beneath the ear tip, never clamp the hemostat beyond the first set of interlocking teeth (the lightest pressure setting). See the photo on the right.
5. The top quarter-inch of the **left** ear should be removed,* cutting straight across with straight-edge, sharp scissors. (Using scissors will cause less bleeding than a scalpel blade, but scissors must be wiped down with a sterile scrub after each use. Scalpel blades must be replaced after each use.)



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc.™ and Sherrie Buzby Photography.

For kittens, the amount removed will be less than a quarter-inch.

The actual amount removed is determined by the size of the kitten (less on young kittens and more on older kittens).



When community cats are correctly ear-tipped, the tips of their left ears have a straight edge, and only a quarter-inch has been removed.

6. If using a cautery tool (preferred method), apply light pressure to the cut edge of the ear to cauterize the cut area. Otherwise, prepare a hemostatic paste ahead of time by mixing Kwik Stop or other styptic powder with just enough lidocaine to make a thin paste. Apply the paste across the cut surface with a Q-tip. This will reduce the amount of head-shaking that occurs during recovery. The paste should stop the bleeding once the gentle pressure of the hemostat is removed. If bleeding continues, apply more paste and, if necessary, reapply pressure for a short time.

*If the left ear is damaged or unhealthy, it may be necessary to tip the right ear. Although it's standard practice to tip the left ear, it's still common practice in some regions of the country to tip the right ear. It's important to conform to local norms. If there is no right-ear local norm, the left ear should be tipped by default.

Discharge instructions example

Post-op care for community cats

Community cats should not be handled when conscious and therefore require special care when recovering from spay or neuter surgery.

When you pick up community cats from the clinic or veterinarian's office, they should already have regained consciousness (and may or may not be moving around in the trap). They should be in the same trap you dropped them off in and the trap should be completely covered with a sheet or towel. Ensure that trap doors are secured before exiting the building.

Here's a rundown of instructions for further recovery.

Initial recovery

- Cats should stay dry, inside and in a temperature-controlled area after surgery. Anesthesia interferes with an animal's ability to regulate his own body temperature, so it's important that we help these cats stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer.
- Cats hallucinate as the anesthesia wears off, so keep them away from people, loud noises and especially dogs. Any sort of sound, light or touch may annoy them greatly. Cats may growl, claw at invisible objects and generally act unpredictably for up to 10 hours post-surgery. They will become more active and alert as the evening goes on. Keep them in a quiet, dark place, such as a bathroom, closet or basement. Cats are independent animals and generally come out of anesthesia without human help.
- Keep the traps covered to reduce the cats' stress. Never open the trap doors or allow the cats out of the trap. Do not stick your fingers into the trap, or attempt to handle the cat for any reason.
- For the most part, leave recovering cats alone but check in every hour or two to monitor their progress. Watch for signs of distress, such as vomiting, bleeding, labored breathing or grogginess more than 24 hours after surgery. If you see any of these symptoms, seek veterinary assistance immediately. If you cannot reach a veterinary office, call the point of contact for the CCP; they may be able to help.
- If a cat is vomiting while still unconscious, the head should be turned to avoid choking. Sometimes this can be achieved by gently tipping the trap to the side to change the cat's position. Be careful when tipping the trap so that you don't harm the cat by jostling her too much. If this can't be achieved by tipping the trap, reach into the trap to reposition the cat's head.
- Occasionally, a cat will shake his head while waking up from anesthesia, opening the ear-tipped area and causing some blood to splatter. This is typically only a small amount and tends to stop quickly.

In-trap care

- Approximately six to eight hours after surgery, the cat will regain consciousness. Once his eyes no longer have a glazed-over appearance and he's sitting in an upright position, you can offer him a small amount of food (e.g., three ounces for adults, one-and-a-half ounces for kittens). Canned food is recommended because of its high water content. If holding the cat for 24 hours or less, there's no need to provide water separately. For kittens six months or younger, feed them as soon as they regain consciousness (monitoring for any vomiting) and again eight to twelve hours later.
- To feed a cat in a trap, there are a couple options. You can purchase or borrow a trap fork (also called a divider or isolator), which is used to separate the cat from the door area, and then open the door and slide the food in. Another option is to put the food on a paper plate on the floor, gently pick up the trap

and press it down onto the food so that it squishes up through the wire “floor.” This method makes it more difficult for the cat to eat, but is better than no food at all (and ensures your safety).

- It is generally recommended that cats be held for 24 hours after surgery, although they can sometimes be returned within 12 to 24 hours, if they are fully awake and alert. Lactating mothers should be returned as soon as possible (i.e., once they are fully awake and alert). They will immediately return to where they left their kittens and will be able to continue nursing their young.
- If a longer recovery period is needed, you can use a feral cat den (or feral cat box) placed in a larger cage, which allows the cat to have a safe place to hide (and provides an added measure of safety for you). The den’s sliding acrylic door will line up with the trap’s rear door for easy transfer. Once the cat is inside, the den is placed in a large cage or crate, along with a litter box, food and water. The cat goes in and out of the den via the circular opening on the side. A pivoting door is used to cover the opening when cleaning or feeding.

Returning cats

- Release the cat in the exact location where she was trapped. Make sure the spot you pick for release does not encourage the cat to run toward dangerous conditions (a busy street, dogs, etc.).
- Keep the trap covered until you are almost ready to release the cat. Then, quietly uncover the trap, allowing the cat to take in her surroundings (i.e., recognize her home) for 15 to 30 seconds. When you are ready to release the cat, hold the trap with the rear door facing away from you and open the door. If the cat doesn’t race out of the trap immediately, tilt the trap so that the end closest to you is raised slightly. You might also try tapping lightly on the trap to encourage the cat to leave.
- Do not relocate the cat. This is considered abandonment if proper acclimation protocol is not followed and it also puts the cat at increased risk of adverse outcomes, including death.
- Never put your hand in the trap.

Additional information

- Most clinics use dissolvable stitches so they do not need removal.
- Male cats might still act as if they wish to breed; it can take up to 30 days for their testosterone levels to drop following surgery.
- If the cat is friendly, you can check the incision site every other day for excessive swelling, discharge or redness. Incisions rarely get infected or open up, but if you see signs of either, contact a veterinarian. If you cannot reach a veterinary office, call the point of contact for the CCP.

Altering community cats in veterinary clinics

Are you affiliated with a high-volume spay/neuter clinic that wants to accept community cats, but you're not sure how you can fit it into your operations? Here are some tips for integrating spay/neuter surgeries for community cats.

First, let's talk about scheduling. Some questions to answer: Will you take walk-ins? How many cats will you accept each day? Will you limit the number of cats per trapper?

Option 1: Allow each caregiver to bring in up to five cats per day (in traps) as walk-ins. Use these appointments to cover any no-shows.

Option 2: Consider having one day (or two) each week designated to community cats. You can even give it a name, like Wild Cat Wednesdays. With this option, caregivers get used to coming in on a particular day and your staff gets into a flow with the process.

Option 3: It's hard for trappers to schedule surgeries when they don't know what they will catch, but if you do require appointments, set a limit as to how many community cats one person can bring in and estimate a certain number of no-shows so that you can overbook with owned pets.

Consider having a Facebook page or a good communication plan for community cat caregivers to network and connect with each other and to provide updates to them on your policies and scheduling.

Have a separate check-in and release time for community cats.

Option 1: Consider keeping the cats overnight and allowing cats to be dropped off throughout the day. Having community cats stay overnight gives them more time to recover. If cats come in early enough, they can be fit into the surgery rotation that day. If they come in late in the afternoon, they can receive surgery the next morning. This strategy allows more flexibility for trappers and also for clinic staff, depending on whether the surgery schedule is light or heavy.

Option 2: Have caregivers drop cats off a half-hour later than regular intake and have them available for release a half-hour after the regular pickup time. For example, if normal check-in time is 7:30 a.m., do community cat check-in at 8:00 a.m. If you do same day-release for owned cats, keep community cats overnight and release them at 9 a.m. the next day.

Decide where you'll house the cats.

To make it easy for staff to prepare cats before surgery and to allow cats to recover in a quiet space where you can turn off the lights after surgery, designate a separate room, with shelving, for community cats.

If you have big enough hallways, consider purchasing rolling baker's racks for cats to be placed on and rolled out for release. This allows easier cleaning of the room for new cats coming in the next day and makes transporting cats out of the clinic more efficient.

Determine your community cat surgery procedures.

Ear-tipping: Have a protocol for staff to follow (see the example in this appendix) and a handout to explain ear-tipping to caregivers, who often don't understand the procedure and worry about having it done.

Vaccines and testing: Will you require a rabies vaccination? Most clinics do require rabies vaccination to comply with state public-health laws. (Consider using rabies vaccines and microchips without the tag to

save money. Ask your provider about this option.) How about other vaccines, testing or treatments? Most clinics have moved away from testing cats for FIV and FeLV.

Trap requirement: Will you require that cats come into the clinic in traps? Many clinics require that if community cats come in as walk-ins and get subsidized pricing, they must be in a trap and get an ear-tip. This protocol protects staff and the cat, because even friendly community cats can react when stressed in a new environment and an ear-tip is important identification to prevent them from being trapped and undergoing anesthesia again.

Place in the rotation: Many clinics that hold community cats overnight place those cats last in the surgery rotation.

Pricing: Decide whether your clinic will offer subsidized pricing. Many clinics offer community cat surgeries at \$15 to \$25 and do fundraising or use funds from owned pets to help pay for those surgeries. Some clinics ask clients at check-in if they would like to “spay it forward” and give a donation to help the clinic provide surgeries for those in need and for community cats. One clinic raised \$20,000 per year just by asking for such donations.

Other procedures: Decide what other procedures (e.g., tail amputations, mass removal) your clinic will do for community cats. You’ll need to decide if cats who receive these procedures can be monitored for post-op care and what is in the cats’ best interests.

Illness: Have a plan for cats who can’t have spay/neuter surgery because of illness. Can the caregiver hold and treat the cat? Will you give the caregiver antibiotics to treat the cat? Does your clinic have the ability to hold and treat sick community cats?

Lactating moms: Will you do a flank spay on lactating moms? Will you release the mom sooner than other community cats or ask the caregiver to go look for kittens?

Planning ahead: What’s your plan if more cats come in than the clinic can safely alter in a surgery day? It’s important to have a plan for holding over cats and communicating with caregivers. You’ll also need protocols in place for how to handle cats who have already been altered and what to do about releasing cats in very cold or hot weather.

Have the proper equipment for dealing with community cats.

Here are some things you’ll need to have on hand in the clinic:

- Light sheets to cover traps
- Isolator for induction
- Transfer cages and dens
- Wildlife gloves
- Nets

Create forms and handouts specific to community cats.

Here are some recommended forms and handouts:

- Clinic tag for community cats (see example in the appendix)
- Post-op form specific to community cats

- Trap rental form, if renting out traps
- Handout on trapping to give to caregivers
- Handout on ear-tipping to give to caregivers



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 15 CCP Operations: Working with Local TNVR and Rescue Groups

Working with Local TNVR and Rescue Groups

Introduction

The impact of a large-scale, focused CCP can be considerable. CCPs can result in dramatic reductions in shelter intake and increases in save rates virtually overnight, as well as long-term population-level reductions. Unfortunately, the sheer scale of such programs (perhaps combined with other factors) can sometimes overshadow or even pose some conflicts with the invaluable work of local trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR), aka trap-neuter-return (TNR), and rescue groups. This can lead to challenges among the very stakeholders whose collaboration, or at the very least, coordination, is required for a community to achieve its lifesaving objectives.

It doesn't need to be this way, of course. Ideally, the CCP is integrated into the various lifesaving programs (TNVR, rescue, foster, adoption, etc.) already underway in a community and has a synergistic effect. However, because the CCP often brings an approach that may be new to traditional TNVR groups, it is important to engage stakeholders early on in a dialogue and identify where it might make sense to collaborate and coordinate. In some cases, stakeholders may need to "agree to disagree" about certain issues, such as returning cats prior to identifying a caregiver. The following guidelines are therefore intended to help those leading the CCP and volunteers in their collaboration and coordination efforts with local TNVR and rescue groups.



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography

Benefits to engaging stakeholders

When various stakeholders in a community work closely together toward the common goal of saving more cats, the results can be astonishing. Among the key benefits to the CCP are:

- The ability to tap into a network of trappers, caregivers, foster homes and adoption outlets, thereby expanding the options for positive outcomes. This network has knowledge and experience specific to their community, including on-the-ground experience that is invaluable. Without such resources, access to neighborhoods and communities may be out of a CCP's reach.
- The opportunity to capitalize on a community's past success, giving momentum to the CCP from the very beginning. One example is getting support from the same stakeholders who have supported the implementation of another community-based program (e.g., a social services or youth development program).
- Increased confidence in the long-term sustainability of the CCP, as key stakeholders have a vested interest in the program.

The benefits are generally felt most acutely by local rescue and TNVR groups in two important ways:

- As the need to pull adult cats from the shelter is greatly reduced, rescue organizations can focus their efforts on expanding to serve other populations of cats in need, such as kittens and adult cats with special needs.
- The number of community cat spay/neuter surgeries increases dramatically, directly addressing the primary source of kittens in a community and eventually reducing the number of breeding community cats, an issue of concern to TNVR groups. Economies of scale generally lead to better pricing as well.

And by sharing resources, a community's lifesaving capacity can be greatly expanded. Among these resources are:

- Vouchers redeemable for surgery or vaccination
- Traps and related tools and materials, such as trap covers and trap tags
- Donations of cat food for caregivers
- Community outreach materials, such as door hangers, flyers and adoption promotions
- Ongoing training in proven practices and data analysis
- Services for transporting cats to and from clinics



Additional benefits include improved relationships with shelter staff and field services officers, as resources once used to handle the steady flow of cats into the shelter are reallocated to tasks more closely aligned with the missions of these organizations, such as dealing with at-large dogs, picking up injured animals and handling cruelty investigations. As staff leading the CCP and volunteers develop strong working relationships with their counterparts in the shelter and in the field, local rescue and TNVR groups are included, developing their own relationships with these key players. In addition, relationships between ACOs and community cat caregivers can be improved.

Finally, there's the positive public image that comes from a shelter's improved lifesaving record. Everybody loves a winner — and, by extension, those associated with a particular success story. Local rescue and TNVR groups stand to gain from this “halo effect.”

Communication and collaboration

As outlined above, the benefits of working closely with local TNVR and rescue groups are significant. To reap the rewards, however, those involved must be committed to such an arrangement. Effective communication is critical to getting these collaborative endeavors off the ground, and to achieving long-term success.

Laying the groundwork. Even before launching a CCP, key staff, shelter leaders and volunteers involved in the CCP should meet with local TNVR and rescue groups. These are among the range of topics to be discussed:

- The proposed CCP's philosophy, goals and basic scope of work
- Each stakeholder's core strengths
- Ways to leverage those strengths while avoiding areas of apparent redundancy, such as trapping in the same neighborhoods and transporting to the same clinics
- Gaps that need to be filled to maximize lifesaving in the community

Establishing clarity around these issues helps build trust among stakeholders and manage expectations. While differences may arise in philosophies and goals, all parties must listen to each other respectfully, recognize each other's strengths and acknowledge successes that have paved the way for the work ahead.

Working together. Generally speaking, CCPs offer important roles for individuals and organizations with a range of interests and skill sets. The key is leveraging these varied interests and skills in such a way that

the CCP's big-picture goals are efficiently and effectively achieved. Stakeholders need not see eye-to-eye on every issue, as long as each party knows where others stand. With that said, agreement on key issues will make it easier for a CCP to work effectively with local TNVR and rescue groups. Among these key issues are:

- Whether or not vouchers will be used, and how
- Which resources (e.g., traps) will be shared, and how
- What data will be collected and/or distributed
- Medical needs and injury protocols
- Ear-tipping protocol
- Vaccines administered
- When to test for feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) or feline leukemia virus (FeLV)
- Post-surgery recovery care
- Protocols for returning “friendlies”
- When kittens should be part of the TNVR process vs. when they should be removed from the community
- Relocation criteria
- Adoption criteria
- Ideal practices for caregivers

Seeking broad agreement among the various stakeholders on these issues will stave off potential issues in the future. And yet, CCPs can be remarkably effective despite a significant level of disagreement, even on the issues mentioned above. For example, staff and volunteers might be committed to returning virtually all healthy community cats who enter the shelter, while a TNVR group opposes returning “friendly” cats. Though this is not an unusual situation, such philosophical differences are not necessarily barriers to strong partnerships, as long as each organization operates openly and in accordance with its values. Once again, it all comes down to mutual respect, trust and communication.

Building relationships among stakeholders. Simply “walking a mile in another’s shoes” can be one of the most effective ways of building a solid foundation of trust among differing parties. Going out on a trapping job together, for example, can allow one organization to appreciate some of the more nuanced practices used by another group. Staff leading the CCP who work an adoption event will almost certainly gain an appreciation for the challenges associated with finding homes for shy cats. Rescue groups may gain more insight into why a



CCP returns friendly cats after seeing a room full of owner-surrendered cats at the shelter. Such activities might not result in changes to an organization's policies or practices, but they often improve the group's ability to work effectively with others.

Checking in regularly with local TNVR and rescue groups can also strengthen these relationships. It demonstrates the ongoing commitment of staff and volunteers, and encourages others to do the same.

Another method is to hold occasional meetings to help maintain the kind of close working relationship necessary to increase a community's lifesaving in a sustainable manner. To keep things on track during these meetings, be sure to have an agenda and stick to it — though casual get-togethers have their place, too. Newsletters and email updates, while no substitute for face-to-face meetings, can also help keep local TNVR and rescue groups informed and engaged.

When to go separate ways. Unfortunately, instances arise when the best decision that a CCP can make is to not work with a particular TNVR or rescue group. Despite having a shared goal, there could be too many contentious issues. It's better to part company if working together undermines lifesaving efforts. Each organization can go on doing their own work, of course — and perhaps an opportunity will arise to work together in the future.

If a “parting of the ways” occurs, it's important for everybody involved to be as professional and respectful as possible — if for no other reason than to ensure that lifesaving efforts are not negatively affected. (See *Conflict Resolution for the Animal Welfare Field* for additional guidance.)

Measures of success

Before launching the CCP, have a good sense of each group's capacity. How many cats can be trapped weekly or monthly? How many kittens can be absorbed into the local rescue community? It's important to be realistic with such estimates, too. There's nothing wrong with being ambitious, but it's easy to get carried away. And doing so can have serious consequences. If a rescue group accepts too many neonatal kittens, for example, it can lead to inadequate care. Or if a TNVR group can't trap enough cats to fulfill the requirements of a grant, future funding might be jeopardized.

Estimating capacities up front offers an additional benefit: It focuses attention on the various metrics that will be used to measure a program's success (increase in save rate, reduction in cat-related complaints, number of cats trapped, kittens pulled, adoptions, etc.). Be sure to set benchmarks at the outset of the program and at periodic intervals, and track progress. Don't forget to celebrate even modest improvements, which offers an excellent opportunity to strengthen the relationships among the various organizations involved.

Finally, collecting and sharing success stories can be remarkably effective at demonstrating to everybody involved — including various stakeholders throughout the community — the significant contribution they're making. Such stories can also be integrated into a CCP's training program.

Additional resources

- *PetSmart Charities Community TNR: Tactics and Tools* (can be purchased on Amazon.com)
- [Best Friends' community cats page](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions About TNR](#)
- [FIV and FeLV FAQs](#)



Photo courtesy of Christopher Crews



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 16 CCP Operations: Trapping Protocols

Trapping Protocols

Introduction

Trapping can be the single greatest challenge for some CCPs. And trapping effectiveness can be greatly affected by a number of factors outside the control of staff and volunteers (e.g., weather, site access, trap-savvy cats). Adopting robust trapping protocols is therefore a top priority for a CCP. After all, if you can't trap the cats, you can't sterilize and vaccinate them.

This guide is intended to help staff and volunteers plan and conduct successful trapping projects, whether for a single cat or multiple cats. Obviously, some details will vary from program to program, but the general principles apply across the board.

Note: This chapter of the *Community Cat Programs Handbook* combines the first-hand experience of many Best Friends staff and volunteers, as well as that of other organizations. We are especially grateful for the information published in “[Trapping: The Basics](#)” and “[The Neighborhood Cats Drop Trap](#)” (Neighborhood Cats), [Guide to Trap-Neuter-Return \(TNR\) and Colony Care](#) (Alley Cat Allies, the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals and the ASPCA), and the many trapping tips provided by the [Animal Defense League of Arizona](#).

Equipment and supplies

Here are some details on the many items you'll generally want on hand for a successful trapping project.

Humane box (or cage) traps. As with other tools, quality traps are important. High-quality traps will not only last much longer than their less expensive counterparts, they are likely to perform better in the field. The design of the trap is important as well; most CCPs prefer the style with both front (hinged) and rear (sliding) doors. These are easier and safer for veterinary staff to use, and are also more difficult for a cat to escape from while veterinary staff, trappers and caregivers are providing in-trap care or cleaning traps (assuming a trap divider is used).

Be sure all traps are numbered (to track inventory) and labeled with information about the organization, including a phone number. You might also consider including a note about trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR), aka trap-neuter-return (TNR), informing any curious residents that the traps are being used for humane purposes and should not be tampered with. For trapping jobs involving multiple locations, label each trap in such a way that you're sure to return cats to their correct location.

Drop traps. This type of trap is basically a large bottomless mesh box that is propped up to allow cats to enter. The trap is then dropped over the cat(s) when the trapper pulls a string attached to the object being used to prop up the trap (e.g., a wooden dowel, length of PVC pipe, plastic bottle).

Although drop traps can be relatively costly to buy and (other than the collapsible versions) are rather cumbersome to handle and transport, they are invaluable tools for any CCP. Various plans for do-it-yourself versions, along with videos demonstrating their use, can be found at the [Drop Trap Design Bank website](#).

Historically, drop traps have been used to catch trap-savvy cats (often the last one or two in a community) or a litter of kittens (perhaps with their mother). More recently, though, some people have begun using drop traps when first trapping a large group of cats. In addition to the obvious advantage of catching multiple cats at once, their use might also minimize the skittishness that can result from multiple box traps being used near the cats (i.e., cats become increasingly wary after seeing fellow cats trapped).

Transfer cages. Especially useful when trapping a large number of cats, transfer cages (sometimes called transport kennels) take up less space in a vehicle and allow traps to be reused. Cats are transferred into the transfer cages on-site, and traps are then re-baited to catch more cats. (See the “Beyond the basics” section below for additional information about safely transferring cats.)

Trap covers. These are generally cut or sewn from old bed linens, but in colder climates, some trappers prefer heavier fabric, such as old towels or blankets. (See the appendix for an example of a trap cover sewing pattern.)

Checklist. By their very nature, CCP operations can be somewhat chaotic, and the accompanying stress can create an environment in which it's easy to leave necessary equipment or supplies behind as you head out to trap. It helps to make a checklist of everything (including the traps) that you need to bring. It's also a good idea to have the key steps involved written down for easy review.

Cat tracking system, clipboard and pen or pencil. Keeping track of which cats are sterilized and their vaccination dates can be a challenge, especially for a large group of cats. The use of a tracking system helps caregivers and trappers address this problem. (See [Cat Stats](#) for an example.)

Newspaper. Newspaper is used to line the traps, increasing the likelihood that the cats (some of whom might be put off by the feel of wire on their feet) will enter the traps. Fold the newspaper, two or three sheets together, so that it can be slid easily into the trap lengthwise with approximately half an inch to spare on both sides of the trap. (On windy days, you may want to use something heavier, such as a hand towel or other fabric that will stay flat.)

Painter's tape or masking tape. A little bit of tape on each corner of the newspaper will prevent it from blowing around in the trap and scaring the cats. Another piece stuck underneath the bait tray will help prevent clever cats from reaching into the trap and moving the tray closer to the corner, where they can steal the bait. Trappers often use tape to label traps in the field as well, especially for large trapping jobs. Knowing exactly where a cat was trapped helps ensure that she will be returned to the correct location.

Magic markers. These are important to have on hand for labeling traps in the field, and markers can come in handy for other uses as well.

Bait. Among the baits typically used by trappers are canned cat food, tuna (in oil), canned salmon or mackerel, sardines, and roasted or fried chicken. However, some people find that the cats prefer the food they're usually given, and have better luck using that. There is no right answer here; the best bait is whatever gets the cats into the traps. Bring a variety, and re-bait the traps as necessary (e.g., after a cat has stolen the bait, once the strong odor has dissipated). In very cold weather, it might be necessary to use dry cat food, as other options can sometimes freeze.

Bait trays. Most trappers prefer disposable materials for bait trays, such as paper plates or lids from plastic food containers or soda cups. Some prefer tortillas or bologna, since these will likely get eaten (therefore generating no trash). Whatever you use, be sure that it's unbreakable, there are no sharp edges and any trash is easily collected.

Cat food and water. Once the trapping job is completed, be sure to leave food and water for the cats who weren't trapped.

Utensils. You'll need to bring utensils (e.g., knife, fork, spoon) to dish out the right amount of bait into the bait trays.

Resealable container. This is useful for storing unused bait while driving to and from the trapping job, and from site to site.

Can opener. If you're using bait that comes in cans without easy-open lids, be sure to have a can opener on hand.

Stick-and-string (or bottle-and-string) assembly. When trying to trap a particular cat or cats (e.g., unsterilized, sick or injured cats), but not others (e.g., healthy sterilized cats), the ability to trigger a trap manually rather than rely on the trip-plate to close the door automatically can be very useful. A length of cord is attached to a wooden dowel, length of PVC pipe, plastic soda or water bottle or even a half-roll of paper towels, which is wedged under the front door, holding it open. The door is closed when the trapper pulls on the cord. (Whatever you choose to prop the door open with, be sure the cord is attached

securely.) Note: Tomahawk Live Trap recently released a remote-control trap trigger that can be used from up to 200 feet away.

Paper towels. Trapping can be messy — from handling bait or cleaning up after a cat has urinated in a trap. Having plenty of paper towels on hand is never a bad idea.

Sanitizing hand wipes. Sanitizing hand wipes make for easy cleanup after trapping.

Trash bags. You'll want to collect and, if possible, recycle cat food cans, used plastic utensils, and other items. Whatever can't be recycled should be disposed of. Trash bags can also come in handy if you happen to trap a skunk. (See the "Accidental trapping of wildlife" section below.)

First aid kit. It's always advisable to have a first aid kit on hand. Trapping injuries are rare, but not unheard of. The injuries are almost never caused by the cats, but by handling equipment, unloading or loading traps, and so forth.

Ant repellent. Ants are a concern mostly in the summer and in warmer climates, because they can be attracted to the bait used when trapping. Although the risk to the cats (i.e., being bitten by ants while trapped) might be relatively small, once the bait is covered with ants, it's unlikely to be appealing to cats. Be sure that any repellent you use is non-toxic (e.g., baby powder or food-grade diatomaceous earth). As an alternative, you can build a small "moat" around the bait by placing a small dish of food in a larger one containing water.

Vehicle protection. It's not uncommon for cats to urinate or defecate in their traps while being transported. Ideally, a CCP has dedicated vans that can easily be hosed out. Since volunteers will likely be doing trapping and/or providing transportation, it's important that they can protect the interior of their cars. Sheets of cardboard, plastic drop cloths or inexpensive shower curtain liners placed under a layer of absorbent material (e.g., old bed linens or blankets) work well. Lining the van's floor with blankets or a heavy comforter will reduce rattling from traps and transfer cages, thereby reducing stress levels for cats and driver alike. Cats should never be transported in a vehicle's trunk or in the open bed of a truck.

Blanket or large towel. If you accidentally trap a skunk, soaking a blanket or towel with water will provide some measure of protection against being sprayed as you release the skunk. (See the "Accidental trapping of wildlife" section below.)

Bungee cords, tie-down straps and/or rope. It's important to secure the traps in your vehicle, especially when stacking them, as some traps can easily fall open if tipped sideways or upside-down, allowing the cat to escape. (Tie-down straps or rope can also come in handy if you accidentally trap wildlife — see below.)

Work gloves. These can be useful for handling traps. Be sure to have one pair per trapper.

Pliers and spray lubricant. Be prepared to adjust traps that aren't working properly.

Broom handle, long wooden dowel or PVC pipe. If you accidentally trap a skunk, raccoon or some other wildlife, traps with front and rear doors can be gently overturned using a broom handle or long wooden dowel, thereby allowing the animal to walk right out. (See the "Accidental trapping of wildlife" section below.)

Powerful flashlight. It's essential to have a high-powered flashlight when trapping after dark. Be sure to have extra batteries on hand.

Camera. It's a good idea to take photos of the cats you trap, since this will make it easier to track progress for a particular location. These days, of course, many cellphones have cameras built in — and the phone is good to have in case of emergencies.

Informational brochures and/or door hangers. Trapping jobs are an excellent opportunity for community outreach, so be sure to have educational materials on hand.

Appropriate clothing and shoes. It's important to be dressed appropriately for trapping. Dress for the weather — and for some manual labor. Wear comfortable closed-toe shoes and long pants. If possible, wear a shirt or jacket with your organization's logo, to help convey a professional image to anybody curious (or concerned) about people trapping cats in their neighborhood. If you're trapping at night, wear a brightly colored shirt or jacket for increased visibility. (Reflective clothing or vests work even better.)

Water and snacks. Trapping jobs — especially large ones — can take several hours. Be sure to have drinking water and some convenient snacks on hand (another reason to carry sanitizing hand wipes).

Binoculars. Although a little costly, binoculars can be very useful when you need to check for ear tips at a distance.



Planning

For a trapping project (even a small one, conducted by experienced trappers) to go well, careful planning is essential. As mentioned above, a comprehensive checklist will help avoid mistakes.

It's recommended that you have help trapping, even for small jobs. Coordinate with a colleague, volunteer or friend. Trapping can be very stressful and tiring, especially for beginners, so having others (even the inexperienced) along to help can make all the difference. And even for the most experienced trappers, having company provides an additional measure of safety. (See Chapter 21, "Staff and Volunteer Safety Protocols," for additional information on this topic.)

If possible, plan for two consecutive days of trapping (making surgery appointments for both days). This will likely increase the project's overall effectiveness, since it is generally easier to trap the remaining cats while the first group is recovering overnight. Such a plan also creates a built-in "rain day" if the first day of trapping goes poorly or needs to be canceled.

Coordination with clinics. CCPs either contract with local veterinary clinics that can provide the necessary number of surgeries at a price agreeable to all parties, or coordinate veterinary services with their municipal shelter partner (or some combination of the two). For the purposes of the following sections, it's assumed that surgery appointments are coordinated prior to trapping, and that standard processes and protocols (e.g., standard medical services provided, costs, invoicing) are in place. (See Chapter 14, "Working with Veterinarians and Veterinary Clinics," for additional information on this topic.) It's also assumed that transportation has been arranged (including a backup plan in case a vehicle breaks down).

Pre-surgery holding areas. Some veterinary service providers will allocate space for cats to recover post-surgery (with the obvious benefit of easy follow-up in the event of medical complications), but holding the cats before surgery is typically the responsibility of the CCP. Some Best Friends CCPs allocate office trailers for this purpose, but also rely on a network of volunteer trappers who provide holding areas (and transportation) for cats.

Regardless of where the cats will be held, the space must be dry and temperature-controlled (approximately 70°F). Most clinic and shelter environments meet this requirement, as do most homes. Garages and basements can be used, assuming the correct temperature can be maintained (which can be a challenge in hot or cold weather). Ensure that the space is quiet and free of fumes, that there are no open windows or doors (in case a cat escapes from a trap) and that no other animals have access to trapped cats.

On-the-ground intelligence. Before finalizing plans for a trapping job, gather relevant information from people “on the ground.” Often, these are residents who called the CCP looking for help, or are known to field services officers. They can also be located by knocking on doors and distributing door hangers in neighborhoods identified as having community cats.

Call each trapping-site contact person and update any information (e.g., number of cats, presence of kittens, best time to trap) that may have changed since the appointment was first made. It’s best if caregivers have an accurate count of the cats they are caring for and are keeping a log of some kind (preferably with photos). This will help not only with the immediate trapping job, but also with tracking progress going forward. (See Chapter 9, “Community Cat Management and Caregiver Resources,” for more information on this topic.)

While assessing each location, keep in mind the various scenarios for which you must be prepared, including relocation — which is recommended only when the cats are in immediate danger (see below).

Let your contacts know when you will be trapping in their area, and ask them to withhold food (but not water) 24 hours before trapping, and to spread the word to any other feeders. If the clinic appointments are scheduled for Sunday morning, trapping will typically be done Saturday (probably in the evening), which means food should be withheld Friday evening. Be sure to remind feeders the day before trapping will take place. It’s also a good idea to have your contacts feed the cats on a schedule for at least two weeks prior to trapping, as this routine will increase the chances of cats being in the area when trapping is underway.

Among the key questions to ask your contacts:

- How many cats are at this location? How many are already sterilized?
- Are there any kittens?¹ If so, how old are they?
- Are there nursing mothers?
- Do the cats and kittens appear healthy?²
- Do you know of anybody else feeding these cats and kittens?
- What time of day do you typically feed, and do you feed dry or canned food? (This information will help to determine the best bait to use as well as when to set the traps.)
- Would you be interested in borrowing traps and trapping the cats yourself? (Ask this question only if a trap loan program is available, and staff or volunteers can teach residents how to trap.)
- Would you be willing to monitor traps for a few hours for us if we set them up on the property? (Note: Never leave traps unattended in a location where they might be tampered with or stolen, or the cats might be harmed.)

Be sure to make notations of any sick or injured cats, as well as any residents who are opposed to TNVR and are causing tension among neighbors or threatening to harm the cats. Trapping jobs — especially large ones — can be an excellent opportunity for education and community outreach, explaining the benefits of TNVR both to the residents feeding the cats and those who would prefer that the cats be removed. Flyers and door hangers can be very effective tools for this purpose and can also be useful for locating other feeders (as well as future volunteers and donors). Consider bringing humane deterrents with you, especially if you know of complainants in the area and have time to either loan them the deterrent or set one up on their property. (See Chapter 8, “Community Outreach and Engagement,” and Chapter 23, “How to Address Various Complaints,” for additional information.)

¹ See Chapter 11, “Working Toward Positive Outcomes,” for more information.

² Be sure to notify the clinic if you expect to be trapping any sick or injured cats. These cats might have to be held longer pre- or post-surgery, so plan ahead.

Coordination with shelter and field services staff.

It's easy for a CCP to be overwhelmed with requests for trapping, so it's important to prioritize. In general, CCPs should focus on targeted or mass trapping efforts, trapping entire groups of cats (or as many cats as possible at each location) or neighborhoods, rather than scattering scarce resources over an entire ZIP code or city. Over time, of course, these larger areas will reap the benefits as neighborhoods are addressed in a systematic fashion. Targeted trapping is a more efficient use of resources, results in short-term measurable impacts and lends credibility to TNVR (especially when careful records of cat numbers are kept), thereby providing support for other programs.³



When prioritizing trapping jobs, it's important to check with shelter staff and/or field services officers (aka animal control officers or ACOs) to determine if a particular trapping site is a “hotspot” for shelter intake or ACO service calls. If not, perhaps there are other sites that are higher priority. (Note: Establishing priorities is not always a straightforward endeavor. A small group of cats in a low-intake ZIP code, for example, might be a top priority if the cats are in imminent danger.)

Trapping basics

Last-minute preparations. Be sure to check the weather before heading out for a trapping job. Although extreme temperatures can be dangerous for young kittens, adult cats have generally grown accustomed to such conditions. Many organizations will therefore trap in all but the most extreme weather conditions as long as they can ensure that the traps will be monitored continuously during trapping and the cats will have adequate shelter when they are returned.

Use trap covers appropriate for the weather (e.g., lighter in warmer weather and heavier in cooler weather). Keep in mind, too, that cats often stay hidden if it's raining or snowing heavily, or very windy.

If you've never set a trap before, or are unfamiliar with a particular type of trap, practice setting it before leaving for the trap site. Only after becoming familiar with all trapping equipment (including the various items described below in the “Selective trapping and hard-to-trap cats” section) should you begin trapping. Even those with a great deal of trapping experience should test the traps before arriving at the trapping site, making sure, for example, that the front door and the mechanism connecting it to the trip plate operate smoothly. Also, check that the rear door-locking mechanism is working properly.

As you head out, check in with your contacts to ensure that food was withheld for 24 hours. It's not unusual to learn that the cats were fed (perhaps by a feeder unknown to the caregiver), in which case it's important that the bait being used is more tempting than their usual fare.

If the cats have eaten within eight hours of surgery, be sure to notify the clinic staff when the cats are dropped off. (Note: Kittens under four months of age should not fast for eight hours, as they may become hypoglycemic as a result. Instead, make sure these kittens eat at least a small amount of food until about four hours prior to surgery. See the “Feeding inside traps” section below.)

If necessary, contact the property manager or other gatekeeper to ensure access to the trapping site, and bring 10%–20% more traps than you think you'll need. It's always better to have extra traps on hand rather than too few.

³ For more information about the rationale for, and benefits of, targeted trapping, see *Community TNVR: Tactics & Tools* by Bryan Kortis.

Once you're at the trapping site, scout out the area to determine if it's safe to leave traps unattended for a reasonable period of time.⁴ If there are people around, introduce yourself and explain what you're doing. This not only helps protect you, other trappers and the cats, it's an opportunity to spread the word. Many people are unaware of TNVR, its benefits and its broad public support. Communicating your objective can also prevent tensions among neighbors from escalating. (See Chapter 8, "Community Outreach and Engagement," and Chapter 23, "How to Address Various Complaints," for additional information on these topics.)

Large trapping jobs often involve multiple trapping locations. Never set out more traps than you can reasonably monitor. Traps should be monitored every 30 to 60 minutes and trapped cats should be put into a temperature-controlled area or vehicle as soon as possible. Consider bringing help if the job will require multiple trapping locations.

Trapping cats with box traps. Note: The following guidelines are for use with traps that have both front and rear doors. The guidelines will have to be adapted slightly for use with other styles of traps.

To begin, prepare the traps near your vehicle and/or away from the trapping site to minimize the likelihood of frightening the cats. Place each trap on a flat surface as you bait and set it. Open the rear door and line the trap with two or three sheets of newspaper (folded ahead of time to the correct size) at each end. It's best to line the entire length of the trap with newspaper (or other material), including the trip plate. If you do this, be sure the newspaper doesn't interfere with the operation of the trip plate and front door. Use a small piece of painter's tape or masking tape to secure each corner of the newspaper, preventing it from blowing around and frightening the cats. If it's very windy, however, it might be best not to use newspaper or to use another type of trap liner instead.⁵

For trapping jobs involving multiple locations, label each trap (e.g., with masking tape and magic marker) in such a way that you're sure to return cats to their correct location.

For each trap, place approximately one tablespoon of bait in the bait tray, and create a trail of bait and juice from the bait tray back to the entrance. Don't use too much bait here (no more than a half-tablespoon), just enough to lure the cat into the trap.⁶

If ants are a concern, use a non-toxic (e.g., baby powder or food-grade diatomaceous earth) ant repellent beneath the bait tray or around the perimeter of the trap, or create a "moat" of water around the bait.

Place the bait tray at the rear of the trap, between the trip plate and the rear door, using a piece of tape to secure it to the newspaper. If the trap is placed lengthwise against a wall, fence or some other structure, you can provide an added measure of protection against having a clever cat steal the bait by putting the bait tray against the protected side of the trap.

"I like to smash my bait — as opposed to placing it on a tray. I put the bait directly on the ground and then smash my trap on top of it. This helps with some clever cats who can reach the bait without triggering the trip plate, as it forces them to work harder. And I always tuck my trap covers under all sides of the trap except the entry door. This prevents cats from stealing my smashed bait from outside the trap."

Bethany Heins, director of operations and strategic projects for national programs, Best Friends Animal Society

Once the traps are properly baited, take them to the trapping site — most likely the cats' regular feeding area. (If the regular feeding area is noisy or unusually busy, you may need to place the traps in a more discreet location nearby.) Place the traps on the ground, making certain they are stable and will not rock or tip. Avoid placing traps out in the open, where cats would likely feel vulnerable and nervous. Instead,

⁴ When trapping in the backyard of a residence, some trappers will leave traps out overnight and use more bait than usual. When leaving traps overnight, be sure they're covered so that any trapped cats remain calm.

⁵ Some trappers prefer to use materials other than newspaper (e.g., fabric cut and sewn to size, cardboard sheets) regardless of weather conditions.

⁶ Remember, cats shouldn't eat for at least eight hours prior to surgery. If a cat does eat within this eight-hour window, be sure to notify the clinic staff when the cat is dropped off. See "Last-Minute Preparations" above.

place the traps lengthwise against a wall, fence or other barrier or under a bush.

Ensure that each trap's front door will snap shut without becoming snagged on a branch, fence or anything else nearby, and check that the rear door is closed securely. Cover each trap with a trap cover.⁷ If it's windy, consider securing the corners of the cover with tape, folding the cover under the trap or doing without the trap cover. Some cats will prefer a "tunnel" (i.e., the trap cover over the top and two long sides of the trap, with the ends folded back to leave the two doors uncovered) while others will prefer more of a "den" (only the front door uncovered). You might experiment with a variety of techniques, to see which ones work best.

Leave the immediate area quietly, as the cats are unlikely to enter the traps if you're standing nearby. (If a caregiver is involved in the trapping, the cats will likely be more comfortable and might even enter the traps without much hesitation.) If you're trapping on your own property, you can go inside. Only rarely should traps be left unattended for more than an hour (e.g., when trapping in the backyard of a private residence) and when you're trapping alone, set only as many traps as you can keep an eye on.



Photo courtesy of Christopher Crews

If you are using multiple traps, you might try placing them side-by-side but facing in opposite directions (perhaps with one trap set lengthwise against a wall, fence or similar barrier). Try to think like a cat and place the traps where they will be most tempting. Having caregivers involved can be a great benefit, since they will know the cats' habits and routines. Also, look for paths obviously traveled by the cats. Move quietly and slowly, and try to remain relaxed so your movements won't frighten cats away. (See the "Trapping tips" section below for additional information.)

Because trapping involves a great deal of waiting, it requires much patience. It will sometimes take several minutes for a cat to go far enough into a trap to trip the door, so be sure the trap is sprung before approaching.

Often, there are certain spots at a trapping site where you're far more successful at trapping cats than you are with other spots at the same site. Once a cat is trapped in such a location, set the trapped cat aside (with the trap covered) and replace the trap with another one.

To the extent that it's possible, you want to prevent cats from seeing and hearing other cats being trapped, since it can make them trap-shy. As cats are trapped, cover the traps quickly to calm the trapped cats and move them to an area away from the other traps and/or cats (reducing the likelihood that untrapped cats will become too nervous to be trapped). Be careful when moving the trapped cats, as the cats can move back and forth quickly, making the trap difficult to handle. In some instances, moving cats before you have completed trapping for the night will be more disruptive than leaving them where they are (which is one reason some people prefer to trap with trap covers already in place). Use your best judgment.

You want the cats' only food source to be inside the traps, so when you move the trapped cats, be sure to clean up any food that was spilled. Be aware that you will probably need to re-bait occasionally, either because a cat has stolen the bait or because the bait's strong odor has dissipated. This is a good time to double-check the operation of the trap as well, ensuring that the trip-plate and front door are working properly.

⁷ Note: Some trappers prefer to trap without trap covers in place, covering the traps only as cats are trapped.

As you're trapping, be sure to check trapped cats for ear-tips. If you trap an ear-tipped cat, consider leaving him in the trap (covered and kept in a quiet place away from the trapping area) until all trapping is completed. Although it's a little stressful for the cat, doing so is sometimes the best way to minimize disruptions to a trapping job. If you trap a cat with a collar, check with neighbors to see if the owner can be found. If you're unsuccessful, be sure the clinic scans for a microchip.

It's not unusual for cats to thrash around inside the trap. Fortunately, the injuries associated with this behavior (e.g., scratched nose, torn nails) tend to be minor. Resist the temptation to release a cat who's thrashing around in a trap; doing so will only make it that much more difficult to trap him next time. Plus, releasing a cat prematurely can result in unmanaged wounds. Take comfort in the fact that the cat is heading to a veterinary clinic, where he/she will be fully assessed.

Covering the trap completely and moving it to a quiet area is typically all that's needed to calm the cat. There are also several calming sprays available that might prove helpful. Never reach into a trap in an attempt to calm a cat.

Wrapping up. Once the trapping job is completed, carefully load the cats into your vehicles, making sure that traps are secured in place or arranged in such a way that they cannot shift or tip over during transport. Some two-door traps can easily fall open if tipped sideways or upside-down, allowing the cat to escape. If you use cable ties or other devices to lock the rear doors shut, be sure to remove them once you arrive at the clinic.

We recommend using newspaper or light sheets of fabric between layers of traps to keep the vehicles (and the cats) clean. Never use plastic sheets or heavy fabric for this purpose, as the cats might overheat. Before leaving the trapping site, make sure you've accounted for all traps. Trapped cats can die quickly if left out in hot or cold weather.

Beyond the basics

Checking in with caregivers prior to trapping helps avoid many surprises. Nevertheless, it's always best to be prepared for the unexpected, even when the task at hand appears to be a routine trapping job. The following are among the various scenarios for which trappers must be prepared.

Kittens and/or nursing mothers. Taking newborn kittens to a local shelter should be a last resort. Many shelters can't provide the kind of around-the-clock care that kittens need. The best way to help most kittens is to leave them with their mother. When they are between eight and ten weeks old, trap them and their mother for spay/neuter surgery.

Note: Although young kittens (under eight weeks of age) can often be socialized and become excellent adoption candidates for a local rescue group, it's important to be mindful of which kittens are truly at greatest risk. Ideally, kittens pulled from the outdoors are not displacing kittens a rescue group would have pulled from shelters; rather, they are in addition to those pulled from shelters. In other words, as long as kittens are dying in shelters, a CCP should only be pulling kittens from very special circumstances (e.g., the mother is known to have died).

Finally, be alert to the possibility of accidentally trapping a nursing mother. Just because you aren't aware of any kittens in a particular area doesn't mean they're not around. Nursing mothers can be spayed and continue to nurse, but need to be reunited with their kittens as soon as they have recovered from anesthesia (typically eight hours after surgery). If you trap a nursing mother, be sure to return her to the exact location where she was trapped. You will also want to keep tabs on the kittens until they are old enough to be sterilized and vaccinated.

Multiple cats in one trap. It's not unusual to trap two or even three cats in a single trap, especially if they are siblings or mothers and kittens. Although they will need to be separated before being dropped

off at the clinic, there's no need to do this at the trapping site, where the risk of escape or injury is higher. Instead, wait until the cats are in a secure holding area.

To transfer one of the cats to a second trap, begin by separating the two cats with a trap divider (threaded horizontally through the trap) and cover the trap. Place the traps back-to-back, with their rear (sliding) doors touching, and cover the empty trap. It's very important that both traps are held securely in place while transferring a cat. Brace one trap against a wall, use bungee cords or have another person help. Slowly lift the cover off the trap containing the cats, prompting the "transfer cat" (now exposed) to move into the empty (covered) trap. After checking to ensure that the cats are not near either rear door, close and secure both doors. Replace the cover and remove the divider from the first trap.

Ill or injured cats. While it's impossible to be prepared for every situation, it's relatively easy to ensure ahead of time that you can respond appropriately if you trap an ill or injured cat. In most cases, this means having the contact information for, and access to, a veterinary clinic (which might be the shelter's clinic) that's open at the time you're trapping. It's important to understand, to the extent that it's possible, the expenses that will be incurred by treating such cats as well as the resources necessary for any after-care. Keeping and caring for an unsocialized cat during her recovery requires a serious commitment, and it is stressful for caregiver and cat alike. (See Chapter 18, "Housing Cats and Kittens," for additional information.)

Friendly cats. All healthy community cats, regardless of temperament, should be eligible to participate in these programs. If a community cat appears to be healthy, he is likely being cared for by someone. Shelter policies that dictate that all friendly community cats be adopted rather than returned can have a harmful impact on a shelter's lifesaving capacity, as well as a deleterious effect on the community, because resources are invested in adopting out cats who already are well cared for. In addition, removing friendly cats from neighborhoods diverts resources that could be used to provide positive outcomes for cats already in the shelter. For more information, see the appendix in Chapter 20, "Returning Cats."

Accidental trapping of wildlife. It's not unheard of to accidentally trap wildlife while trapping cats. You should release any wildlife exactly where the animal was trapped, as soon as possible, according to the following guidelines. Like all animals, wildlife can carry zoonotic diseases. And because most of us are unfamiliar with releasing wildlife, use additional care when releasing raccoons, skunks or opossums from traps. Traps with front and rear doors can be gently overturned using a long stick, thereby allowing an animal to walk right out. This is generally the preferred method for releasing any wildlife accidentally caught while trapping cats. If this is not an option, try the alternative methods described below.

If you are bitten, do not release the animal. Contact your local rabies control authority (typically the same agency as your local animal care and control) for direction as to what to do next. It may include impounding the animal for rabies observation.

Raccoons: For traps with both front and rear doors, stand behind the trap as you would to release a cat, and have the trap pointed toward bushes or some other cover that will allow the raccoon to hide. When you lift the rear door, the raccoon will probably run straight out of the trap. For traps with only a front door, thread a length of rope or something similar (e.g., rolled-up trap cover) through the handle at the bottom of the trap door, holding both ends in one hand. Using the other hand, push the top of the trap door in while pulling on the rope and stepping slowly backward (behind the trap). Never use your hands to lift the door.

Skunks: Always talk softly to a trapped skunk as you approach. Skunks have poor eyesight and need to hear you approaching in order not to be startled. Stop every few steps to give the skunk a chance to grow accustomed to your presence. If the skunk is nervous, she will warn you by stomping her front feet, so pay attention! If this happens, remain very still, giving the skunk 15 seconds or so to calm down. Again, proceed slowly and talk softly. The skunk can then be released using one of the methods described above.

Alternatively, you might try a method to make you feel more protected (though the chances of getting sprayed are actually greater). Cut holes in a trash bag for your arms and head and pull the bag over your clothes. Saturate a blanket or towel with water (to better absorb the skunk spray, if necessary), or even a plastic shower curtain or tarp, and hold it in front of you while you slowly approach the trapped skunk. Again, be sure to speak softly while approaching. Gently drape the blanket or towel over the trap, and release the skunk as described above.

Opossums: Like cats, opossums can be intimidating to people unfamiliar with them, hissing and showing their teeth when nervous. This behavior is generally more for show than anything else. Release an opossum just as you would a raccoon, though it's best to wait until after dark, as an opossum's vision is better in low-light conditions. Occasionally an opossum will get stuck in the trap by biting at the wire mesh. If this happens, call animal control or your local wildlife center for assistance. Cover the trap while waiting for help to arrive.

Selective trapping and hard-to-trap cats

Sometimes it seems as if you're able to trap every cat except the one you need to trap. Perhaps the cat is injured, or she's the one remaining cat in the group who has not been sterilized. In other situations, the challenge is *not* trapping a particular cat — a lactating mother, for instance, who you intend to trap (along with the kittens) only after her kittens are weaned. Thankfully, there are special tools and techniques to address such challenges.

Note: Kittens should be trapped individually, but they will sometimes follow one another (or their mother) into a trap. When trapping kittens, it's best to use either a drop trap (and transfer each kitten into a box trap) or use the stick-and-string method described below.



Photo courtesy of Christopher Crews

Because drop traps are not intended for holding or transporting cats, you must be prepared to immediately transfer cats caught in a drop trap into a box trap. Although the process is straightforward, it's recommended that you have a helper.

Placement of the drop trap. Although using a drop trap is pretty simple, proper setup — even for experienced trappers — requires some careful planning. As with trapping in general, such planning is an important investment for the success of a trapping job.

A drop trap must be set on flat ground (as gaps might allow a determined cat to escape by lifting the trap⁸), within clear sight of the trapper and with enough space to successfully transfer cats into a box trap. (These constraints obviously limit the drop trap's versatility; however, the benefits are worthwhile.) Place the box trap nearby, along with covers for both traps and a trap divider. Set up the drop trap as close to the cats' regular feeding site as conditions allow, propping it up on a wooden dowel, plastic bottle or something similar, to which 50 feet of cord has been attached.

Note: Because the design of drop traps varies, there are some important differences in how the trap itself is set. For the purposes of the next section, it's assumed that the trappers are familiar with and can properly set the type of drop trap being used.

Baiting the drop trap. Unlike trapping with box traps, you want to be generous with the food in case the target cat doesn't arrive until after other cats have eaten. Again, there's no right answer when it comes to the question of the best bait to use. Among those preferred by experienced trappers are tuna (in oil), sardines, and roasted or fried chicken, although some find that the cats prefer the food they're usually provided, and have better luck using that.

⁸ Some heavier traps are designed with gaps to minimize the risk of injuring tails caught under the trap's frame.

You want the target cat to walk into the drop trap as far as possible, so place the bowl of food under the trap midway along its “rear” side (the side farthest from you). It’s sometimes helpful to create a trail of food into the trap as well. If ants are a concern, use a non-toxic (e.g., baby powder or food-grade diatomaceous earth) ant repellent around the bowl of food.

Once the drop trap is baited, unwind the cord and move far enough away that the cats feel comfortable eating inside the trap. Be sure to face the drop trap head-on, as you want to be able to pull the “prop” out as quickly and cleanly as possible to avoid any jamming. It’s then time to wait.

Trapping and transfer. Don’t pull the cord until the target cat has settled into eating, with her back to you. If you pull the cord too soon — and she darts out before the trap hits the ground — she might be too frightened to return for several hours. It’s easy to get caught up in the excitement, but be patient. Often, cats will walk in and out of the trap, sniff around the perimeter of the trap or pace nervously, watching the trappers.

Once the target cat is fully beneath the trap and settled comfortably into eating, quickly pull the cord, dropping the trap over the cat (as well as any other cats eating at the time). Never drop the trap if cats are too close to the perimeter of the trap, as this can result in injury. Immediately cover the drop trap with a large sheet. Some trappers also place one or two box traps on top of the drop trap to weigh it down, preventing cats from lifting the trap. This can be especially important for home-built traps made of PVC tubing. Once the drop trap is covered, the cats are transferred, one by one, into box traps until the target cat is safely contained in a box trap.

When you drop the trap, any cats who aren’t caught will very likely scatter — and it may be some time before they return. It’s important, therefore, to make your first “drop” count, waiting until the target cat (or, in some cases, litter of kittens) is eating. If she sees other cats being trapped, she’ll only be that much more difficult to trap in the future! Once you’ve caught the target cat, you can reset the trap and try for others.

To transfer the cats into box traps, begin by placing the box trap so that its rear door is aligned with the door on the drop trap. With both traps held securely in place with bungee cords or, better yet, the help of an assistant, slowly lift both doors, allowing the cats — one at a time, if possible — to enter the box trap. After checking to ensure that there are no cats near either door, close and secure both doors. Repeat until the target cat is safely contained in a box trap of her own, after which non-target cats can be released. Be sure to have a trap divider on hand in case two cats enter the box trap together. (See the “Multiple cats in one trap” section above.)

When transferring cats from a drop trap, the goal is to trick them into thinking the box trap is their escape route. There are a couple ways to accomplish this:

1. Cover the box trap and then uncover the drop trap (making the box trap look like a hiding spot) or, alternatively, leave the box trap uncovered (making it appear to the cat as if it’s an escape route).
2. If trapping after dark, follow the steps described in (1) and then have a helper shine a flashlight into the box trap from the end farthest from the drop trap. The cats will often move in the direction of the light.

Stick-and-string (or bottle-and-string) technique. Like the drop trap, the stick-and-string technique can be very effective for singling out particular cats (e.g., an injured or ill cat, litter mates) or excluding others (e.g., a lactating mother who will be trapped after the kittens are weaned). Indeed, the basic principle involved is the same: The trapper manually triggers the trap only when a particular cat (or litter of kittens) is in the trap, excluding non-target cats.

The box trap is baited normally (as described above), but the front door is propped up using a wooden dowel, plastic bottle, roll of paper towels, or something similar, to which 50 feet of string or cord (e.g., clothesline) is attached. The trap should be positioned so that the trapper can clearly see when the target cat is at the back of the trap, and then pull the string. Never pull the string if you’re not sure the cat (tail included) is fully inside the trap.

Note: You might have to re-bait the trap frequently, as you wait for the target cat (and non-target cats take advantage of a free meal).

Once the target cat (or litter of kittens) is trapped, cover the trap quickly (if it wasn't already covered), and move it to a quiet area away from the other traps. If you've trapped more than one cat or kitten, you can separate them later using the method described above. (See the "Multiple cats in one trap" section above.)

Additional trapping tips

Experienced trappers have numerous tricks they use to improve their trapping success, lessons learned either through firsthand experience or from other trappers. Of course, there's no magic involved, and these techniques can be used quite effectively even by trappers with little or no experience.

Feeding inside traps. Cats can sometimes be too nervous to enter a box trap (with or without a cover), even when food has been withheld for 24 hours. If the trapping site is a location where traps can safely be left in place for a few days (e.g., a caregiver's backyard), try feeding the cats inside the traps — with both doors open — for a few days prior to the trapping job. Use bungee cords, tie wraps or something similar to securely hold each door open. The traps will essentially become temporary feeding stations. (When using this method, there's no need to withhold food prior to trapping, since the cats will have little fear of entering the traps.)

Once they're accustomed to eating inside the traps, the cats will be more likely to enter the traps when the doors are no longer tied open. Set the traps as you normally would, but don't make any other changes (e.g., placement, bait, cover or not) to their setup.

Note: If the traps cannot be left out continuously, you can use them for daily feeding and remove them afterward.

Side-by-side traps. You'll notice that some cats will circle the traps, interested in the food but still reluctant to walk into the trap. Placing two traps side-by-side but facing in opposite directions can be an effective way to lure such cats into a trap. As the cat circles around the back of the first trap he approaches, he walks into the entry of the trap placed beside it. Once you find this method to be successful in a particular location, remove trapped cats as you catch them and replace the trap with an empty one.

Spreading bait juices. Taking some of the juice from the trapping bait and smearing it near the traps on a vertical surface (e.g., a tree or the side of a building) a couple feet off the ground will carry the scent of the bait farther than if it's on the ground, because the wind will carry the scent along. This strategy helps particularly when the area where the cats are located is large.



Trapping kittens. Both drop traps and the stick-and-string technique can be very effective for trapping kittens, since the trapper can wait until all siblings — perhaps with the mother, too — are safely inside before trapping them. However, if you’ve already trapped the mother, she can be used to lure the kittens. Cover her trap and then place an empty trap (also covered) up against it so that the two traps are lined up end-to-end and the front door of the empty trap is open. The idea is to create a “tunnel” with the open door on one end and the mother cat on the other end; the only way the kittens can see the mother is through the second trap.

Note: The same technique can be used if the reverse situation occurs: You’ve trapped one or more of the kittens, and want to lure the siblings and/or mother cat.

When trapping lactating mothers and/or kittens, it’s important to remember that nursing kittens less than about four weeks old shouldn’t be away from their mother for more than four hours. For this reason, many trappers prefer to either trap young kittens along with their lactating mother, or wait until the kittens are weaned to trap them and — if not immediately, then soon thereafter — their mother.

In-trap care

It’s standard practice for Best Friends’ CCPs to drop off cats for surgery within 12–24 hours of trapping. Some programs recommend that cats be held in their traps for up to three days before and after surgery. Proper in-trap care is very important, to minimize stress on the cats and the likelihood that they will become ill.

Always use at least one trap divider when feeding and cleaning. This will prevent the cat from escaping and also ensure your safety. For an added measure of safety, use two dividers, each one threaded horizontally through the trap. (Dropping the dividers in through the top of the trap, as shown in the photo, might not prevent the cats from pushing past.)

Cats should be fed wet food twice daily, up until eight hours prior to surgery. Kittens under four months of age are at risk of developing hypoglycemia if they aren’t fed for eight hours, and should therefore be fed one to two ounces of canned food the morning of surgery. If the traps weren’t already lined with newspaper during the trapping, this should be done when the cats are brought to the pre-surgery holding area. Replace soiled or shredded newspapers as necessary.

To encourage a cat to move to one end of the trap for feeding or cleaning, lift the trap cover from the end of the trap you’re cleaning or using for feeding. (The rear door generally provides easier access, but there will likely be times when you need to access the trap through the front door.) Most unsocialized cats will prefer the covered end, allowing you to work in the uncovered end once the trap dividers are securely in place. However, some cats will see the uncovered end of the trap as an escape route and move to that end. Either way, you’ll know which end of the trap the cat prefers, and you can lift the appropriate end of the trap cover to give yourself the necessary workspace. (You might have to use one of the dividers to gently nudge the cat. Never use your hands to poke or push the cat.)

If multiple caregivers will be providing in-trap care, it’s a good idea to create a log for each cat. The log will help caregivers to coordinate efforts and monitor any health concerns, both before and after surgery. (An example of an in-trap care log is included in the appendix.)

Caution: Cats can die of hypothermia or heat stroke during pre-surgery holding and post-surgery recovery. Remember this simple rule-of-thumb: If it’s too hot or cold for you, then it’s too hot or cold for the cats. Be careful about leaving cats in traps on the ground or the floor, as these surfaces can be much hotter or colder than the air temperature. If possible, keep the cats raised above the ground or floor, even if it’s only on long pieces of lumber.

Post-trapping

Cleaning and disinfecting the traps. Once the cats have been returned (see Chapter 19, “Post-surgery Recovery,” and Chapter 20, “Returning Cats”) to the location from which they were trapped, the traps and trap dividers must be cleaned and disinfected. Start by using a scrub brush (and, if necessary, hot water) to remove all food, paper and feces. To disinfect the equipment, many trappers use a solution of diluted chlorine bleach (10 parts water and one part bleach), as this is effective, inexpensive and readily available. Using a sponge, rag or sprayer, apply the bleach solution and allow it to sit for 10 minutes before rinsing it off. (Never leave the solution on the traps, as it will corrode any exposed metal.)

Alternatives for disinfecting equipment include Clorox Germicidal Bleach, a commercial cleaner available online, and various accelerated hydrogen peroxide–based disinfectants (e.g., Rescue, which require just five minutes to be effective.

Disinfectants work best when applied to freshly contaminated surfaces, so disinfectant your equipment as soon as you’re done using it. Never store traps in the “set” (front door open) position, and keep them out of rain and snow. Some trappers put the traps out in the sun, as ultraviolet light can render some pathogens inactive. However, this practice should not be used in place of disinfectants, only as an additional step.

Using bleach, wash the trap covers, as well as any other sheets, blankets and towels that were used for trapping. Do not use fabric softener.

Ongoing trapping and area maintenance. It’s critical to sterilize all cats in a location — and this goal is rarely achieved after just one trapping job. Trapping as many cats as possible the first time out is preferable to doing two or three at a time, though, as small, frequent trapping attempts can lead to a group of trap-shy cats. Do any necessary “cleanup” trapping as soon as possible following your initial effort. (See the “Selective trapping and hard-to-trap cats” section above for additional information on this topic.)

Finally, contact the caregivers 24–48 hours after the cats are returned to ensure that the cats are doing well (e.g., no post-surgery complications, eating as usual). (See Chapter 9, “Community Cat Management and Caregiver Resources,” for more information on this topic.)

Additional resources

- [Solutions to Cat-Related Issues](#)
- [Conflict Resolution for the Animal Welfare Field](#)
- [Best Friends’ humane deterrents video](#)
- [Drop Trap Design Bank](#)
- [Alley Cat Allies’ Community Cat Colony Tracking System](#)
- *Animal Sheltering* magazine article: [Game Changers — Tips for Moving Past Stalemate in Your Cat-Trapping Efforts](#)
- [Cat Stats: A TNR program management tool](#)

APPENDIX

Trap cover sewing pattern and instructions (for use with Tomahawk Live Trap models 608FN and 608NC)

How to Make Cat Trap Covers



TOOLS:

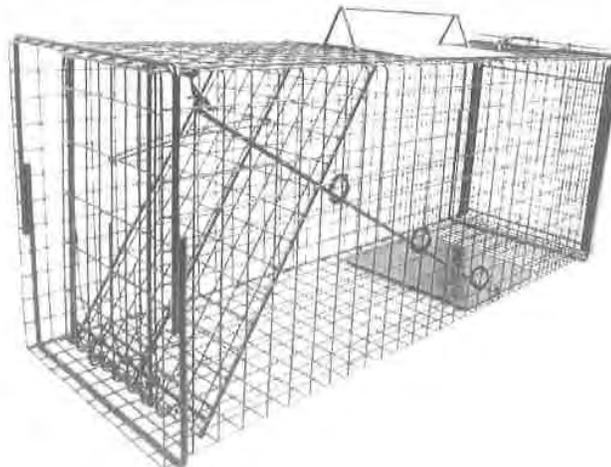
- 1 single needle sewing machine
- 1 pair of paper scissors
- 1 pair of fabric scissors
- 1 box of fabric pins OR fabric weights (can of tuna works)
- 1 No 2 pencil
- 1 fabric pen, chalk (you can use the pencil too)
- 1 yard stick OR ruler
- (if you don't like scissors you can use a rotary tool and a cutting mat)

MATERIAL:

Paper: Roll of butcher paper, roll of brown shipping paper, cardboard, or scratch paper taped together to make a large sheet. Be creative, this will be for the pattern.

Fabric: used bedsheets, towels, shower curtains, etc

Thread spool: the industrial size spools if you can get it, polyester is best



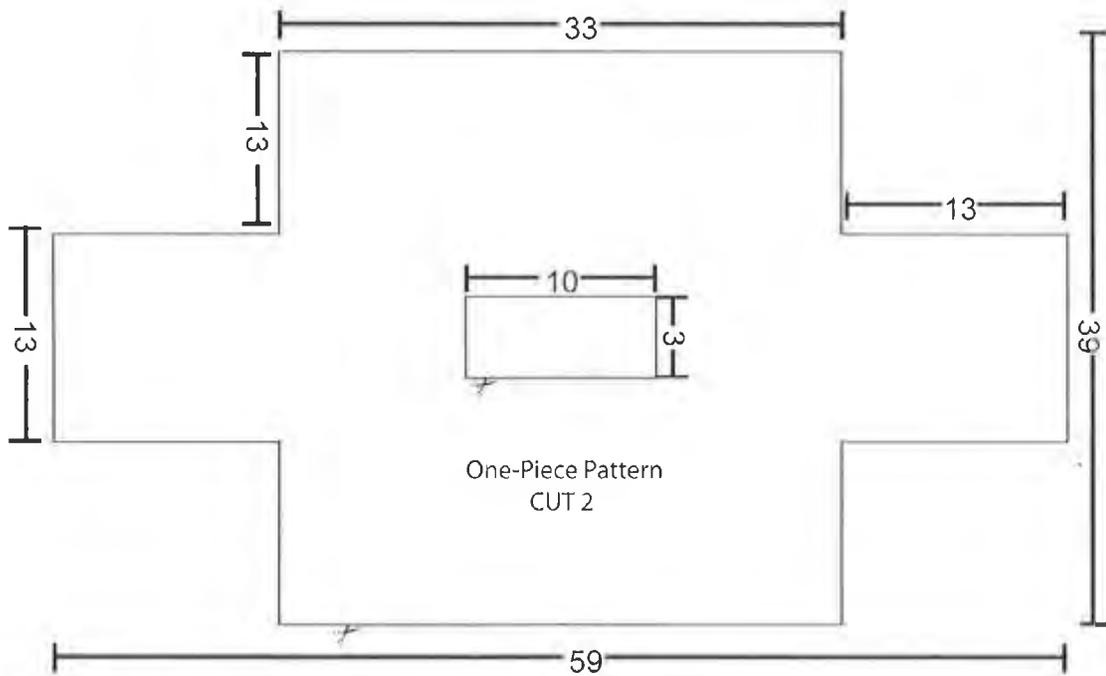
How to Make Cat Trap Covers



STEP 1: DRAFT PATTERN

One-Piece Pattern

Follow the diagram with the measurements to draft your pattern. This is not to scale.



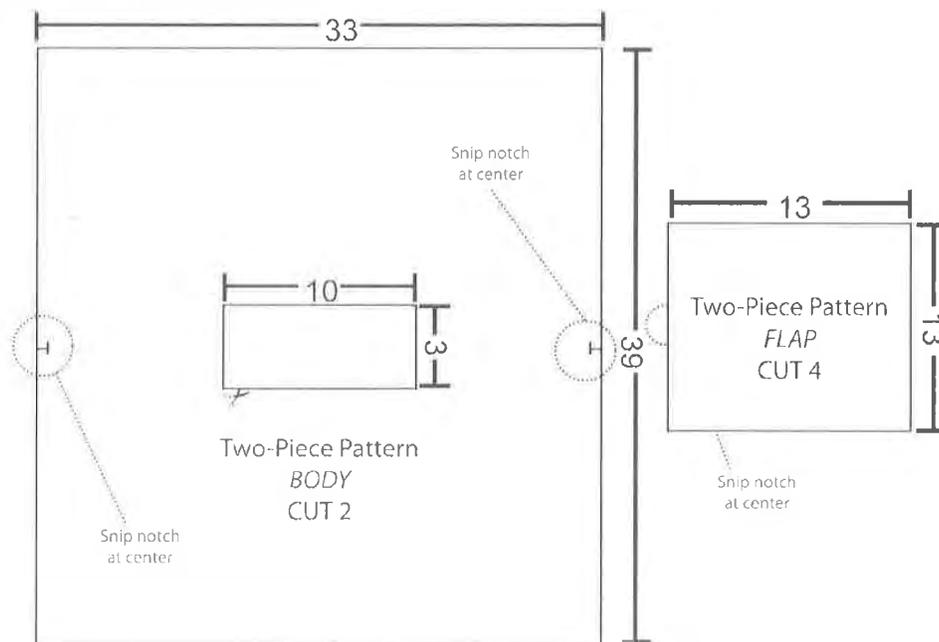
How to Make Cat Trap Covers



STEP 1: DRAFT PATTERN (continued)

Two-Piece Pattern

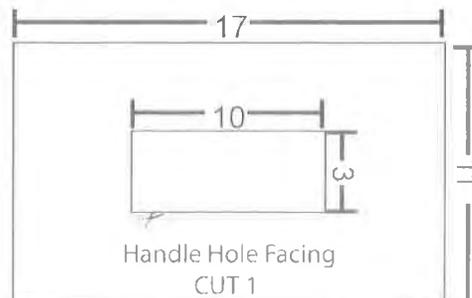
Follow the diagrams with the measurements to draft your pattern. This is not to scale. Make sure you make notches. If you do not have a notcher, fold the paper and cut a v-shape, this will help with tracing later.



Facing

The facing pattern is for the hole of the trap handle and is meant to be used with towels, where a handle hole has been cut in the middle of the towel.

Follow the diagrams with the measurements to draft your pattern.



How to Make Cat Trap Covers



STEP 2: CUTTING FABRIC

Before starting please wash all fabric, remove from dryer immediately to prevent any wrinkles. This will save time if you don't want to iron anything.

- (a) Lay fabric flat, face to face, smoothing out any wrinkles, follow the rules for folded edges & hemmed edges under "Cutting Rules"
- (b) Place pattern on the fabric and trace it with fabric chalk or fabric pen, a pencil works as well. Do not use a Sharpie, not only will it leak through the fabric onto your cutting surface, it will also ruin your pattern. Use weights or pins if needed.
- (c) Pin and cut within the traced line, the straighter you cut the easier it will be to sew later. Pins can be substituted for weights.
- (d) Fold each cut set, for ease of sewing later, its best to fold each set together.

One-Piece Pattern
Cover (Cut 2)

Example:

Cut 2 – Body, bedsheet A & B

Two-Piece Pattern
Body (Cut 2)
Flap (Cut 4)

Example:

Cut 2 – Body, bedsheet A & B

Cut 4 - Flap, bedsheet A & B

How to Make Cat Trap Covers



STEP 2: CUTTING FABRIC (continued)

Cutting Rules:

Cut as straight as possible

Match edges as precisely as possible

Place folded edges along the length of the pattern

Place hemmed edges along the length of the pattern

For pillow cases, place the pattern at a corner with cut edges to be at one side and the top that connects to the body of the cover

ALWAYS ALIGN PATTERNS PARRALEL WITH THE FABRIC EDGE. In other words the length of the pattern should align with the length of the fabric, do not skew it, this will cause the fabric to stretch during the sewing process.

How to Make Cat Trap Covers



STEP 2: CUTTING FABRIC (continued)

Bedsheets, thin fabric

Bedsheets are the easiest to sew. When choosing fabrics, make sure both sheets are of similar weight and stretch for each trap cover. When you use similar fabrics in one cover, the sewing will go by much faster. For example, do not use a thin light weight polyester fabric with a medium weight 100 % cotton sheet, the stretch may be different and may cause difficulty when sewing later.

Example, Two piece pattern:
 Cut 2 – Body, bedsheet A & B
 Cut 4 - Flap, bedsheet A & B

Towels

Please refer to the facing pattern for the handle. Towels can be used as is as long as they cover the majority of the trap. To make the trapping process a little easier, cut a hole for the handle using your pattern. In a thinner fabric cut the facing for the handle.

Example, towel with facing:
 Cut 1 - Towel with handle hole
 Cut 1 – Facing for the handle hole

Old Blankets, thick fabrics

If you want to use old blankets you should cut one using a thicker fabric and cut one using a thinner fabric (bed sheet).

Example, One piece pattern:
 Cut 1 – Body of cover, blanket
 Cut 1 – Body of cover, bed sheet

How to Make Cat Trap Covers

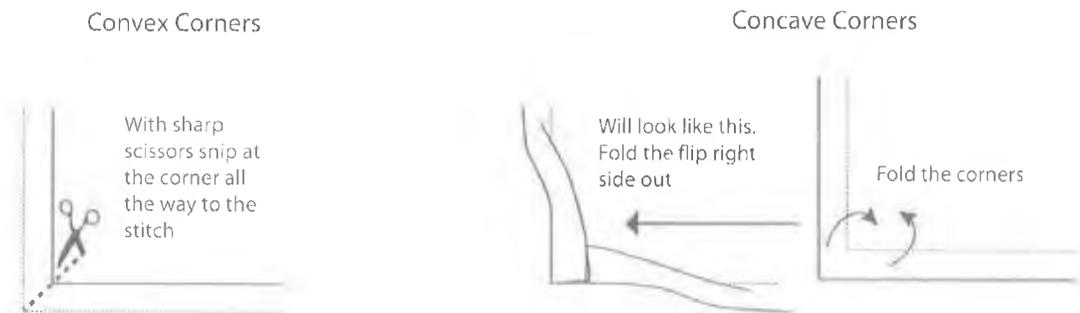


STEP 3: SEWING

One-Piece Patterns:

- (1) Sew with $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance all around, pivot at corners. Leave 10" opening on one side
- (2) Prepare corners (see Figure 1)
 - (a) Fold convex corners
 - (b) Snip to points at concave corners
- (3) Flip cover
- (4) From 10" opening pull handle hole while holding the seams as if finished, sew all around with $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance. Pivot at corners reducing stitch length to size-1 (or smaller). See Page 10 for more details.
- (5) Snip corners of handle hole, flip
- (6) Iron cover if desired
- (7) Sew $\frac{1}{4}$ " top stitch all around cover and handle holes
- (8) DONE (see Figure 2)

Figure 1



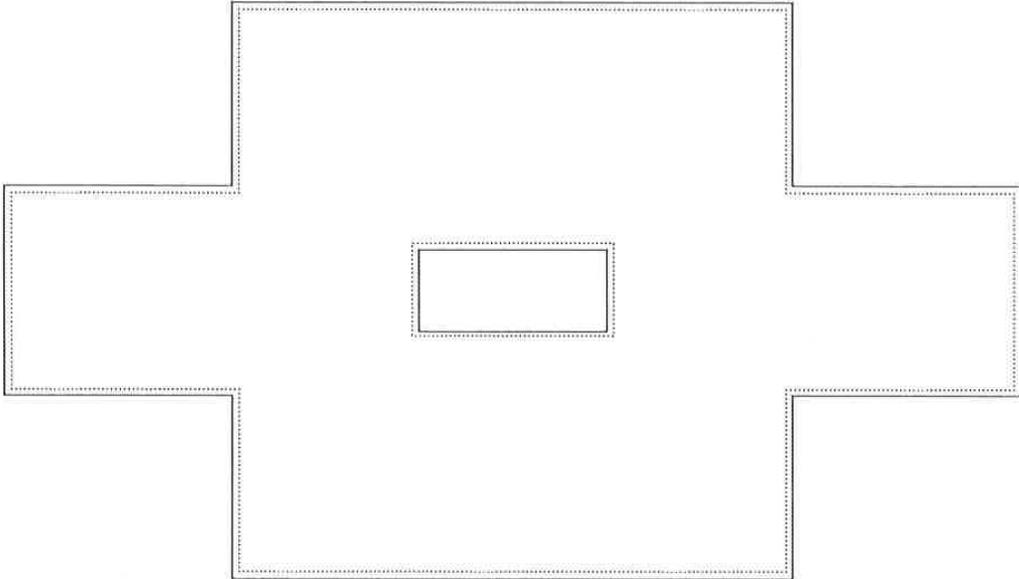
How to Make Cat Trap Covers



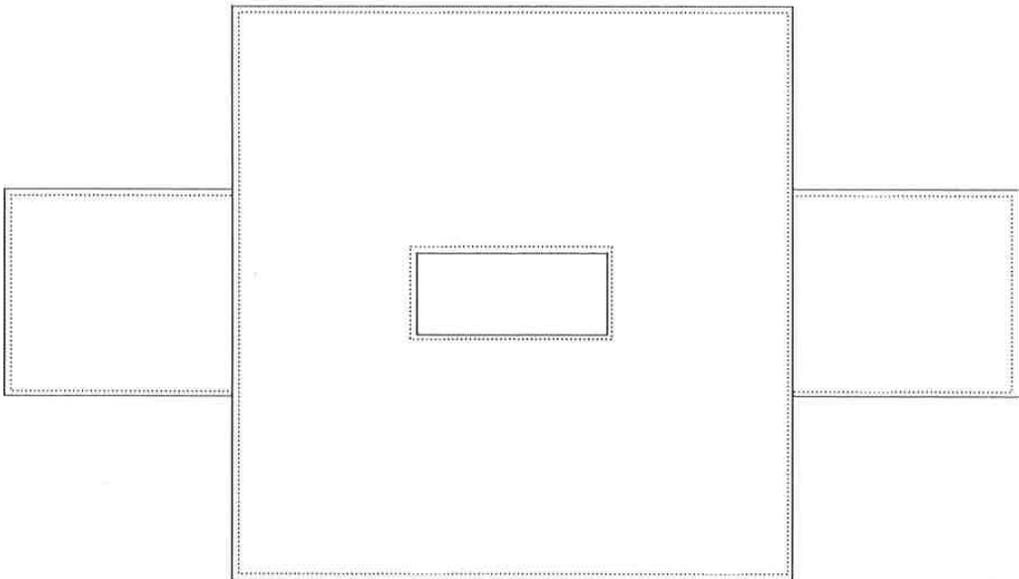
STEP 3: SEWING (continued)

Figure 2

Finished Cover made from One-Piece Pattern



Finished Cover made from Two-Piece Pattern



How to Make Cat Trap Covers

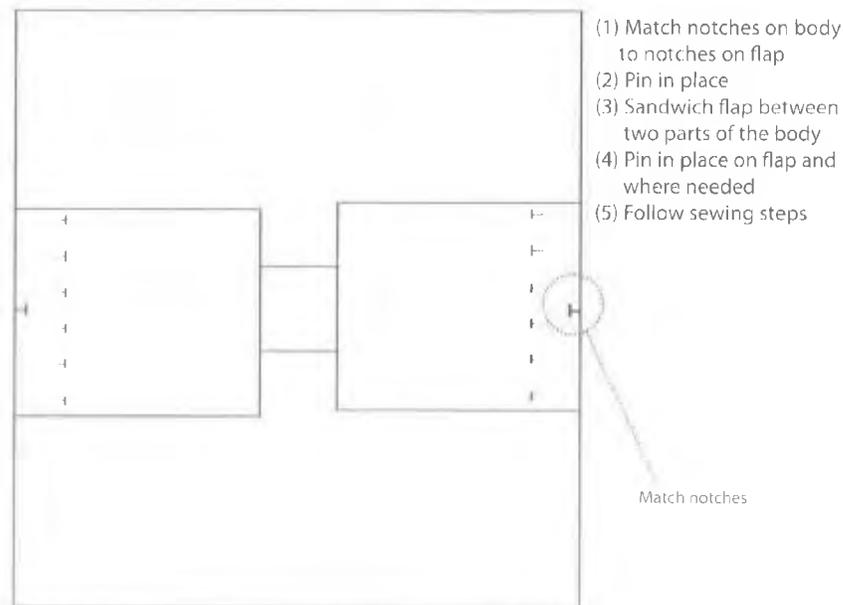


STEP 3: SEWING (continued)

Two-Piece Pattern

- (1) Start with the Flaps, place fabric face to face, sew on three sides with $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance (sides without the notch)
- (2) Fold corners, flip flaps, sew $\frac{1}{4}$ " top stitch on the same three sides
- (3) For Body place fabric face to face, match notches on body to the notch on the flaps, pin flaps in place (see Figure 3)
- (4) After pinning, sew $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance all around, pivot at corners, leave 10" opening.
- (5) Fold corners, flip
- (6) From 10" opening pull handle hole while holding the seams as if finished, sew all around with $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance. Pivot at corners reducing stitch length to size-1 (or smaller). See Page 10 for more details.
- (7) Snip corners of handle hole, flip
- (8) Iron cover if desired
- (9) Sew $\frac{1}{4}$ " top stitch all around body and handle holes
- (10) DONE (see Figure 2)

Figure 3



How to Make Cat Trap Covers



STEP 3: SEWING (continued)

Basic Handle Holes

These instructions provide further details than listed above, with a step-by-step breakdown

This is a long lasting method, intermediate to advanced level.

- (1) Once you have sewn the body of the cover and have flipped it, make sure the opening of the handle hole is aligned
- (2) Through the 10" opening, grab the raw edges of handle hole as if finished, make sure the corners match. Pin if needed
- (3) Sew with $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance (advance sewers can sew at $\frac{1}{4}$ ")
- (4) Pivot at corners reducing stitch length to size-1 (or smaller)
- (5) Snip at corners, flip cover right side out
- (6) DONE

Handle Hole Facing

These are the handle hole sewing steps for those who want to do a facing instead

This is a long lasting method, intermediate level.

- (1) Place the handle hole facing on to the cover, face to face, making sure that the squares are aligned. Pin if needed.
- (2) Sew $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance all around, pivot at corners, reducing stitch length to size-1 (or smaller)
- (3) Snip to the stitch at corners (see Figure 3)
- (4) Flip facing to opposite side, iron if desired
- (5) Top stitch with $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance
- (6) DONE (see Figure 4)

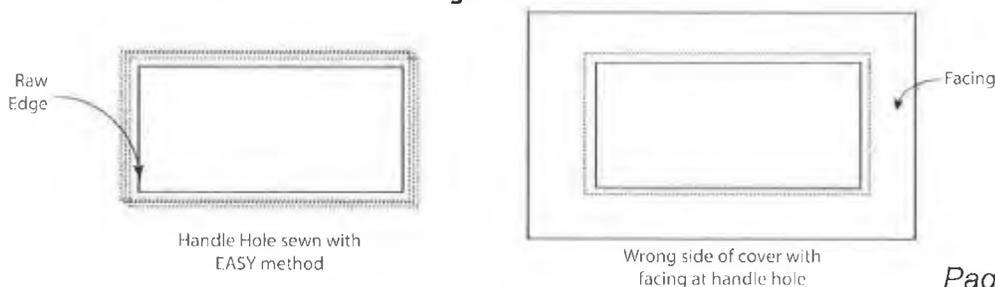
EASY Handle Holes

The steps listed above may be too advance or confusing for you. Here is the easy no-brainer way

This is not as long lasting as the previous method, but fast and easy.

- (1) After flipping, ironing, and topstitching the cover, make sure the handle hole matches perfectly
- (2) Using a single needle OR zigzag, topstitch the handle hole with $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. Make two to three passes
- (3) DONE (see Figure 4)

Figure 4



Page 10

How to Make Cat Trap Covers



STEP 4: LABELS (Optional)

To ensure that the cat trap covers you lovingly made are kept with the cat traps, the covers should be labeled.

Below is a list of iron-on transfer sheets listed alphabetically by brand. You can find these types of products online at Amazon and Ebay and at brick & mortar stores like Michael's and Joann's, local art & craft stores may also have other brands not listed (Swains, Blue Rooster). I prefer the opaque white sheets meant for darker fabrics, they absorb the ink much better than their transparent counterparts and last much longer through many washes.

Avery: Personal Creations InkJet Iron-On Dark T-Shirt Transfers, White

Epson: Iron-On Inkjet Transfer, White

Jane Tailor: Dark T-Shirt Transfer, Iron-On Transfer Sheets

Transfer Magic: Ink Jet Transfer to Dark, Transfer Paper For Dark Fabrics

World Paper: Jet-Opaque II Iron on Heat Transfer Paper/Dark Color 8.5x11

World Paper: 3G Jet Opaque Inkjet Heat Transfer Paper 8.5x11

Once you've purchased your transfer sheets please print the last page included in this PDF. Follow the instructions on the transfer sheet package. I prefer to place my labels on one of the corners, but placement is at your discretion.
Have fun!

Example of trap loan agreement



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
ANIMAL CARE SERVICES
 4710 State Highway 151 San Antonio, Texas 78227
 Office: (210) 207-6696
 Fax: (210) 207-6673
www.saacs.net

TRAP NO#:

ACS COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAM - TRAP LOAN AGREEMENT AND GUIDELINES

Community Cat Program Trapping Guidelines:

1. Traps must be monitored every 2 hours during day time and 8 hours during nighttime.
2. Cats must be provided food, water and clean paper every 12 hours
3. Cats must be held in a humane environment during trapping, holding, and transportation to and from ACS.
 Traps lined with paper and covered with a towel.

_____ I have been provided with a copy of the Humane Trapping Instructions & the Post Surgical Instructions

ACS Trap Rental Guidelines:

1. Maintain control and know whereabouts of trap at all times.
2. Do not loan trap or remove ACS identification card.
3. Do not attempt to trap wildlife. Wildlife may not be relocated and must be released back.
4. Return trap to ACS during CCP hours: _____
5. Contact ACS immediately if trap is damaged or stolen.

Reason for renting the trap:

--

TRAPPER INFORMATION: Please ensure accurate information

Owner's Name:		Phone:	
Street Address:	City/State:	Zip:	
Email:		Drivers License:	

PAYEE AGREEMENT

By signing below, I agree to pay the \$75 that will be billed to me should I fail to return the traps to ACS within 60 days or within 72 hours of demand. Failure to pay within designated timeframe may result in the debt being turned over to a collection agency. I have given correct contact information and will update my information by calling 210-207-6696 or emailing ccp@sanantonio.gov.

Furthermore, a citation may be issued, resulting in court fees and citation fees owed to the City of San Antonio. These fees will be in addition to debt incurred through this payment agreement with Animal Care Services.

Owner's Signature:	Date:
---------------------------	--------------

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Payment Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Denied	By:	Date:
PERSON ID:	SAP Customer:	
SAP COSA#:	SAP Document#:	

REVISED 8/2013

Example of in-trap care log



Daily Care Log

Trap no. _____ Trapper/org _____ Date trapped _____ Location _____

Physical description of cat

Sex: M F Age: Adult Adolescent Kitten

Color: Black White B&W Gray Brown Orange Buff Other _____

Pattern: Tuxie Tortie Tabby Spotted Calico Other _____

Coat Length: Short Medium Long

Medical Information

Date of surgery _____ Date of vaccination(s) _____ Meds / other notes _____

Day and date	Intake of food (wet, dry, how much, etc.)	Urine and BM (normal, diarrhea, blood, etc.)	Observations/notes	Caregiver initials
..... a.m.
..... p.m.
..... a.m.
..... p.m.
..... a.m.
..... p.m.
..... a.m.
..... p.m.
..... a.m.
..... p.m.



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 17 CCP Operations: Guidelines to Consider

Guidelines to Consider

Introduction

Some cats are identified as eligible for return-to-field (RTF) when they enter the shelter or during daily rounds in the shelter. Other cats are found in the community as a result of calls from concerned citizens and door-to-door neighborhood canvassing.

Each CCP is different, of course, with policies and practices appropriate for its particular context. Nevertheless, there are a number of factors that every CCP must consider carefully in order to maximize lifesaving efforts. This chapter provides an overview of guidelines to consider based on the policies and practices from our experience.

The intake process

Cats enter the program in one of the following ways:

- Shelter intake (e.g., field services officers or residents turning in cats who they believe are strays)
- Trapping efforts conducted by staff and volunteers
- Residents bringing cats either to the shelter or to CCP partner veterinary clinics



Again, the details of how each CCP handles these different intake routes will vary. However, the basic steps involved are generally similar.

Intake forms. If the cat comes through the shelter intake process as a perceived stray, the individual bringing the cat in may be asked to complete a standard intake form, which documents critical information about the cat (e.g., description of the cat, location where he was found) and provides information about any other cats at the cat's location. Accurate intake information is critical when making TNVR arrangements. Field services officers, shelter staff and veterinary staff at partner clinics may or may not use a standard intake form, but will generally record much of the same information. Regardless of the form(s) used, it's very important that this critical information is captured at the time a cat first enters the shelter and/or CCP system. (See the appendix for an example of an intake form.)

It's also very important that each cat be scanned for a microchip during intake, and that every effort is made to locate the owners of microchipped cats.

Database entry. Information from the intake form must be transferred to a database, which will then be used to track the cat until an outcome is finalized. The cat will be assigned a unique identification number at this time. The database will also be used to generate periodic reports documenting a CCP's performance. (See Chapter 22, "Data and Statistics," for additional information.)

ID card. Key information (e.g., cat identification number, trap number, intended outcome) is recorded on an ID card, which is then attached to the trap. (There's an example of an ID card in the appendix.) The ID card will be associated with that cat throughout the rest of the intake process, surgery (perhaps via a paper collar) and recovery. This procedure ensures that cats are not mixed up. Note: In some cases, this information is recorded on a clinic form, which then accompanies the cat through the process. (See the clinic form example in the appendix.)

Evaluation. Staff will evaluate each cat based on eligibility criteria (see below) and recommend appropriate outcomes accordingly.

Holding area. Once a cat has been evaluated and determined to be eligible for the CCP, she is placed in a covered trap in a quiet, temperature-controlled holding area to await surgery. In some programs, surgeries are performed at the shelter, in which case cats are housed at the shelter before surgery (and afterward, during recovery). Otherwise, surgeries are performed off-site at partner clinics. In such programs, cats are housed in a dedicated area for CCP cats. The same area is often used for post-surgery recovery, although some partner clinics provide space within their clinics for this purpose.

For additional information, please see Chapter 18, “Housing Cats and Kittens.”

Eligibility

Every eligible cat who comes through Best Friends’ CCPs is sterilized, given rabies and FVRCP vaccines,¹ ear-tipped, treated for any detectable medical needs and returned to the location where he or she was trapped. Cats eligible for the program must be:

1. Free-roaming and lacking a traceable microchip
2. Of a healthy weight (a good indicator that they have someone in their neighborhood feeding and caring for them) and injury-free (as determined by our veterinary staff²)

Please see Chapter 11, “Working Toward Positive Outcomes,” for more information on this topic.

Role of field services officers

Field services officers (often called animal control officers or ACOs) typically find themselves on the “front lines” (e.g., fielding complaint calls, addressing nuisance complaints in the field) of animal control activities. In some communities, field services staff don’t pick up healthy cats, since many communities have no legal requirement for shelters to admit and care for such cats. However, this practice varies by community. Actively impounding cats can sometimes be at odds with the basic philosophy and approach of some CCPs.

Some CCPs require that the only cats impounded by field services staff are unhealthy and/or injured. Similarly, any healthy ear-tipped cats captured by field services staff should be released immediately. Of course, exceptions (e.g., an ear-tipped cat whose welfare is seriously threatened due to specific circumstances) will occur, though there should be few of these. In some cases, field services staff provide transport for CCP cats, in which case the cats are considered spay/neuter patients rather than impounds.

Commercial trappers

In many communities, it’s possible to find pest control or wildlife removal companies that will remove free-roaming cats for a fee. Cats caught by these commercial trappers are often brought to the local shelter, where, like so many cats (especially those determined to be feral), they don’t have a positive outcome.

However, shelters are typically under no obligation to accept cats from commercial trappers, and doing so is incompatible with CCP philosophy.



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc. and Sherrie Buzby Photography

¹ The FVRCP vaccine, sometimes called the distemper vaccine, protects against feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and panleukopenia (also known as feline distemper).

² Injured cats are treated by veterinary staff and returned only after sufficient recovery.

Cats in traps

Agencies often loan traps to residents participating in the CCP and will provide any necessary training as well. Some CCPs allow residents to bring trapped cats only to our partner veterinary clinics, while other programs allow trapped cats to be taken to the shelter for surgery (not for impound).

Cats brought to the clinics will obviously be recognized as CCP cats. For cats brought into the shelter, however, it's very important that they are clearly designated as CCP cats and treated accordingly. Historically, some shelters have automatically assumed that cats in traps were feral, which often meant a shorter holding time and a poor chance of a positive outcome at the shelter. Many shelters accept cats in traps for the purpose of TNVR.



It's best if RTF is sought for all cats brought to the shelter in traps. And the intake of such cats should also serve as an indication that more cats are likely in need of sterilization at or near the trapping location, thus triggering a prompt response (e.g., trapping, distributing door hangers, tabling) from staff. For additional information, please see Chapter 8, "Community Outreach and Engagement."

Intervention programs

By offering various forms of assistance (e.g., dog or cat food, consultation regarding pet behavior issues), shelter-based intervention programs can be very effective at helping people keep their pets rather than surrendering them to the local shelter. Such programs are becoming increasingly common in communities across the country and offer an opportunity to save the lives of community cats as well. For example, residents may be surrendering a litter of kittens or young cats born to a stray they've been feeding. Again, such instances should trigger a prompt response (e.g., trapping, distributing door hangers, tabling) from staff. For additional information, please see Chapter 8, "Community Outreach and Engagement."

Surrender fees

Some shelters that allow residents to surrender cats in traps charge a fee for the service, in an attempt to deter such costly practices (both in terms of lives and tax dollars). While these fees are most likely effective at reducing intake, they may not increase overall lifesaving in a community. The same cats might end up in a nearby shelter that has no surrender fee, or residents who learn of the fee only after they've trapped a cat might choose to dump the cat across town instead — a clear violation of animal cruelty statutes prohibiting abandonment.

For residents frustrated with cats on their property but unwilling to pay for their removal, the CCP's free services might be a very appealing alternative. TNVR is a viable solution to the problems that residents are having, as well as a long-term solution that everyone can support. See Chapter 23, "How to Address Various Complaints," for additional information.

Neonatal kittens

Historically, kittens too young to eat on their own usually would not have had a positive outcome if brought to a shelter, because they demand more resources than shelters can typically provide. This is especially true during kitten season, when resources are stretched even thinner than usual. Leaving newborn kittens outdoors with their mothers gives them the best chance of survival.

Although the practice of newborn kittens being impounded is unfortunately still the case in many shelters, more and more shelters are creating networks of foster homes and shoring up resources for

temporary kitten care until foster homes can be found. These programs, some of which (depending on their scale) can be implemented with surprisingly little in the way of facilities or equipment, can contribute significantly to overall lifesaving. Such programs are also enormously popular with staff, volunteers, the public and the media.

For additional information, see Chapter 24, “Saving Kittens” and Chapter 26, “Additional Cat Lifesaving Programs.”

Additional resources

- [Best Friends’ community cats page](#)
- [FAQs About Trap-Neuter-Return \(TNR\)](#)
- [What to Do If You Find Kittens](#)

APPENDIX

Intake form example

XXXX Shelter Stray Cat Intake Form

Full address where cat was found. Must be complete address, not just cross streets.

--

Is this address the exact address or best guess?

 Exact

 Best Guess

This address is (check all that apply):

A Yard	Private Residence	Alley	Vacant Lot
A Business	Apartment Complex	Abandoned Building	A Park

Other information about this location: _____

Does this cat live:

 Indoors

 Outdoors

 Both

 Unknown

Have you seen any other cats or kittens near this address?

 Yes

 No

If so, how many?

 Under 10

 Over 10

 20 or more

Do you feel as though they are causing a nuisance on your block?

 Yes

 No

If yes, please describe: _____

Has the cat shown signs of sickness or injury?

 Yes

 No

If yes, please describe _____

Do you know if this cat has nursing kittens?

 Yes

 No

Do you know if anyone owns this cat?

 Yes

 No

If yes, who? _____

Do you know if anyone is/has recently been feeding or providing spay/neuter for any cats?

 Yes

 No

If yes, who? _____

By signing below, you understand that you are forfeiting this cat to the care of the XXXXX Animal Shelter. At the shelter's discretion, the following outcomes are possible for this animal: adoption, transfer to a rescue group, sterilization/return to the original location, or humane euthanasia if deemed necessary. You may be contacted by a shelter staff person or representative for additional information.

Signature:	Date:
Name:	Phone:
Address:	Email:

Staff use only below:

Intake Staff:	AID#	Outcome type:	Outcome Date:	Release Staff:
---------------	------	---------------	---------------	----------------

For reference any other AID#s related to this cat are listed below (i.e. mom/babies or cats from same colony)

ID card example



Identification Card

Trap no. _____ Trapper/org _____ Date trapped _____ Location _____

Physical description of cat

Sex: M F Age: Adult Adolescent Kitten

Color: Black White B&W Pattern: Tuxie Tortie Coat Length: Short
 Gray Brown Orange Tabby Spotted Medium
 Buff Other _____ Calico Other _____ Long



Identification Card

Trap no. _____ Trapper/org _____ Date trapped _____ Location _____

Physical description of cat

Sex: M F Age: Adult Adolescent Kitten

Color: Black White B&W Pattern: Tuxie Tortie Coat Length: Short
 Gray Brown Orange Tabby Spotted Medium
 Buff Other _____ Calico Other _____ Long



Identification Card

Trap no. _____ Trapper/org _____ Date trapped _____ Location _____

Physical description of cat

Sex: M F Age: Adult Adolescent Kitten

Color: Black White B&W Pattern: Tuxie Tortie Coat Length: Short
 Gray Brown Orange Tabby Spotted Medium
 Buff Other _____ Calico Other _____ Long



Identification Card

Trap no. _____ Trapper/org _____ Date trapped _____ Location _____

Physical description of cat

Sex: M F Age: Adult Adolescent Kitten

Color: Black White B&W Pattern: Tuxie Tortie Coat Length: Short
 Gray Brown Orange Tabby Spotted Medium
 Buff Other _____ Calico Other _____ Long

Clinic form example



COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAM
Best Friends Animal Society Clinic
 Kanab, Utah 84741
 Clinic: 435-644-2001 ext: 4210
 Community Cat Program: 435-644-4469

Drug dose here

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____
 State: _____ Zip: _____ Contact #: _____

Cat Info

Is this cat a: Pet Shelter Community Cat Carrier or Trap# _____
 Has this cat had any vaccinations? Yes No Unknown Breed _____
 If yes, what and when: Combo Rabies Date: _____ Color _____
 Age _____

Consent for Surgical Sterilization

I hereby request and authorize Best Friends Animal Society through whomever veterinarians and assistants they may designate to perform an operation for the sterilization of the animal described on this admission form.

I understand that the operation presents some hazards and that injury to or death of such animal may conceivably result; for there is some risk in the procedure and the use of anesthetics and drugs used in providing this service.

I understand that Best Friends Animal Society has the right to refuse service to any animal to whom surgery is deemed a health risk.

I hereby release Best Friends Animal Society, the veterinarian, assistants and all of its officers, directors, employees and members of its staff from any and all claims arising out of or connected with the performance of this operation or procedure and/or any transport of the animal. I agree that I have not or will not claim any right of compensation from them, or any of them, or file action by reason of such sterilization of such animal or any consequences related thereto.

Signature _____ Date _____

All cats will receive a small ear tip unless otherwise approved.

MEDICAL USE ONLY	
<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px; text-align: center;"> Vaccine stickers here </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Medical findings</p> <p>In Heat <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant <input type="checkbox"/> Lactating <input type="checkbox"/> Cryptorchid <input type="checkbox"/> Already Fixed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Done <input type="checkbox"/> Reason: _____ Condition Noticed: _____ Medications: _____ Weight: _____ Other: _____</p>	<p>Vaccinations</p> <p>FVRCP (Combo) <input type="checkbox"/> Rabies <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Surgery performed</p> <p>Spay <input type="checkbox"/> Neuter <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Weight: _____ Ear tip: yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/></p>



Photo courtesy of Christopher Crews



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 18 CCP Operations: Housing Cats and Kittens

Housing Cats and Kittens

The appropriate housing of multiple cats and/or kittens is a challenge in any shelter environment, requiring that considerable attention be paid to the prevention and management of infectious disease. Even elevated stress levels can have severe health consequences. CCPs face these same challenges, since cats eligible for these programs are part of the overall sheltering system. For that reason, moving cats as quickly as possible through the system is always recommended. In the case of community cats, most can be returned to their neighborhoods 24 hours after surgery.

Because no two CCPs are alike, it's not possible to provide precise housing requirements. A program run solely out of a shelter will likely be able to take advantage of the existing facility's capacity, as well as the proximity of the intake, clinic and holding areas. A program relying largely on volunteers transporting cats to and from clinic appointments, on the other hand, might be housing cats and kittens at partner clinics and in the homes and garages of volunteers. Nevertheless, the basic considerations for appropriate housing are similar.



The following guidelines are therefore intended to provide CCP staff and volunteers with the basics, along with references to multiple resources that address various aspects of the topic in much greater detail.

Short-term housing

CCPs typically house cats being returned to their outdoor homes for no more than 48 hours, including pre-surgery holding and post-surgery recovery. This not only reduces the pressure on a shelter's capacity, but also minimizes the stress levels on all the animals (including non-CCP cats and dogs) potentially affected by crowded conditions. In such programs, cats are generally kept in their traps (always covered) before and after surgery.

This kind of an arrangement obviously permits a certain degree of flexibility where housing is concerned. Trapped cats could be kept at the shelter, on shelves in an area designated for CCP cats. Alternatively, they could be kept at partner clinics or with volunteers, who set aside space in a spare room, basement or garage (assuming certain conditions are met, as described below). Either way, the following factors must be taken into consideration.

Appropriate environment. The space must be dry, temperature-controlled (approximately 70°F), quiet and free of fumes. There should be no open windows or doors (in case a cat escapes from a trap) and no other animals should have access to trapped cats. Always ensure that the cat is secure in the trap by using a trap fork or divider when providing food or removing soiled newspaper.

Housing capacity. Before trapping, it's important to know how many cats a program can safely house, especially for those programs that rely heavily on volunteers' spare rooms or garages. Under such circumstances, it doesn't take much to affect the program's overall capacity — a volunteer on vacation, for example, or an outbreak of ringworm that renders a volunteer's home temporarily off-limits.

The same goes for shelter capacity. The number of cats a shelter can safely house may affect how many cats should be trapped and brought into the shelter for surgery at a time. However, having a large surgical capacity at the shelter or partner clinics can aid in this, as higher surgery capacity can lead to quicker

turnaround time and shorter length of stay for the cats in the facilities. It's best, of course, to have excess capacity built into the program, thereby minimizing the chances that such disruptions affect operations.

Illness and infectious disease. Unvaccinated cats — and especially kittens — are at high risk of contracting and spreading diseases when housed in close quarters. Feline panleukopenia and feline calicivirus are life-threatening and can be easily spread by improper handling and cleaning techniques. Feline rhinotracheitis (i.e., upper respiratory infection), feline leukemia virus can be spread by direct and/or indirect contact (e.g., via contaminated gloves or clothing). Hands should be washed or gloves and other personal protective equipment should be changed or disinfected between contact with each animal. Barriers between cats who are housed in traps or trap covers should also be used to prevent the spread of illness and to reduce the cats' stress.

Zoonotic diseases — those that can be passed between animals and humans — should also be considered a risk. Examples include ringworm, rabies, bacterial infections, and parasites (e.g., *Toxoplasma gondii* and worms, and those transmitted by fleas, ticks and mites). Proper handling techniques (e.g., wearing gloves and changing them after handling each cat or washing your hands thoroughly after handling each cat and when cleaning traps or litter boxes) will greatly reduce such risks. (To minimize the risk to pets at home, it's recommended that staff and volunteers change clothes and shoes before returning home after their shift and keep pets away from community cats in traps.)

To prevent transmission of illness, sick cats should always be kept at a distance from healthy cats. This protocol is extremely important in situations when the cats being housed are not all from the same location.

Monitoring and in-trap care. For the most part, recovering cats should be left alone (and covered), but it's important that somebody check on them every hour or two, especially when they first regain consciousness and the anesthesia is wearing off (i.e., a few hours after surgery for adults). Signs of distress, including vomiting, bleeding, labored breathing or prolonged grogginess (more than 24 hours after surgery), require immediate veterinary assistance.

Once a cat's eyes no longer have a glazed-over appearance and he's sitting upright, he can eat a small amount of canned food (e.g., three ounces for adults, one-and-a-half ounces for kittens). Canned food is recommended because of its high water content. (If holding the cat for 24 hours or less, there's no need to provide water separately.) For kittens six months or younger, there's no need to wait eight hours; they can be fed as soon as they regain consciousness (monitoring for any vomiting) and again 8–12 hours later. (See Chapter 19, "Post-surgery Recovery," and the in-trap care section of Chapter 16, "Trapping Protocols," for additional information.)

Access by staff, volunteers and others. Even during short-term housing, it will probably be necessary for multiple people to have access to the cats. One volunteer might provide transportation from the clinic to the home of another volunteer, for example. Or there might be a regular team of volunteers who care for cats housed at the shelter. It's important that everybody involved has access (including 24/7, as necessary) to the cats, of course, but it's also important that access be restricted to only those people who truly require access to the cats.

Keeping the cats in a secure area with limited public access and foot traffic creates an environment that is less stressful for them. This strategy also lowers the risk of improper handling of the cats by staff or members of the public who may not have received proper training, which in turn decreases the chances of bites and scratches and cats getting loose. In the shelter environment, CCP cats are generally kept separate from other cats.

Communication of critical information. Each trap should be tagged in such a way that the cat can be returned to the exact location from which he or she was trapped, and that any necessary medical treatment can be administered prior to release. Information typically recorded (on a voucher, kennel card or index card, etc.) includes the trapping location, trap number, name of the trapper or organization, date the cat was trapped, a physical description of the cat, and any notes regarding medical conditions and treatments.

Long-term housing

Again, most CCPs house cats for no more than 48 hours (including pre- and post-surgery). However, there are instances when long-term housing is necessary. For example, cats who come into a shelter or clinic with certain medical conditions (e.g., severe upper respiratory infection, broken limb) will often be treated and monitored in a kennel until they are ready to be returned.

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters* provides detailed information regarding the appropriate housing of cats and kittens, and readers are encouraged to carefully review this information. The following, then, is just a brief overview of the additional considerations (on top of those already discussed above in the section on short-term housing) when housing cats for more than 48 hours.

Kennels. Stainless steel kennels not only provide more space than traps, they are easier to clean. They give cats a greater opportunity to escape, however, during feeding and cleaning. A “feral cat den” (available from [ACES](#), Tomahawk and others) is recommended, as it gives the cat a safe place to hide and an additional measure of safety for staff and volunteers. After the den is used to transfer the cat from the trap to the kennel, it's placed inside the kennel with its pivoting door open. The door can then be used to cover the opening when cleaning or feeding.

Note: If a den is not available, be sure to provide some other hiding place for the cat (e.g., a small carrier, box or cover over the front of the kennel), as this will help reduce stress.

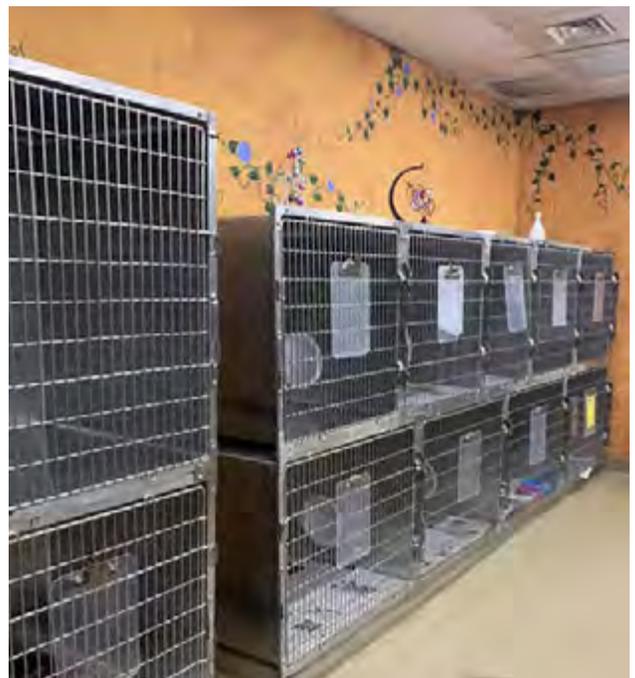
Bedding. Soft bedding, a tent or some other kind of “hidey hole” should be provided. This is especially important if feral cat dens aren't provided, as the bedding will be used by some cats to create a safe hiding place. Clean bedding should remain with the cat, as it can provide a familiar smell and comfort for the cat. Soiled bedding must be replaced regularly.

Food and water. Fresh food and water should be provided twice daily, and should be kept as far as possible from the litter pan. (“[Portals](#)” can be installed between kennels, allowing cats separate areas for eating/drinking and elimination, as shown in the photo.)

Litter pan. A small pan of clean litter must be provided and changed regularly.

Cleaning. For cats who will be housed longer, spot cleaning should be used most of the time. Spot cleaning doesn't involve the use of chemical cleaners, so the cat's scent isn't removed from the space. Toys and bedding should remain in the kennel unless they are soiled.

Regular deep cleaning is essential for minimizing the spread of infectious disease.¹ An accelerated hydrogen peroxide-based disinfectant (e.g., Rescue), which requires only about 10 minutes to be effective, is recommended. Deep cleaning should be done when preparing a kennel for a new resident or



¹According to the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters*, “Animals who are housed long-term in the same enclosure require less frequent disinfection of their enclosure, but daily cleaning is still essential to maintain sanitary conditions.”

when a cat has soiled his kennel. Do not leave the cat in the kennel during deep cleaning. The ASPCA has step-by-step videos demonstrating how to deep clean and spot clean cat kennels.

Note: Disinfectants work best when applied to freshly contaminated surfaces and only after organic debris has been removed with soap or detergent. So, it's best to clean up as soon as possible, and disinfect after an initial cleaning of the surfaces.

Communication of critical information. Kennel cards should be used to communicate key information about each cat and kitten, such as physical description, notes regarding medical condition, and protocols for medicines and other treatments.

Additional resources

- [Association of Shelter Veterinarians: Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters](#)
- [University of California, Davis, Koret Shelter Medicine Program: “Sanitation in Animal Shelters” information](#)
- [University of California, Davis, Koret Shelter Medicine Program: “Disinfectant for Animal Shelter” information](#)
- [Million Cat Challenge Resource Center: Capacity for Care](#)



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 19 CCP Operations: Post-surgery Recovery

Post-surgery Recovery

Introduction

Unsocialized cats should not be handled when conscious and therefore require special care when recovering from surgical sterilization (or any surgery). However, by the time cats are picked up from the clinic (in the same trap used to drop them off), they have generally regained consciousness. They may or may not be moving around in the trap at this time.

To minimize stress on the cats, make sure the traps are completely covered with a sheet or towel. If recovery will be done at a location other than the clinic (trapper's or volunteer's residence, shelter, etc.), and therefore requires transport, check to see that the trap doors are secured before loading the cats into a vehicle.

Recovery after surgery

Anesthesia interferes with an animal's ability to regulate his or her own body temperature. It's therefore very important that staff and volunteers help program cats stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer. The space used for post-surgery recovery should be dry and temperature-controlled (approximately 70°F). Most clinic and shelter environments meet this requirement, as do most homes. Garages and basements can be used, assuming the correct temperature can be maintained (which can be a challenge in hot or cold weather). Ensure that the space is quiet and free of fumes, that there are no open windows or doors (in case a cat escapes from a trap) and that no other animals have access to the recovering cats.

CAUTION: Cats can die of hypothermia or heat stroke during post-surgery recovery. Be careful about leaving cats in traps on the ground or floor, as these surfaces can be much hotter or colder than the air temperature. If possible, keep the cats raised above the ground or floor, even if it's only on long pieces of lumber.

The following guidelines are intended to help staff and volunteers (including caregivers, trappers and anybody else who will be involved) understand and oversee the post-surgery recovery process, ensuring that program cats will be returned safely to their outdoor homes:

- The stitches used by the veterinary staff are dissolvable, so they do not need to be removed. The entire recovery process, therefore, takes place while the cats are in their traps.
- The first phase of recovery should take place at the veterinary clinic. Cats should not be turned over to staff and volunteers or to caregivers until they regain consciousness. Cats must be sternal (i.e., in an upright position lying on his/her chest) with their heads up and eyes open.
- Keep the traps covered to reduce the cats' stress. Never open the trap doors or allow the cats out of the trap. Do not stick your fingers into the trap or attempt to handle the cats for any reason.
- The cats will be groggy as they come out of the anesthesia, but they should become more alert and active as time passes. The disorientation they experience can cause them to overreact to normal stimulation and behave in unpredictable ways. Keep recovering cats away from other animals (especially dogs) and children.
- Cats can hallucinate as the anesthesia wears off, which means they can become annoyed at the slightest sound, light or touch. They might growl, claw at invisible objects and generally act unpredictably for up to 10 hours post-surgery. Keeping them in a quiet, dark place (bathroom, closet, basement, etc.) is best. Cats are independent animals and generally come out of the anesthesia without any human intervention.

- For the most part, leave recovering cats alone but check in every hour or two to monitor their progress. Watch for signs of distress, such as vomiting, bleeding, labored breathing or grogginess more than 24 hours after surgery. If you observe any of these symptoms, seek veterinary assistance immediately.
- The stages of recovery a cat will typically experience include unconsciousness, shivering, thrashing, “drunkenness,” awakening and, finally, focusing.
- It’s recommended that cats are held for 24 hours after surgery. However, cats can sometimes be returned 12–24 hours after surgery, as long as they are fully conscious and alert. Lactating mothers, in particular, should be returned as soon as possible. They will immediately locate their kittens and continue nursing.
- Some cats take longer to recover than others. Never return a cat before he’s fully recovered from surgery and anesthesia.

Potential complications

Generally speaking, the post-surgery process is uneventful. As with all surgical procedures, though, it’s possible that complications can arise. Staff and volunteers should therefore be aware of the following situations:

- Occasionally, a cat will shake his head while waking up from anesthesia, opening up the ear-tipped area and causing some blood to splatter. This is typically only a small amount, though, and tends to stop quickly.
- It is rare that a program cat is picked up from the clinic before regaining consciousness, but sometimes it might be necessary. In such instances, additional monitoring is required. If an unconscious cat vomits, her head should be turned to prevent choking. This can be accomplished by gently tipping the trap to the side. Be careful not to harm the cat by jostling her too much.
- If a longer recovery period is needed (following spay complications, dental surgery, etc.), you can use a “feral cat den” (available from [ACES](#), Tomahawk and others) placed in a larger cage or crate. This allows the cat to have a safe place to hide and also provides a measure of safety for staff and volunteers. The den’s sliding acrylic door will line up with the trap’s rear door for easy transfer. Once the cat is inside, the den is placed in a large cage or crate, along with a litter box, food and water. The cat goes in and out of the den via the circular opening on the side. A pivoting door is used to cover the opening when cleaning or feeding.



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography

In-trap care

It’s standard practice for Best Friends’ CCPs to return cats within 24 hours of surgery. Some programs recommend holding cats in their traps for several days after surgery. To minimize stress on the cats and the likelihood that they will become ill, proper in-trap care is very important, especially if cats are housed for longer periods of time.

When feeding the cats and cleaning the cages (replacing soiled or shredded newspaper), always use at least one trap divider. This will prevent the cat from escaping and also ensure your safety. For an added measure of safety, use two dividers (sometimes called forks), each one threaded horizontally through the trap. Some trap dividers have a small hook on the end of one “prong” that’s used to secure the divider in place. (Dropping the dividers in through the top of the trap might not prevent the cats from pushing past.)

Approximately two to four hours after surgery, an adult cat will regain consciousness. Once the cat is alert, you can offer him a small amount of canned food (e.g., three ounces for adults, one-and-a-half ounces for kittens). Canned food is recommended because of its high water content.

If cats are being held for 24 hours or less, there are a few reasons for not providing another water source. Spilled water requires cleanup and lying down in spilled water can reduce a cat’s body temperature. If a cat manages not to spill her water and does decide to drink it, she will be more likely to urinate in the trap. In addition, lying in spilled water or urine can cause irritation to the recent surgical incisions. Keeping the cats raised above the ground is also helpful, since it allows urine or feces to fall through the trap if a cat does urinate or defecate.

For kittens six months or younger, there’s no need to wait to feed them. Feed them as soon as they regain consciousness (monitoring for any vomiting) and again 8–12 hours later.

To encourage the cat to move to one end of the trap for feeding or cleaning, lift the trap cover from the end of the trap you’re cleaning or using for feeding. (The rear door generally provides easier access, but there will likely be times when you need to access the trap through the front door.) Most unsocialized cats will prefer the covered end, allowing you to work in the uncovered end once the trap dividers are securely in place. However, some cats will see the uncovered end of the trap as an escape route and move to that end. Either way, you’ll know which end of the trap the cat prefers, and you can lift the appropriate end of the trap cover to give yourself the necessary workspace. You might have to use one of the dividers to gently nudge the cat. As an alternative, you can try blowing on the cat. **Never use your hands to poke or push the cat.**

If multiple caregivers will be providing in-trap care, it’s a good idea to create a log for each cat (see the appendix for an example). This will help caregivers to coordinate efforts and monitor any health concerns, both before and after surgery.

APPENDIX

Example of discharge instructions

Community cats should not be handled when conscious and therefore require special care when they're recovering from spay or neuter surgery.

When you pick up community cats from the clinic or veterinarian's office, they should have already regained consciousness (and may or may not be moving around in the trap). They should be in the same traps you dropped them off in and the traps should be completely covered with a sheet or towel. Ensure that the trap doors are secured before exiting the building. Here's a rundown of further recovery instructions.

Initial recovery

- Cats should stay dry, inside and in a temperature-controlled area after surgery. Anesthesia interferes with an animal's ability to regulate his or her own body temperature, so it's important that we help these cats stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer.
- Cats hallucinate as the anesthesia wears off, so keep them away from people, loud noises and especially dogs. Any sort of sound, light or touch may annoy them greatly. Cats may growl, claw at invisible objects and generally act unpredictably for up to 10 hours post-surgery. They will become more active and alert as the evening goes on. Keep them in a quiet, dark place, such as a bathroom, closet or basement. Cats are independent animals and generally come out of anesthesia without human help.
- Keep the traps covered to reduce the cats' stress. Never open the trap doors or allow the cats out of the trap. Do not stick your fingers into the traps or attempt to handle the cats for any reason.
- For the most part, leave recovering cats alone but check in every hour or two to monitor their progress. Watch for signs of distress, such as vomiting, bleeding, labored breathing or grogginess more than 24 hours after surgery. If you see any of these symptoms, seek veterinary assistance immediately. If you cannot reach a veterinary office, call us. We may be able to help.
- If a cat is vomiting while still unconscious, the head should be turned to avoid choking. Sometimes this can be achieved by gently tipping the trap to the side to change the cat's position. When tipping the trap, be careful that you don't harm the cat by jostling her too much.
- Ear-tipping is a universally accepted method to identify a spayed or neutered and vaccinated community cat, and involves the removal of the tip of the left ear (though in some parts of the country, the right ear is tipped). Occasionally, a cat will shake his head while waking up from anesthesia, opening up the ear-tipped area and causing some blood to splatter. This is typically only a small amount and tends to stop quickly.

In-trap care

- The cats regain consciousness approximately 6-8 hours after surgery. Once a cat's eyes no longer have a glazed-over appearance and he's sitting in an upright position, you can offer him a small amount of food (three ounces for adults, one-and-a-half ounces for kittens). Canned food is recommended because of its high water content; if you're holding the cat for 24 hours or less, there's no need to provide water separately. For kittens six months or younger, feed them as soon as they regain consciousness (monitoring for any vomiting) and again 8 to 12 hours later.
- To feed a cat in a trap, there are a couple of options. You can purchase or borrow a trap fork (also called a divider or isolator), which is used to separate the cat from the door area, and then open the door and slide the food in. Another option is to put the food on a paper plate on the floor, gently pick up the trap

and press it down onto the food so that it squishes up through the wire bottom of the trap. This method makes it more difficult for the cat to eat, but it's better than no food at all (and ensures your safety).

- It is generally recommended that cats be held for 24 hours after surgery, although they can sometimes be returned within 12–24 hours, as long as they are fully awake and alert. Lactating mothers should be returned as soon as possible (i.e., once they are fully awake and alert). They will immediately return to the spot where they left their kittens and will be able to continue nursing their young.
- If a longer recovery period is needed, you can use a feral cat den (or feral cat box) placed in a larger cage; this allows the cat to have a safe place to hide (and provides an added measure of safety for you). The den's sliding acrylic door will line up with the trap's rear door for easy transfer. Once the cat is inside, the den is placed in a large cage or crate, along with a litter box, food and water. The cat goes in and out of the den via the circular opening on the side. A pivoting door is used to cover the opening when cleaning or feeding.

Returning cats

- Release the cat in the exact location where she was trapped. Do not relocate the cat; it might be seen as abandonment and the cat may die. Make sure the spot you pick for release does not encourage the cat to run toward dangerous conditions (e.g., a busy street, dogs).
- Keep the trap covered until you are almost ready to release the cat. Then, quietly uncover the trap, allowing the cat to take in her surroundings (i.e., recognize her home) for 15–30 seconds. When you are ready to release the cat, simply hold the trap with the rear door facing away from you and open the door. If the cat doesn't race out of the trap immediately, tilt the trap so that the end closest to you is raised slightly. You might also try tapping lightly on the trap to encourage the cat to leave. Again, never put your hand in the trap.
- Just FYI: We use dissolvable stitches, so they do not need removal.
- Also FYI: Male cats might still act as if they wish to breed; it can take up to 30 days for their testosterone levels to drop following surgery.
- If a released cat is friendly, you can check the incision site every other day for excessive swelling, discharge or redness. Incisions rarely get infected or open up, but if you see signs of either of these, contact a veterinarian. If you cannot reach a veterinary office, call us.



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 20 CCP Operations: Returning Cats

Returning Cats

Introduction

As with so many aspects of a CCP, there is simply no one-size-fits-all policy for returning cats. Indeed, even within a single CCP, conditions change. For example, return procedures differ depending on whether the cats are involved in return-to-field (RTF) or trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR). Even within a single CCP, conditions change. Because of this, it's important to have clear protocols in place that allow case-by-case decisions to be made more quickly and with confidence.

Although there will always be exceptions to the rule, the up-front investment in a carefully considered guiding principle eliminates much of the uncertainty that can impede a CCP's progress. Doing so benefits not only the staff and volunteers, but also the cats entrusted to their care.



Guiding principle. To ensure the safety of every cat returned, an agency should establish a clear guiding principle that will be used to shape policies and practices designed to maximize positive outcomes — including those related to returning cats to their outdoor homes. Doing so before implementing a program will help avoid misunderstandings and mistakes once the program begins. For example, Best Friends governs its CCPs using the following guiding principle:

Program eligibility. Although some details — the age at which kittens can be vaccinated, for example — vary by CCP in part because of local and state laws and regulations, the basic assumption regarding a cat's eligibility is the same across the board: If a cat is of healthy weight and body condition, then she probably has a reliable food and water source, and sufficient shelter provided by one or more caregivers. For this reason, many staff, including those employed by Best Friends, consider it unnecessary to identify a caregiver before returning cats. However, we recommend trying to identify a caregiver whenever possible, as it can help reduce the possibility of the program receiving resistance and backlash.

The best option for an individual cat (given the information available at the time a decision must be made) should be determined by a range of factors, including (in no particular order):

- Cat's health
- Cat's age
- Location from which the cat was trapped
- Availability, capability and capacity of caregivers
- Availability of various resources (space, funds, medical care, etc.)
- Legal climate (e.g., laws governing holding times for strays)
- Potential impact on other animals in the shelter's care
- Ways in which the option chosen supports the CCP's overall goals

General guidelines

The following guidelines are considered best practices for returning cats. Situations in the field, however, don't always allow for such guidelines to be followed precisely. Staff and volunteers must therefore exercise their best judgment, being mindful of the primary objective: to provide the best opportunity to thrive for the cat or kitten being returned. A flowchart illustrating the various factors to consider is provided in the appendix.

Preparation. Before transporting the cats to the site where they will be returned:

- Check the weather. Adult cats have generally grown accustomed to extreme temperatures, but such conditions can be dangerous for young kittens.
- Make sure all paperwork (e.g., clinic notes) is in order.
- If requested, call the caregiver, property owner or other contact person ahead of time to notify him or her that one or more cats are being returned. Of course, you can also try to make contact in person at the time the cat is returned.
- Check that the cat in the trap matches the description on the paperwork, confirm that the address exists, and double-check that the cat has an ear-tip.
- Allow time for the transportation vehicle to reach a comfortable interior temperature before loading the cats.
- Line the floor of the transportation vehicle with newspaper or blankets for easy cleanup later.
- When possible, inform shelter staff and/or field services officers where and when you are returning cats — especially if doing so after dark. In some cases, staff and volunteers may wish to be accompanied by a field services officer.

Transporting cats. It's not uncommon for cats to urinate or defecate in their traps while being transported. Ideally, the agency has dedicated vans that can be hosed out easily. Even so, volunteers will likely be doing trapping and/or providing transportation, so it's important that they can protect the interior of their cars. Sheets of cardboard and/or plastic drop cloths work well, as do inexpensive shower curtain liners.

Some vehicles are large enough to stack traps, in which case it's important that the traps be secured in place or arranged in such a way that they cannot shift or tip over during transport. Some two-door traps can fall open if tipped sideways or upside-down, allowing the cat to escape. Use of bungee cords may resolve this concern. In case the traps do shift around during transport, using a carabiner or ziptie on the doors of the traps can help reduce the chances of a cat escaping. It is best to use newspaper or light sheets of fabric between layers of traps to keep the cats clean. Never use plastic sheets or heavy fabric for this purpose, as the cats might overheat.

While driving, avoid sounds that are unfamiliar to the cats, such as loud music. Using safe driving methods will help ensure that the experience is not traumatic. Cats should never be transported in a vehicle's trunk or in the open bed of a truck. If you are returning cats from multiple locations, place the



cats in the van in the order that you will be returning them. This practice helps with overall organization and helps to reduce time spent out in the field.

Returning cats. It's standard practice for Best Friends' CCPs to return cats approximately 24 hours after surgery, assuming there is no reason to hold them longer, such as additional surgery performed or required. Nevertheless, we recognize that some programs recommend, or even require, that cats be held in their traps for a longer period of time after surgery.

Please don't ever return a cat who hasn't fully recovered from anesthesia, the side effects of which can last up to 24 hours. Lactating mothers should be returned as soon as they have recovered.

Here are some more tips regarding return of cats:

- Whenever possible, return the cat to the exact location where she was trapped. Adult cats should never be returned more than 300 feet (about the length of a football field) from the exact trapping location.¹
- Double-check that there are no visible signs of illness, injury or residual effects from the surgery, like bleeding or grogginess, as this is the last chance to catch such issues prior to returning a cat.
- Make sure the spot chosen to release the cat from the trap does not encourage her to run toward dangerous conditions, such as a busy street or dogs who are nearby. Consider releasing the cat on a side street (ideally within 300 feet of the cat's original location), which gives the cat access to the preferred site and provides a safer, quieter option.
- Don't release the cat next to parked vehicles. Cats will often run to the nearest place of shelter in their line of sight, which means they may run underneath a vehicle and crawl up into the vehicle's engine area.
- Keep the trap covered until you are almost ready to release the cat. Then, quietly uncover the trap, allowing the cat to take in her surroundings (i.e., recognize her home) for 15–30 seconds. When you are ready to release the cat, simply hold the trap with the rear door facing away from you and open the door. The cat may try to escape before the trap is open. This is a good indication that the cat is familiar with the surroundings and it's the correct location.
- If the cat doesn't race out of the trap immediately, tilt the trap so that the end closest to you is raised slightly. You might also try tapping lightly on the trap to encourage the cat to leave. Never put your hand in the trap.
- Positioning the trap toward a bush or other safe form of shelter may encourage the cat to run in the desired direction. If the cat will not exit the trap, you may need to canvass the neighborhood to determine and confirm the correct location.
- If you're returning both a mother and one or more of her kittens, release the kittens first and then the mother. Doing so allows the kittens to follow the mother to safety.



¹ It's important that there's no dangerous barrier between the return site and the trap site. Here's a possible scenario: A cat was trapped at a specific house in a gated community. The person returning the cat needs to release the cat somewhere close by. Using Google Earth, she might locate a wrought-iron gate about a block from the trap site where she knows the cat can easily get back onto the property without encountering busy roads or other barriers such as fences. However, if her research reveals instead that the gated community is very large and the only gate where the cat could easily access the property is three blocks from the trap site, or a large stream runs between the gate and the trap site, it would become necessary to gain access to the gated area in order to safely return the cat.

Returning kittens. In general, kittens four months and older should be assessed for RTF using the same criteria used for adult cats. By that age, kittens are self-sustaining and, in our experience, do well when returned to their community. However, many kittens younger than four months still qualify and are good candidates for RTF. We recommend that healthy kittens coming from an area near an established community of cats, or with a caregiver, be considered for RTF, especially if there's a mother cat in the community or one who can be returned at the same time as the kittens.

Kittens who are not thriving, who are born in the shelter or who are brought in without the ability to confirm their original location may not qualify for RTF. Kittens who qualify should be returned within a short window of time; they should not be away from their location longer than a couple of days.



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography

There are also considerations for ensuring a safe return at the location. For example, you should always assess the surroundings when returning kittens. A tall fence that can be climbed easily by an adult cat may be more difficult for kittens to climb, so adjustments to the location may be needed. We also recommend that kittens be returned with their littermates or another cat from the community whenever possible.

When returning an adult cat at the same time as kittens, release the kittens first followed shortly by the adult. Adult cats often run home without looking back, so you want to ensure that the kittens see where the adult goes, and that the adult knows the kittens are there. This practice will help everyone reunite safely after you leave. See Chapter 11, “Working Toward Positive Outcomes,” for more information on assessing the eligibility of kittens for RTF.

Wrapping up. Before leaving the return location, canvass the neighborhood, searching for other cats and leaving door hangers with information about the CCP. (See the appendix for an example of a door hanger.) This can also be an excellent opportunity to locate residents who are feeding cats, recruit volunteers and help to mitigate any complaints from residents. You'll want to make notes regarding any need for additional trapping or about following up with complainants. Remember, to maximize the effectiveness of a TNVR program, it's very important that all cats in a location be sterilized.

Addressing complaints. If you are returning cats and a resident approaches you with the intent of preventing you from doing so, stop what you are doing and try to de-escalate the situation by asking why the resident doesn't want the cats returned. Explain the benefits of the program and offer solutions, such as information about humane deterrents. After giving the resident this information, attempt to release the cats again. If the resident becomes hostile, you may want to consider leaving with the cats and returning later, possibly with a field services officer. See Chapter 23, “How to Address Various Complaints,” for more information on this topic.

Finally, upon returning to the CCP facility, return the traps and other supplies used, such as trap covers and bungee cords, for cleaning and storage (see Chapter 16, “Trapping Protocols,” for details) and clean out the transport vehicles.

Follow-up

It is not unusual for cats to hide out for a couple days after being trapped, sterilized, vaccinated and returned. Don't be alarmed if caregivers report that the cats are missing. Have them continue to provide food and water as usual (the cats are more likely to eat and drink when nobody is around) and monitor consumption levels. If a cat is not eating and drinking as usual, then the cat should be seen by a veterinarian, which will require re-trapping.

For any socialized cat, encourage caregivers to check the incision site every other day for excessive swelling, discharge or redness. Incisions rarely get infected or open up, but if this occurs, the cat should be seen by a veterinarian immediately.

Whenever possible, follow up with caregivers within a week after the cats are returned to their location. Following up not only ensures the safety of the cats but also strengthens the ongoing relationships between staff and volunteers and residents — a critical component in the success of any CCP.

Finally, please note: Neutered male cats might still act as if they wish to breed; it can take up to 30 days for testosterone levels to drop following surgery.

Special cases

Medical considerations. In some instances, it might be best not to return cats — a declawed cat, for example. In such cases, an alternative positive outcome must be sought, such as adoption from a shelter, transfer to a rescue group or transfer to a foster home. It is not uncommon for cats to be returned to their locations after they've recovered from extensive surgical procedures, such as eye enucleations or leg amputations.

In some instances, a caregiver is willing and able to provide ongoing medical treatment (e.g., thyroid medication), in which case the cat can be returned. Relocation should be considered only if returning the cat will put him in immediate danger (see below), and euthanasia should be performed only in cases of irremediable suffering.

Microchipped cats. Occasionally, a microchipped cat will be returned to the location where he was found, if repeated attempts to contact his family are unsuccessful. If this is the case, staff will typically remove the old contact information and update it, registering the cat to the CCP or the caregiver. This way, the cat is easily identified if he once again ends up in the shelter system.

Additional resources

- [The Urban Cat League's "Tough Love: Socializing Feral Kittens" video series](#)
- [Barn Cats, Inc.](#)
- [Solutions to Cat-Related Issues](#)
- [Conflict Resolution for the Animal Welfare Field](#)
- [Best Friends' humane deterrents video](#)

APPENDIX

Returning friendly cats

For truly feral community cats, returning them to their neighborhoods sterilized and vaccinated is often the only positive outcome. But what about friendly community cats? As animal lovers, we often imagine the best possible outcome being an indoor home, a warm lap on which to cuddle and a soft bed. We want to rescue friendly cats from what we might judge as the harsh and dangerous life of the outdoors.

Not every cat is suited to life inside, however. Community cats, even friendly ones, make the best use of their survival instincts. They learn where to seek shelter from the weather, for instance, and know where to go for food and water. Some cats may seem friendly with people in the community, but that doesn't mean they will be friendly with a stranger. Some friendly community cats who have only known life outside will shut down and become ill simply from the stress of being confined to a kennel while waiting for adoption.

The other perspective to consider is from the people in the community who care for these cats. In our desire to give a community cat a home, we may be taking away someone's favorite community cat. Behind every socialized community cat is someone who has put in the effort to get to know the cat, and that person deserves to have that beloved cat back. The bonds formed between them should not be devalued just because their companions don't live with them indoors.

Health and welfare concerns

It's perfectly understandable that people worry about outdoor cats, especially those who are social. Best Friends Animal Society operates more large-scale trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) programs than any other organization in the country. From years of firsthand experience, we know the risks faced by outdoor cats. However, what we've seen corresponds very well with what has been reported in the scientific literature: Most of these cats are doing well as community cats.

The evidence shows that nearly all the cats brought to shelters as strays are healthy. One peer-reviewed study reporting the results of six large-scale return-to-field (RTF) and TNVR programs (72,970 cats total) found that just 0.5% of cats were euthanized for serious health concerns [1]. These results correspond well with those from other studies [2,3]. If community cats were truly struggling to survive, as some media accounts suggest, it would be apparent from shelter intake data — and this is simply not the case.

Community cats are friendly because they have humans looking out for them; they often have more than one caregiver. In fact, the results of a recent national survey show that 14% of residents feed stray cats [4]. By sterilizing, vaccinating and returning community cats, we are acknowledging the human-animal bond and providing services (sterilization and vaccination) that benefit the entire community.

Benefits to community cats and their caregivers

Unfortunately, the greatest risk to cats in many communities is the local shelter, especially during kitten season, when resources are stretched even thinner than usual to address the influx of kittens. RTF programs reduce overcrowding and do so quickly. Eligible cats (e.g., those brought in as "stray," lacking identification) are sterilized, vaccinated, ear-tipped and returned to the location where they were found. All healthy community cats, regardless of temperament, should be eligible to participate in these programs.

Community cats come in all types, and while some may be too scared to interact with their caregivers, others are social and friendly. Regardless of temperament, if a community cat appears to be healthy, he is likely being cared for by someone, so removing that cat from his outdoor home is usually not the right option. Shelter policies that dictate that all friendly community cats be adopted rather than returned to their neighborhoods can have a harmful impact on a shelter's lifesaving capacity, as well as a deleterious effect on the community, as resources are invested in adopting out cats who already are well cared for by

their caregivers. In addition, removing friendly cats from neighborhoods diverts resources that could be used to provide positive outcomes for the cats most at risk: cats in shelters.

Removing cats from an area where they're familiar with the risks (traffic patterns, which yards have dogs, where to hide in an emergency, etc.) and adopting them out to new homes puts them at an unnecessary risk since they are unfamiliar with the dangers in their new community. Even "indoor-only" adoptions do not guarantee that a cat will be kept indoors. Moreover, there's no guarantee that a friendly outdoor cat will make a good indoor-only pet cat.

Confident cats in a community (often the friendly ones) sometimes offer protection and support to the less dominant cats. Removing the confident, friendly cats could increase the risks to cats who are less outgoing. In addition, we often find that residents really like the friendly cats the best and provide resources to the other cats only because of the friendly cats. Removing the friendly cats, then, might reduce residents' interest in looking after the less friendly cats.

Benefits to pet cats and their owners

For people who have indoor/outdoor cats, it is not unusual for their cat to go missing for a few days. By the time they realize the cat is not coming back, several more days could have passed. If the cat ended up at the shelter, he might have been euthanized or adopted to someone else during that time. Either way, the cat is gone.

Unfortunately, the return-to-owner (RTO) rate of cats from shelters is very low. According to [Shelter Pet Data Alliance \(SPDA\)](#) data from 2023, only 5.6% of all stray cat intake at US brick-and-mortar shelters was returned to their owner. Survey results tell us that the most common methods by which lost cats are reunited with their owners is when cats return home on their own or are found by searching the neighborhood in which they went missing [5,6]. By returning friendly cats to their communities, we're improving very low RTO rates.

Residents struggling economically are less likely to be reunited with their missing cats than more affluent residents. One study of missing pets compared return rates for residents earning less than \$30,000 per year to those of residents earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 annually. Although both groups reported the same number of missing cats, members of the less affluent group were reunited with their cats only 39% of the time compared to 94% for the more affluent group [6].

Disadvantaged communities bear the burden of permanently losing a pet more than higher-income areas. This could be due to language barriers, citizen status concerns, less ability to find resources detailing where to look for a lost cat, inability to take time off work to visit the shelter during the hours it is open, or lack of transportation or funds to get to the shelter and reclaim their pet.

By way of community cat programs (CCPs), friendly cats are returned to their communities to be reunited with the people who care for them, which honors the human-animal bond and retains in-shelter resources for animals who truly need sheltering. Ideally, we should all be aiming for the same goal: the best possible outcome for every animal, including community cats. And we should encourage shelter staff and the community to embrace this quote from J.R.R. Tolkien: "Not all those who wander are lost."

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Example of door hanger in English and Spanish



A new program for community cats

A stray cat from your neighborhood was recently taken to an animal shelter in your area. Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley (ASCMV) and ACTION Programs for Animals have partnered with Best Friends Animal Society to provide a proven effective, humane alternative for stray cats called a community cat program. When eligible* cats are trapped and taken to the shelter:

- They are spayed or neutered, vaccinated, treated for parasites and ear-tipped. An ear tip is the universal sign that an outdoor cat has been spayed or neutered.
- After recovery, the cats are returned to their neighborhoods and the number of cats in the community is reduced over time.

Appointments for targeted trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) may be available for cats in your community. Please call 575-644-0505 or email mail@apalascruces.org for more information.

BENEFITS OF SPAY/NEUTER:

- Prevents unwanted litters, reducing community cat populations
- Saves taxpayer dollars by keeping cats out of municipal shelters
- Decreases the number of cats dying in shelters
- Helps improve the health of outdoor cats
- Reduces nuisance behaviors like spraying, fighting, howling and roaming
- Creates safer and healthier neighborhoods by reducing the number of unvaccinated cats

If we all pitch in, we can save more lives. Please visit our website to learn more about:

- Spaying or neutering your pets
- Volunteering
- Adopting and fostering
- Donating

Missing a pet? Visit ascmv.org to see the most recent animal impounds.

Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley (ASCMV) is the only animal center in Dona Ana County. ASCMV takes in more than 10,000 animals from the community each year. Our goal is to save every animal who can be saved through programs designed to help pets in the shelter and the community.

* See the website for details.



Un nuevo programa para los gatos comunitarios

Hace poco, un gato callejero que estaba en su vecindario fue llevado al albergue para animales que está en su área. El Centro de Servicios para Animales del Valle Mesilla (ASCMV) y Programas ACTION para Animales se han asociado con Best Friends Animal Society para proporcionar una alternativa eficiente y humanitaria para los gatos callejeros, que se llama Programa para Gatos Comunitarios. Cuando se atrapa a los gatos elegibles* y se los lleva a un albergue:

- Estos gatos son esterilizados o castrados, vacunados, reciben tratamiento contra parásitos y se les corta la puntita de una oreja. La puntita cortada de la oreja es el signo universal de que un gato que anda en la calle ha sido esterilizado o castrado.
- Cuando los gatos se recuperan, se los regresa a sus vecindarios y después de un tiempo, se reduce el número de gatos en la comunidad.

Podría haber citas disponibles para que los gatos de su comunidad sean parte del programa TNVR, donde los gatos son atrapados, castrados, vacunados y regresados al lugar original. Por favor llame al 575-644-0505 o envíe un correo electrónico a mail@apalascruces.org para obtener más información.

BENEFICIOS DE ESTERILIZAR/CASTRAR A LOS GATOS

- Se evita que haya camadas no deseadas, reduciendo las poblaciones de gatos comunitarios
- Los contribuyentes ahorran dinero en impuestos, al mantener a los gatos fuera de los albergues municipales
- Se reduce el número de gatos que mueren en los albergues
- Ayuda a mejorar la salud de los gatos callejeros
- Se reducen los comportamientos molestos como orinar, pelearse, aullar y vagar por las calles
- Se crean vecindarios más seguros y saludables al reducir el número de gatos no vacunados

Si todos ayudamos, podemos salvar más vidas. Por favor visite nuestro sitio web para obtener más información sobre:

- Esterilización o castración de sus mascotas
- Servir como voluntario
- Adopción y hogares de crianza temporal
- Donaciones

¿Extravió una mascota? Visite ascmv.org para ver la lista de animales que han sido atrapados recientemente.

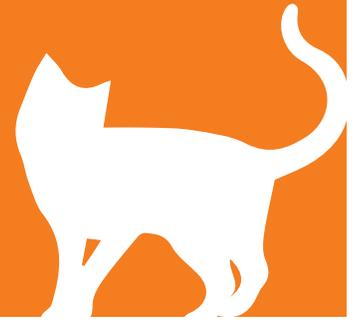
El Centro de Servicios para Animales del Valle Mesilla (ASCMV) es el único centro para animales en el Condado de Dona Ana. ASCMV recibe más de 10,000 animales de la comunidad cada año. Nuestra meta es salvar a todos los animales que puedan ser salvados, a través de programas diseñados para ayudar a las mascotas que se encuentran en el albergue y en la comunidad.

* Vea el sitio web para obtener más detalles.



Example of community engagement flyer in English

What to do if you find kittens



► Are the kittens visibly sick or injured?

YES: Contact an animal welfare organization or shelter that can help you assess whether the kittens need intervention. If that isn't possible, take the kittens to a veterinarian immediately.

NO: Estimate the kittens' age by how they look.



Avoid handling the kittens and watch them from a distance for 10-12 hours. If the kittens seem healthy and content, mom will usually return when she feels it's safe. If the kittens are exposed, attempt to find a safe hiding spot nearby, move them and monitor them from a safe distance for 10-12 hours.

Great! Kittens this age usually don't need much from people or their mom. As long as they are not in immediate danger, you can contact a local provider to schedule spay/neuter surgery.

Did mom return?

YES

Great! Leave kittens alone for now. When the kittens are eight or more weeks old they can be scheduled for spay/neuter surgery along with mom.

NO

These kittens may need your help and you'd make a great rescuer. If you can't foster them yourself, contact a local animal welfare group for guidance.

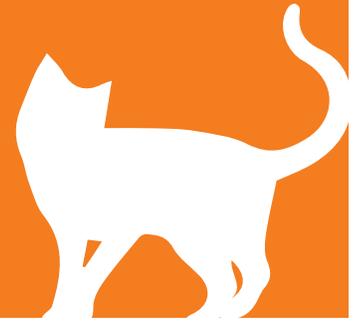
Taking newborn kittens to your local shelter should be a last resort. Many animal shelters can't provide the kind of around-the-clock care that kittens need. In fact, within a few hours of arriving at many shelters, young kittens are at risk of being killed.

The best way to help most kittens is to leave them with their mother, and then when they are more than eight weeks old, contact your local shelter for spay/neuter resources.



Example of community engagement flyer in Spanish

¿Qué debe hacer si encuentra gatitos?



► ¿Están los gatitos visiblemente enfermos o heridos?

SI: Comuníquese con una organización o albergue dedicado al bienestar de los animales, donde pueden ayudarlo a evaluar si los gatitos necesitan alguna intervención. Si esto no es posible, lleve a los gatitos a un veterinario de inmediato.

NO: Calcule la edad de los gatitos en base a la apariencia que tengan.



Evite tocar a los gatitos y obsérvelos de lejos durante 10-12 horas. Si los gatitos parecen estar sanos y tranquilos, por lo general la mamá regresará cuando sienta que es seguro hacerlo. Si los gatitos están expuestos, trate de encontrar un lugar cercano y seguro donde esconderlos, tráselos ahí y obsérvelos desde una distancia segura durante 10-12 horas.

¡Estupendo! Por lo general, a esta edad, los gatitos no necesitan mucho de las personas ni de la mamá. Mientras no estén en peligro inmediato, usted puede comunicarse con un servicio local para programar la cirugía de esterilización/castración.

¿Regresó la mamá?

SI

¡Estupendo! Deje a los gatitos solos por ahora. Cuando los gatitos cumplan ocho semanas o más, puede programar la cirugía de esterilización/castración para ellos y la mamá.

NO

Estos gatitos podrían necesitar su ayuda y usted podría ser un gran rescatista. Si no puede cuidarlos temporalmente, comuníquese con un grupo dedicado al bienestar de los animales para que lo orienten.

Llevar gatitos recién nacidos al albergue local tendría que ser la última opción que debería considerar.

Muchos albergues de animales no pueden proporcionar el tipo de cuidado que los gatitos necesitan durante las 24 horas del día. De hecho, los gatitos corren el riesgo de que los maten en las siguientes horas luego de llegar a muchos de los albergues.

La mejor manera de ayudar a la mayoría de los gatitos es dejarlos con su mamá y luego, cuando cumplan más de ocho semanas de vida, usted puede comunicarse con su albergue local para obtener información sobre los servicios de esterilización/castración disponibles.





Photo courtesy of Christopher Crews.



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 21 CCP Operations: Staff and Volunteer Safety Protocols

Staff and Volunteer Safety Protocols

Introduction

By its very nature, fieldwork is never risk-free, but if staff and volunteers are given the proper tools and training, they can work effectively canvassing neighborhoods or trapping and returning cats while maintaining a high degree of safety. The primary objective of establishing field safety protocols is to keep staff and volunteers safe at all times. The information in this chapter is based on protocols used by Best Friends staff and volunteers in CCPs across the country.

To be prepared for medical emergencies, staff would benefit from being certified in basic CPR and first aid through the American Red Cross or the American Heart Association (with recertification as necessary). In areas of the country where rabies is prevalent throughout the year, it may be beneficial for staff and volunteers to receive the pre-exposure vaccine series as a precautionary measure, and especially if it is required of shelter staff.

Situation evaluation in the field

The most straightforward way for staff and volunteers to maintain personal safety while at a field location is to be continuously aware and alert. Best Friends recommends the C.A.T. (Communicate, Assess, Take action) system as a tactical guide for maintaining safety in the field.

Communicate:

- Emergency contact information must be on file for all staff and volunteers.
- Volunteers and staff members must exchange phone numbers before going into the field.
- Everyone should have the direct line to the appropriate animal control and law enforcement agencies saved in their contacts.
- Make sure volunteers maintain an open line of communication with staff members.
- A checklist of on-hand needs should be reviewed. (See the section below on field safety tools and gear for more information on which on-hand needs ought to be considered.)

Assess:

- When you're at the field site, survey the area for potential threats or risks before getting out of the vehicle and starting work. Have situational awareness as it pertains to dangerous roadways, hostile people or loose animals nearby.
- Respect private property and "no trespassing" signs. Before entering private property, make sure you have permission to do so.
- Rely on support from law enforcement and/or field service officers when dealing with people known to be hostile.
- On dead-end streets or cul-de-sacs, always park the vehicle facing the exit and ensure that there is easy access to the driver's seat.
- Know the exact address and cross streets you would give to a 911 operator if an emergency occurred.
- Lock the vehicle if you leave it unattended. Always carry a second key (e.g., on a retractable key chain on your belt loop) so that you can keep the vehicle on and locked while animals are on board.

Take action:

- Based on your assessment of the work area, begin work if it's safe. Continue to maintain awareness of your surroundings, including roadways, animals and people nearby.
- Avoid entering a private residence. For example, instead of walking through a house to get to the back yard, ask to use a side gate. If a resident has already trapped the cats, have the person bring the cats out to the vehicle rather than going inside the residence.
- If you feel unsafe, leave the area.



Field safety tools and gear

Physical preparedness is important when staff and volunteers are out in the field. Having appropriate gear can make a world of difference for your comfort and safety. This section lists items you will want to have access to each time you are at a location. Best Friends' suggestions for sourcing some of these tools are listed in the appendix.

Personal safety gear. Each staff person or volunteer should have a mobile phone with one or more ICE (in case of emergency) contacts programmed into the list of contacts. Phone numbers that should be readily available include:

- Phone numbers for all team members
- Check-in number (for checking in and out text message)
- 911 (or another emergency number)
- Local dispatch or animal services
- Neighborhood watch (if available)

All team members should have a high-lumen flashlight, a very bright but small flashlight that can be used to illuminate potential threats and hazards or signal for help, even in the daylight.

Proper attire and accessories. When in the field, you should always be dressed in logo-wear — in preferably high-visibility colors with your organization's name and, when possible, the program name printed on the back. If you are near high-traffic and high-risk areas, consider wearing a reflective or high-visibility vest with the organization and program names printed on the back. Wear closed-toe shoes appropriate for walking and running, as well as weather-appropriate clothing.

Vehicles. Vehicles can provide safety for staff and volunteers while they're out in the field. Consider implementing the following protocols:

- Staff and volunteers are responsible for doing a vehicle check before driving. Items to be checked include proper tire inflation and proper operation of lights, turn signals and door locks (including the remote keyless entry device on the key ring). Vehicles must be running well and have no outstanding mechanical issues. Follow the dealership and manufacturer schedules for routine maintenance.
- For visibility, each vehicle should have a magnet or vinyl CCP logo prominently displayed on at least one side.

- All vehicles must have a full emergency roadside kit that includes items such as a fire extinguisher, jumper cables, Fix-a-Flat or similar tire repair system, reflective roadside triangles, zip ties, duct tape, a jack and tire iron, a spare tire, chemical “light sticks,” a flashlight, water and a blanket or tarp.
- Each vehicle should have weather-appropriate items in the roadside kit, such as blankets in winter and extra water in summer.
- A spare key should be hidden in a consistent location on each vehicle, and staff must be aware of the location in case of emergencies.
- Vehicle registration and insurance cards should be tucked in a safe place with easy access. All staff and volunteers should know where they are.
- All vehicles must contain a basic medical kit. The medical kits should be restocked after each use and checked on a quarterly basis to replace medications that have expired. (See the appendix for a list of recommended contents.)
- Each vehicle should have drinking water for human and animal consumption in case of emergencies.
- Valuables should never be left in the vehicle and the doors should always be kept locked. If you have cats in the van and must keep the van running while you step away (to provide heat or air conditioning), take the spare key with you and lock the doors. Be sure to replace the key when there are no longer any cats inside the vehicle.

Additional resources

- [Volunteer Door Hanger/Neighborhood Canvassing Guidelines](#)
- [Volunteer Trapping Safety Protocols](#)
- [Conflict Management and Resolution Tips](#)
- [Best Friends Volunteer Handbook](#)
- [Solutions to Cat-Related Issues](#)

APPENDIX

Sources for safety equipment

Whistles and headlamps. The [Rescue Source Store](#) is a good place to buy these items.

High-lumen flashlights. The more lumens, the better the light will be for safety purposes. Anything over 100 lumens is a good safety tool. There are multiple manufacturers of these tactical lights, so shop around for the best deal. Two good resources are [511tactical.com](#) (for less expensive but good-quality lights) and [surefire.com](#) (for more expensive but the highest-quality lights).

Apparel. There are dozens of companies that offer good apparel for field operations. [L.A. Police Gear](#) is a great resource for quality equipment (from pants to lights) and often has great prices on close-outs.

Emergency kit checklists

Emergency roadside kits. All vehicles should have a full emergency roadside kit containing items such as:

- Vehicle registration and insurance card
- Fire extinguisher
- Jumper cables
- Fix-A-Flat or similar tire repair system
- Reflective roadside triangles
- Zip ties
- Duct tape
- Jack, tire iron and spare tire
- Chemical “light sticks”
- Flashlight
- Drinking water
- Blanket or tarp
- Seasonal, weather-appropriate items (extra blankets in winter, extra water in summer)

Medical kits. Best Friends has relied on [Zee Medical](#) for restocking medical supplies at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary as well as for purchasing full medical kits. Every vehicle should have a medical kit containing the following:

- Bag or box for storage of medical supplies
- Accident report forms and workers’ compensation cards
- Four pairs of exam-quality vinyl or nitrile gloves (no latex)
- Ten 2 x 2 inch gauze pads
- Ten 4 x 4 inch non-stick gauze pads
- Ten 3/8 x 1-1/2 inch junior adhesive plastic bandages
- Ten knuckle fabric bandages

- Ten fingertip fabric bandages
- Two 5 x 9 inch trauma pads
- Ten sterile eye pads
- Ten butterfly wound closures, medium
- One 1/2 inch x 5 yard first-aid tape roll
- One 6 x 3/4 inch finger splint
- 20 alcohol cleansing pads
- One box of insect sting relief pads
- 30 3/4 x 3 inch adhesive plastic bandages
- Two rolls of gauze and vet wrap
- Individual single-use packets of triple antibiotic ointment
- Tweezers



Photo courtesy of Christopher Crews



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 22 CCP Operations: Data and Statistics

Data and Statistics

Introduction

The effectiveness of a CCP depends on a number of factors, including stakeholder buy-in, allocation of funds, clinic capacity and many more. The ability to accurately assess this effectiveness is critical to understanding which aspects of the program are working well and identifying opportunities for improvement. This assessment is most often done by analyzing a shelter's key statistics.

Although the very thought of analyzing data makes some people uncomfortable, a careful review of the shelter's key statistics is essential to understanding a CCP's current performance and future progress. This understanding also helps staff and volunteers to develop policies and processes that maximize positive outcomes, and the institutional knowledge developed over the course of regular data reviews and reporting is invaluable in making lifesaving decisions quickly and with confidence — all of which improves the CCP's overall success. (See Chapter 11, "Working Toward Positive Outcomes," for additional information on this topic.)



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography

One additional benefit: Careful data analysis and regular reporting are an excellent way to gain support for a CCP, whether from elected officials, the general public, donors or institutional funders. Indeed, as supporters demand an unprecedented degree of transparency from the animal sheltering and animal welfare communities, data analysis — once considered either a luxury or an academic pursuit — is no longer optional. (See Chapter 6, "Financial Considerations," for additional information on this topic.)

Key metrics

A number of statistics can be tracked to monitor the progress of a CCP, and certain statistics will be of interest for particular shelters, their communities and various stakeholders. For a program operating near an environmentally sensitive area, for example, reducing shelter deaths may be considered less important than reducing the number of young kittens coming into the shelter (the latter metric being a rough measure of population-level impacts, thereby being of particular interest to stakeholders who want to protect wildlife).

There are two broad categories of data to consider when preparing for and analyzing your CCP: shelter statistics and program statistics. Below are the key elements of each category, and suggestions for how you can use them to create a successful program and monitor your progress toward saving cats in your community.

Shelter statistics. The place to begin when creating a CCP is with the shelter's statistics. The more detailed those stats are, the better. Analyzing the data you have before you begin a CCP program can help create the best road map for maximum impact. Even if you haven't previously captured detailed data, you can still start return-to-field (RTF) for immediate lifesaving and begin capturing detailed information so the program can be refined as you move forward. You'll need to know the answers to the following:

- Intake types and subtypes: How are the cats getting to the shelter (e.g., owner surrender, strays brought in “over the counter,” field service or animal control staff, commercial trappers)?
- Jurisdiction: Where are the cats coming from?
- Age: Which age group (kittens or adults) tends to end up in the shelter?
- Outcome types and subtypes: Which cats don’t have positive outcomes, and why?

To answer these questions, you will need the data detailed in Table 1 and Table 2 at the end of this chapter. The information in Table 1 helps to determine the ideal target area, while the information in Table 2 measures the result and impact of CCP efforts.

Note: Shelter Pet Data Alliance (SPDA), a data analysis platform, utilizes essential animal data statistics that all shelters should track. Learn more in this Gathering Data for Shelters e-learning module.

The importance of save rate. Shelters measure admissions and outcomes of pets in their care in a number of ways, and each method has pros and cons. The save rate formula given in the sidebar has been used for consistency in measurement across the nation. For all individual shelters and communities, a gross save rate is calculated.

The live release rate metric is being used by many shelters, and we encourage shelters to consider transitioning to the use of save rate as their internal standard, particularly because live release rate formulas may vary from shelter to shelter.

Save rate: Calculation of pets saved (not deceased) as a percentage of total intake.

Formula: [(live intakes) – (subtotal other outcomes*)] divided by (live intakes)

*Subtotal other outcomes = Non-live outcomes as described by SPDA in the Gathering Data for Shelters module.

Live release rate: Calculation of pets with live outcomes as a percentage of total outcomes (excludes owner-requested euthanasia from total outcomes).

Formula: (live outcomes) divided by [(total outcomes – (owner-requested euthanasia)]

Program statistics. Government officials and grant-making organizations often want to see program-specific data such as the impact on government resources, the number of spay/neuter surgeries and the total number of program cats. You also need to track location information for each group of cats, along with caregiver contacts. For smaller programs, you can create a spreadsheet to log addresses and contact information as well as details on individual cats. Larger programs, however, will most likely need to use custom fields in shelter database software (e.g., Chameleon or PetPoint) to keep up with their project’s data. Best Friends recommends that you collect the information listed in Table 3 at the end of this chapter.

This database can be used daily to keep up with the status of cats and manage communications with caregivers. You can also summarize the data on an interim basis and pair it with shelter stats to determine program impact.

“A data-driven approach is essential to the design, implementation and sustainability of any successful community cat program. By tracking and understanding key statistics, shelters are able to create targeted programs, leverage results to raise support and funding, and achieve sustainable solutions for the cats in their community.”

Nikki Kelley, senior manager of advanced analytics, Best Friends Animal Society

Zooming in and zooming out. Data entry, tracking and reporting requires great attention to detail. Addresses of cats’ locations, for example, must be precise enough to be used in mapping tools; kittens

must be counted individually, not merely as litters; and so on. Nevertheless, it's important to be able to zoom out beyond a particular shelter and assess lifesaving efforts at a community level, too. This is especially important in communities where, for whatever reason, cats and kittens are being diverted from one facility (e.g., a limited-admission private humane society) to another one (e.g., an open-admission municipal shelter). Only by having a clear “big picture” perspective can a community understand the effectiveness of its current lifesaving efforts and the work necessary to achieve the goals of a CCP.

When collecting data, keep the phrase “garbage in, garbage out” in mind. If the data is inaccurate, the results will be skewed. While this might appear insignificant at the individual cat level, incorrect data reporting can result in consequences such as misdiagnosing target areas with large cat populations or skewing analysis outcomes. Once an error is detected, it's vital to find the source of the error and recalculate the affected baselines.

A word of caution. Although some very successful CCPs exist in communities requiring groups of cats to be registered (i.e., cat and caregiver information is recorded and tracked by a “sponsor” organization), such arrangements can be detrimental to a program's effectiveness. Such bureaucracy (sometimes accompanied by annual fees) tends to drive caregivers underground, likely reducing sterilization and vaccination rates in a community. For this reason, Best Friends discourages CCPs from requiring cats and caregivers to be registered.

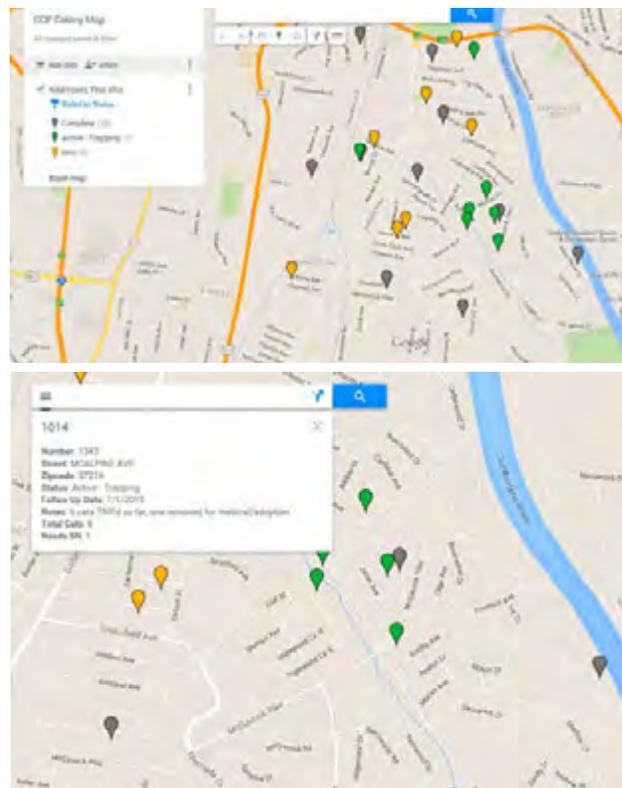
In addition, there is a risk that sensitive cat and caregiver information might be made public via public records requests. It's generally assumed that this risk is greatly reduced by having cat and caregiver data tracked by a private nonprofit organization rather than by a government agency (e.g., the department of the local government overseeing municipal shelter operations), although there is no known legal precedent. Such risks would seem to outweigh the benefits of registration, which are, in any case, limited to begin with. (See Chapter 5, “Key Legal Issues to Consider,” for additional information on this topic.)

Innovative tools

Among the most popular case management software applications used by shelters are [Chameleon/CMS](#) and [PetPoint](#). Although none of this software is designed specifically for CCPs, key program statistics can be tracked using customizable fields.

In addition, several new mapping tools (e.g., Google Maps, Microsoft MapPoint) and geographic information system (GIS) technology allow CCPs to track intake and cat locations. Visualizing such data can be enormously valuable not only to various staff members, but also to elected officials and the general public, as a compelling way to demonstrate a CCP's progress. Using Google Maps, for example, you can create custom maps to track the status of CCP cats. This simple map shows all groups of cats in a given ZIP code and their status. (Note: These are not actual locations.)

By zooming in on target areas and clicking on markers, you can see detailed information. These maps are easily accessible on mobile devices, helping you manage trapping schedules and locations while out in the field. For additional information about creating maps using Google Maps, see the [Google Maps Help Center](#). The appendix contains tips for mapping cat communities.



Additional resources

- [Shelter Pet Data Alliance \(SPDA\)](#)
- [The National Federation of Humane Societies' Basic Data Matrix](#)
- [What Is Your Rate? Understanding the Asilomar Live Release Rate, ASPCA Live Release Rate and Save Rate](#)
- [Cat Stats online database](#)
- [Best Friends pet lifesaving dashboard](#)
- [Alley Cat Allies Community Cat Colony Tracking System](#)

Table 1: Shelter Intake Data

	Level of importance	How to track	What it tells you	Example
Intake (overall)	Essential	For shelters with a high volume of animals, it's recommended that you use tracking software such as Chameleon or PetPoint to count each individual animal.	Intake decreasing over time suggests a reduction in your community's free-roaming cat population.	In Las Vegas, Nevada, feline intake fell 32% within three years of the CCP launch, from about 12,100 in 2015 to about 8,200 in 2018.
Intake by age	Essential	Enter the estimated date of birth (DOB) at intake. This allows you to easily calculate age at intake and age at outcome. You can also develop age ranges for reporting (e.g., up to eight weeks, two to six months, adult, senior).	Effective CCPs should experience a gradual decrease in intake of kittens under eight weeks of age, signifying fewer litters being born to free-roaming cats and, over time, a reduction in the community cat population.	In 2016, Baltimore, Maryland, saw 39% fewer kittens (up to four months of age) entering the shelter compared to 2012, the year before the program started.
Intake by exact address	Essential	When possible, enter the exact address for all intakes. This helps define areas of high intake so you can create targeted programs to decrease the number of cats coming into your facility.	Effective CCPs track exact addresses so they can run neighborhood "hot spot" reports. These reports show where targeted TNVR should be completed, as these locations are likely the places where additional cats needing to be trapped are living.	In Louisville, Kentucky, Alley Cat Advocates identified one ZIP code as the location with the highest percentage of feline intakes at Metro Animal Services. After an eight-month TNVR effort, they were able to decrease intakes for that ZIP code by 51%.

Summary: Combining intake information broken down by age and specific neighborhoods can help you determine which areas to target first, and then give you a clear picture of your program's success over time. It can also help you refine the program along the way to maximize impact. If interim progress reports don't indicate that intakes are declining as you hoped, it's time to re-evaluate and see if you should be targeting different areas. This information will also help you secure funding for your program, as intake statistics broken down by age and specific neighborhoods are required in most major TNVR and CCP grant applications.

Table 2: Shelter Outcome Data

	Level of importance	How to track	What it tells you	Example
Outcomes (overall)	Essential	Track in the shelter software system at the individual animal level.	In tandem with declining intakes, you should expect to see a decrease in non-live outcomes and an increase in save rate, as your shelter's lifesaving capacity expands.	Within three years, the CCP in Riverside County, California (Coachella Valley Animal Campus), saw a save rate jump from 35% in 2016 to 69% in 2019. In that time, non-live outcomes decreased by 75%. ¹
Outcomes by age	Essential	Devise a formula using the outcome date and estimated DOB.	Outcomes by age help paint a complete picture of your shelter's increase in lifesaving. You would expect to see fewer deaths across all age categories, not just some populations. For example, if fewer kittens are dying but adult cat deaths remain unchanged, this suggests a need to investigate adult cat health issues in your shelter.	When Best Friends, the Animal Care and Control Team of Philadelphia (ACCT Philly), and PetSmart Charities launched that city's Community Cats Project in mid-2014, ACCT Philly began a foster-based kitten nursery in tandem with the CCP. Together, these programs helped increase their save rate for neonatal kittens by 17% from 2013 to 2017.
Outcomes by type	Essential	This is perhaps the most essential element to track. Each outgoing animal is assigned an outcome type: adoption, returned to owner, returned to field, euthanasia, etc. (See reference to SPDA essential animal data statistics below.)	The secret to increasing your save rate is decreasing deaths and increasing live outcomes as a percentage of intakes. Many shelters see an initial dramatic spike in save rate as policies change to get more community cats out alive. The true challenge is continually finding ways to increase live outcomes, which, in combination with intake reductions from the program, can translate into sustainable lifesaving for cats.	In 2014, the first year of the CCP in Pima County, Arizona, the save rate for cats jumped 35% compared to 2013 (from 51% to 79%). This was the result of a 49% reduction in shelter deaths and a 21% decrease in live intakes.

¹ For a discussion of save rate, live release rate and other related metrics, see *What Is Your Rate? Understanding the Asilomar Live Release Rate, ASPCA Live Release Rate and Save Rate*.

Table 2, continued

	Level of importance	How to track	What it tells you	Example
Nuisance calls	Essential	Keep a call log of incoming complaints related to free-roaming cats. (It's important to distinguish between inquiries and complaints.)	While not as dramatic as other lifesaving results, decreased complaint calls can be helpful when making a case for your program to local government. Fewer calls means fewer upset residents and less staff time spent responding to the calls (i.e., a cost savings).	In Harrington, Delaware, where 550 cats (93% of the pre-trapping count) were sterilized and vaccinated, the shelter saw a 98% reduction in the number of cat-related nuisance complaints. ²

Note: Shelter Pet Data Alliance (SPDA), a data analysis platform, utilizes essential animal data statistics that all shelters should track. Learn more in this [Gathering Data for Shelters](#) e-learning module.

² Source: Office of Animal Welfare, Delaware Division of Public Health.

Table 3: CCP Data to Collect

Data on groups of cats

- Unique identifier (assign a unique ID number to each group of cats)
- Address (including ZIP code)
- Total number of cats
- Number of original members and number of “new arrivals”
- Number needing spay/neuter (update as program proceeds)
- Additional notes

Caregiver contacts

- ID: the unique number you assigned (there can be multiple contacts per group, all with the same ID)
- Name
- Address (not necessarily where the cats live; include ZIP code)
- Phone
- Email address
- Additional notes

Cat details (for each cat trapped)

- Group ID (unique number you assigned)
- Estimated date of birth
- Name
- Sex
- Description (create a drop-down menu of items to choose from)
- Microchip number
- Intake date
- Origin (trapped by program, resident, shelter, etc.)
- Shelter ID number, if pulled from shelter
- Surgery date
- Surgery type (spay: pregnant, in heat, normal, abnormal; neuter: normal, abnormal)
- Clinic name
- Other medical information
- Outcome date
- Outcome type
- Additional notes

APPENDIX

Tips for mapping cat communities

Know your audience

Who will be accessing the map? Will it be shared with the public or will it be for internal use only? The target audience will determine what information to include and what to leave out. For example, you do not want to include private contact information for caregivers if the map will be shared with the public. But if the map will be used only by staff for targeted trapping, then caregiver contact information is helpful.

Try to keep your map relevant, which means uploading information as it becomes available. We recommend setting a consistent schedule, updating the information on a particular day every week, month or quarter.

Create effective visuals

Use distinguishable markers that help tell your story. You can create different marker styles for different sets of data. For example, you might want age (kitten vs. cat) to be displayed in different colors, as they could be important distinctions in the analysis of your program. Or you might want to distinguish by year, so that progress can be seen year-over-year.

Change the marker colors and base map to coordinate coloring. Fun markers, such as paw prints and animal faces, can be used. However, if you're mapping a small area with many cat locations, it might be more practical to use the smallest dot size to prevent the map from being overloaded with distracting dots.

Share your creation

Visuals are a perfect way to share your successes with vital stakeholders or partners. Maps can be made public or private; you can restrict it to access only or allow editing privileges. Maps are a useful tool for garnering support for your efforts and collecting information.

Your map can even be embedded into a website, as another way to share information. The code can be exported as Google Earth KLM and KMZ files. For example, if your program has partnerships with multiple spay/neuter clinics, they can be displayed together on a map. That could make it easier for members of the public to locate the closest clinic, simplifying the scheduling process.



Photo courtesy of PetSmart Charities, Inc., and Sherrie Buzby Photography



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 23 CCP Operations: How to Address Various Complaints

How to Address Various Complaints

Introduction

The targeted TNVR (aka TNR) method at the heart of CCPs offers a common-sense, animal-friendly, effective and economical alternative to the traditional method of managing community cats (i.e., impoundment followed, in many cases, by lethal injection). In addition, TNVR has a strong basis in science and enjoys broad public support. National surveys commissioned by Best Friends in 2014 and 2017 found that Americans prefer TNR to lethal roundups by nearly three to one.

Nevertheless, we must recognize that some people object to free-roaming cats on their property. Cats can cause property damage (e.g., leaving scratches on cars, urinating on patio furniture) and some of their behaviors associated with mating (fighting, yowling, etc.) can be annoying.¹

Keep in mind that cat-related complaints existed long before the CCP was implemented; the CCP is not the cause of most of these complaints. In fact, with the CCP in place, residents receive more helpful resources than ever. Don't forget: We all want to reduce the number of community cats.

Spaying or neutering community cats generally eliminates “nuisance” behaviors, thereby addressing many of the most common complaints. For example, getting the cats spayed or neutered through TNVR will lessen the cats’ hormone-driven behaviors, such as roaming, spraying of urine and fighting. And many of the other complaints can be resolved by using the various humane deterrents available. (See the information on humane deterrents below.)

No successful CCP is complete without staff and volunteers who are properly trained in complaint mitigation. Whether you are an animal control officer, staff member, caregiver, volunteer or neighbor, you will come across people who are upset about outdoor cats. The first step to becoming proficient in nuisance mitigation techniques is knowing that you will encounter these issues in the field and while talking with residents on the phone. Resolving these issues requires patience, perseverance and professionalism.

This chapter is intended to help those leading a CCP, volunteers and field service staff address complaint calls effectively and efficiently. Often, a shelter’s field services and dispatch staff will be the “first responders,” but not always. In any case, it’s best if all staff can effectively address objections raised by residents skeptical of — or even vehemently opposed to — the CCP. (See Chapter 12, “Working with Field Services and Dispatch Staff,” for additional information on this topic.)

People want to be heard

No one likes to be ignored. Sometimes when we contact our local government offices and agencies — whether it’s the animal shelter or the water department — we fail to get what we consider a satisfactory response. Perhaps we receive no response at all. Naturally, this only increases our level of frustration.

Unfortunately, this is all too often the case when stakeholders and staff are not fully aware of what the key CCP talking points are and how to give residents consistent messaging. When residents finally reach someone who can convey accurate information about the CCP, they are sometimes very frustrated.

When interacting with a complainant, the best way to proceed at first is to listen more than you speak. Keeping in mind that it’s natural for a complainant to feel that TNVR seems counterintuitive as a way to solve the problem, listen carefully and try to understand the complainant’s concerns. After you’ve built rapport, you can educate the complainant about the effectiveness of TNVR and dispel misconceptions about it.

¹ This does not, however, mean that the mere presence of community cats constitutes a nuisance under the provisions of local ordinances. Please see *Community Cats: Public Policy and Legal Issues* for additional information.

The primary goal of the first interaction (over the phone or in person) is not to persuade complainants that TNVR is the best option or even that the CCP can help them. The goal is simply to listen and acknowledge the validity of their concerns. To be clear, though, this must be “active listening,” in which you demonstrate a high degree of engagement through, for example, eye contact (if you’re communicating in person) or verbal acknowledgments. It is not merely staying silent.

Active listening can also provide clues that you can use to communicate effectively with the complainant. Individuals have different communication styles and really listening to the person’s concerns can help you guide the conversation in a positive direction.

If nothing else, this approach might create the foundation for future respectful, solutions-oriented conversations. In some instances, once complainants have had the opportunity to fully express their concerns, you might have an opening to explain the CCP’s objective (to reduce the number of free-roaming cats in the community), the way it works and the services offered.

In fact, sometimes this is all it takes. Once people feel heard, and learn a bit about the CCP, they often realize that we’re all in this together and that the program actually meets their needs, too. And once complainants know that the CCP has the broad support of their neighbors, animal services and elected officials, they might be reluctant to stand out from the crowd — and therefore be a bit more tolerant of cats traveling across their property.

Staying calm

Accepting the fact that you will encounter disagreeable residents at times will help you with the most important part of complaint mitigation — staying calm. The resident has often been dealing with the issue for a while and has finally gotten fed up enough to make a call or ask for help. If not managed properly, outdoor cats can be unpleasant neighbors, so it’s not unreasonable to be upset when your front porch constantly smells of cat urine and the paint on your car is scratched by cat claws.

When people get angry or combative, it’s likely because they are desperate to find a solution to the problem. To help them find a solution, it’s important that you stay calm, focus on listening and try to acknowledge the validity of their concerns. Give them time to vent and explain the situation before you offer any solutions or resources; then, tailor your response to the individual’s specific concerns.

People often have already made up their minds about acceptable solutions to the problem and TNVR isn’t generally one of them. Your role is to listen, share information and work to address the person’s complaint with a response that is in the best interest of everyone, humans and cats alike.

It takes a village

While we might not be the best of friends with our neighbors, most of us do choose to be neighborly. After all, it’s no fun engaging in a feud with the same folks with whom we share a property line or public park, or whose kids go to the same school as ours.

It’s often helpful if complainants know that managing the population of free-roaming cats is more than their issue; it’s a neighborhood issue. Just as the problem was not created by any one resident or household, the solution will not come from any one resident or household. Some residents will be actively involved in the trapping and neutering or spaying of the cats, for example, while others will manage feeding stations. Some may choose to be involved less directly, by volunteering with door-to-door canvassing or making donations.

Residents who complain about the cats are probably less likely to participate in the program. However, once they understand that their neighbors are working together toward a solution that will benefit the entire neighborhood (the CCP being a vast improvement over the costly, ineffective traditional approach), these people are much more likely to at least accept the CCP.

Explaining what doesn't work

There are typically only three potential outcomes for trap and removal efforts: The cats are impounded followed by lethal injection, the cats are relocated, or the cats are socialized and adopted. Here are some details on why those strategies don't solve the problems that some people associate with free-roaming cats.

Trap and impound. No community has ever succeeded in using this method to solve a “feral cat problem.” Litter-bearing mammals will breed to the capacity of the environment. If a cat is trapped and impounded, the food and resources he was consuming will become available to the remaining cats at that location and will lead to new cats moving into the area. If the remaining unsterilized cats have access to these newly available resources, their litter sizes will increase, leading to an increase in the cat population. The trap and impound method has not only proven to be ineffective at reducing the population of cats, it is inhumane and expensive to carry out.



Relocation. Relocation is not a feasible solution to issues related to community cats. For the reasons described above, it will not solve the underlying problem. If a cat is removed, more cats will come in her place. It is extremely stressful and damaging to cats if they are trapped and put in an area that they are not familiar with and in which they do not know where to find food, water or shelter. They are taken away from their caregivers and their home. Many of them will panic, run off and get lost. To avoid this scenario as much as possible, a time- and resource-intensive acclimation process is necessary.

Socialization and adoption. Most people are not familiar with cat socialization and feral cat behavior. You need to explain to them that feral cats cannot be socialized and are generally not candidates for adoption, especially with the limited space and resources of municipal shelters. Even if community cats are friendly with specific caregivers or when they are outside, they often fail to thrive indoors or in a cage, refuse to use a litter box, and may even become aggressive. These cats are friendly because they have someone who cares for them. They do not need to be rescued and adopted; they already have a home.

The main socialization period for cats is between two and eight weeks of age. If a cat is not socialized to humans during this critical period, the cat will likely not be able to be socialized properly. Kittens under eight weeks of age can be socialized and adopted into homes, but this is not something that can be done with the limited resources of a high-intake municipal shelter. Plus, it is always best to leave kittens with their mother during this critical time.

The shelter environment is dangerous to kittens, putting them at risk of contracting life-threatening illnesses. And impounding kittens puts other animals at risk of euthanasia because of the limited space in shelters. Instead of offering impoundment for kittens, you can encourage caregivers or people who find kittens to socialize and find homes for the kittens on their own or by using local rescue resources. If the person is not willing to do this, recommend TNVR for the mom and the kittens once they are eight weeks old.

Mapping the problem

In your initial contact with a complainant, you'll want to focus on understanding the situation as completely as possible. As with any case report, record the contact information for all involved parties; in most cases, there is a complainant and a caregiver. Record the details of the situation, including the specific problems that the cats are causing, the number of cats, the location of feeding stations and the details of the properties involved.

It may be helpful to sketch a map of the property and mark the locations where cats are passing through or causing issues. This map will help you better determine locations for humane deterrents later. In most situations, the issue is rooted in the behavior of the cats rather than the existence of the cats themselves. Often, helping the complainants understand the cats' behavior can help them understand that the behavior (not the cat) is the real issue.

Once you fully understand the situation, offer solutions that fit the complaint, tailoring your recommendations to the specific situation. Sterilization, for example, helps to control the cat population and to stop nuisance behaviors such as spraying, fighting and roaming. Some issues, such as property damage, will not be solved with spay/neuter but can be easily resolved using humane deterrents.

It is important to approach each conversation with respect and empathy. Most people do not want to harm the cats, but they are desperate for an effective solution. You can offer them a lasting solution to the problem while keeping the cats safe.

Offering solutions

Here are potential solutions that you can offer to complainants:

- Nuisance behaviors solved by spay or neuter: Behaviors such as spraying, fighting, mating and roaming are eliminated through spay or neuter surgery. Once the cats are sterilized, the hormones driving these behaviors dissipate, resulting in suppression of the nuisance behaviors.
- Nuisance behaviors solved by use of deterrents: Behaviors that cannot be solved with spay or neuter (such as destruction of property, urinating or defecating on property, scratching up cars) can be solved through the use of deterrents and counseling caregivers on proper community cat care. (See the section on humane deterrents below for more information.)

Emphasizing best practices

Sometimes cat-related complaints aren't so much cat-related as caregiver-related. Whether they love cats or loathe them, residents have every right to expect caregivers to be considerate of their neighbors. Whether they care for one cat or many, caregivers should keep feeding stations and shelters clean, for example. (See Chapter 9, "Community Cat Management and Caregiver Resources" for additional information.) It is sometimes necessary for staff and volunteers to remind caregivers of their obligations, pointing out that any carelessness reflects poorly on the program — and may, as a result, put the program (and cats) at risk.

Communicating the details of this role to complainants can help them believe that you're not "taking sides" or interested only in the welfare of the cats. Everyone wants a solution that works for the entire community.

Incoming calls

Some CCPs field complaint calls directly, while others rely on calls being forwarded via a shelter's dispatch staff or a community-based 311 system. Regardless of which system is employed, it's important that all staff and volunteers responding to calls use a clear, concise description of the CCP for every call. This way, residents receive accurate, consistent information. (See the appendix for an example of such a description.)

It's also helpful if residents see the same information elsewhere (e.g., on the shelter's website, in news stories, included with utility bills). This can be an effective form of community outreach, and may reduce the number of complaint calls.

“Complaints” from good Samaritans

Sometimes what initially appears to be a complaint call is a call for help from a resident who has unwittingly taken on more than he or she can truly handle. Although many people feed stray cats (or cats they believe to be stray), not all of them ensure that the cats are spayed or neutered. This may be due to a lack of knowledge (e.g., that cats as young as four months of age can become pregnant), a lack of resources (e.g., money, transportation) or another reason.

Such situations can quickly spiral out of control — in some cases, even prompting somebody who’s been feeding cats to surrender them to the shelter. It’s important to recognize that these people are interested in the welfare of the cats and, generally speaking, can become trustworthy, compassionate caregivers with just a little bit of assistance. (See Chapter 9, “Community Cat Management and Caregiver Resources,” for additional information on this topic.)

Similar calls may come from caregivers who, for any number of reasons, have been unable to spay or neuter every cat they are caring for. The appearance of even one or two litters of kittens, for example, can be overwhelming — prompting a caregiver to reach out for help. In such cases, it’s important to recognize what sort of help is needed — and whether staff can provide that help. Sometimes, collaboration with shelter and/or field services staff will be necessary to prevent a bad situation from becoming worse. For this reason, all incoming calls must be accurately assessed and prioritized accordingly. (See Chapter 11, “Working Toward Positive Outcomes,” for additional information on this topic.)



When the complaint has little to do with the cats

As anybody with years of experience handling complaint calls can attest, some calls that appear to be cat-related are, at their core, actually disputes between neighbors, roommates or even spouses. In these situations, one party uses the cats as leverage against another party. Obviously, there’s little that staff (or the shelter’s field services staff) can do to resolve such disputes, and attempts to do so (e.g., issuing citations, removing the cats) may backfire, with the case appearing to be closed when in fact the dispute is unresolved and growing more contentious.

It’s important, therefore, for staff handling complaint calls to recognize, to the extent that’s possible, the true nature of a complaint and to know when assistance from other agencies (e.g., law enforcement, social services) might be needed. When in doubt, it’s best to check with experienced field services staff.

Other considerations: wildlife

The actual effect that cats have on wildlife populations is widely debated, but it is undeniable that some predation of wildlife occurs. While this is an unfortunate reality, the only proven method to reduce the population of outdoor cats is TNVR and RTF programs. Deterrents can be used to keep cats off property. Another recommendation is planting native plant species for birds and other wildlife to feed on, rather than

setting up commercial bird feeders, which can leave wildlife vulnerable to a variety of predators. See the additional resources at the end of the chapter for more information on this topic.

Follow-up

Because of the busy nature of shelter operations — and the low priority generally given to complaint calls — staff rarely follow up with residents who have called with cat-related complaints. More often than not, no news is considered good news. However, making follow-up calls and/or visits part of a CCP's standard operating procedures helps prevent bad situations from becoming worse — and taking up far more staff time and energy.

Proactive courtesy calls can also be helpful before returning a cat who was impounded through the shelter. It reminds the resident that the cat will be returned and opens the door for complaints and solutions to be discussed immediately, which can prevent issues from arising during the return process. Following up also gives staff the opportunity to improve the overall process for handling complaints. Staff can gain a better understanding, for example, of which humane deterrents (see below) are most effective in a particular situation or which outreach materials residents find helpful.

At a minimum, follow-up work should be done in those cases requiring future visits to a residence or property (e.g., targeted trapping to achieve the desired 75% spay/neuter threshold within a group of cats).

Measures of success

The number of incoming calls can increase following the implementation of a CCP, as residents feel more comfortable calling for assistance when they know the cats won't be in danger. Some will call simply out of curiosity about the new program. This means that the number of incoming calls alone won't show the actual impact a CCP is having on cat-related complaints.

An accurate sense of what is and isn't working to resolve complaints requires a more nuanced approach. Careful tracking of the number of calls requiring a visit by field services staff, for example, will likely provide valuable insights. Periodic meetings for front-line staff (including field services and dispatch staff) to share results can also prove valuable, as they allow staff an opportunity to learn what others find effective. These meetings can also ensure that everyone is delivering the same message and can allow the shelter to determine if any program changes should be made. Although such efforts place an additional burden on already scarce resources, the potential return on investment is worthwhile. (See Chapter 12, "Working with Field Services and Dispatch Staff," for additional information.)

Tools

Letters of support. It may be useful to remind complainants that a CCP complies with all relevant laws and has the support of the municipal shelter and city or county elected officials. A simple one-page letter (e.g., from the shelter director or city manager) explaining this can be valuable when communicating with residents. (See the appendix for an example of such a letter.)

Humane deterrents. There are a number of humane deterrents on the market, and we recommend that a CCP have a few on hand to loan to residents interested in keeping cats off their property. A successful experience with one of these products can transform a complainant into one of the program's most enthusiastic ambassadors. Here are two effective humane deterrents:

- **ScareCrow:** With this motion-activated sprinkler, an infrared sensor responds to motion and releases a three-second blast of water. The sprinkler, which "fires" 1,000 times on one nine-volt battery, covers an area approximately 45 feet by 35 feet. The ScareCrow is available through various online retailers.
- **CatStop:** This deterrent uses a motion sensor and emits a high-pitched, ultrasonic alarm that can't be heard by humans but will frighten most cats and small dogs. You place the unit facing the area you want to protect and it covers about 300 square feet. CatStop can operate up to nine months on one

nine-volt battery and is a good choice for areas where children may be at play. The CatStop is available through various online retailers.

Here are a few other ideas for deterrents:

- Concrete pavers, river rocks, large pine cones, chicken wire (sharp edges down) or large pieces of bark can be used to cover loose soil, discouraging cats from eliminating there.
- Plant the herb rue or Coleus canina (often called the “scaredy-cat plant”), decorative plants that repel cats.
- Generously sprinkle any of the following on the ground in areas where you want to deter cats: cayenne pepper, mothballs, coffee grounds, pipe tobacco, lemongrass oil, citronella oil, eucalyptus oil or mustard oil.

From the opposite perspective, attractants can be used to keep cats within their caregivers’ property lines. Attractants include cat shelters, cat trees, scratching posts, and litter boxes or kiddie pools filled with sand or litter (which can mitigate cats defecating in the neighbors’ flower beds).

Additional information is available on the Best Friends website, where a downloadable PDF called “Solutions to Cat-Related Issues” is available. It’s useful to print out copies and give them to intake personnel and field services staff to share with residents. Also, see Best Friends’ humane deterrents video. (Links for both of these are below.)

Additional resources

- [Solutions to Cat-Related Issues](#)
- [Best Friends’ community cats page](#)
- [FAQs About Trap-Neuter-Return \(TNR\)](#)
- [Conflict Resolution for the Animal Welfare Field](#)
- [Best Friends’ humane deterrents video](#)
- [Community Cats: Conflict Management and Resolution Tips](#)
- [Fact vs. Fiction: What Every Wildlife Professional Should Know About Free-Roaming Cats](#)
- [Even Wildlife Conservationists Agree: Study Proves TNR Is the Way to Go](#)

APPENDIX

Example of talking points for responding to incoming calls



Below are questions about the community cat program that you may need to answer when speaking with local residents. Please contact 760-507-1228 or coachellacats@bestfriends.org if you have any questions, and thank you so much for caring about community cats.

Scripts for responding to phone calls

Introduction (for volunteers and Best Friends staff members)

Hi, my name is _____ and I [work/volunteer] with Best Friends Animal Society, which helps conduct a spay/neuter program in partnership with Coachella Valley Animal Campus and Palm Springs Animal Shelter. Animal control forwarded me your information and asked me to contact you regarding the cats in your neighborhood. Can you please let me know your concern about the cats?

Voicemail message (for volunteers and Best Friends staff members)

Hi, my name is _____ and I [work/volunteer] with Best Friends Animal Society, which helps conduct a spay/neuter program in partnership with Coachella Valley Animal Campus and Palm Springs Animal Shelter. Animal control forwarded me your information and asked me to contact you regarding the cats in your neighborhood. At your convenience, please call us back at 760-507-1228, and I can let you know about some options available to you in the area. Thank you so much.

Answers to questions about the program

What is the community cat pilot program?

It's a partnership among Riverside County Animal Services' Coachella Valley Animal Campus (CVAC), Palm Springs Animal Shelter (PSAS) and Best Friends Animal Society. Through this program, Best Friends sterilizes, vaccinates and ear-tips eligible community cats who have been brought into CVAC and PSAS. After spay/neuter, vaccination and ear-tipping, the cats are returned to their outdoor homes in the neighborhoods where they were originally trapped.

There is no charge for sterilization, vaccination and ear-tipping of cats, but these services are only for community (free-roaming) cats who have been admitted to CVAC or PSAS.

Best Friends, CVAC and PSAS will be working with a trapper to assist in community trap-neuter-return (TNR). We are happily taking TNR requests in the Coachella Valley.

The program doesn't include removal or relocation of animals, but we do have humane deterrents available for residents who do not want cats on their property.

Which area does the program cover?

The program helps cats in the Coachella Valley in areas serviced by PSAS or CVAC. Please contact Best Friends at 760-507-1228 for more information.



Which cats are eligible for the program?

This chart shows the eligibility criteria.

Eligible cat	Ineligible cat
Cat (feral or tame) is successfully living outdoors at a known location (i.e., cat is healthy or has a treatable medical issue).	Cat has a major health issue. (Minor medical issues, such as an ear infection, may be treated.)
Cat's return location is in a CVAC or PSAS jurisdiction.	Cat's return location is not in a CVAC or PSAS jurisdiction.
Cat is a minimum of 4 months old (unless a colony caregiver has been identified).	Cat is under 4 months old (without an identifiable feeding source).
Cat does not have an ID connected to an owner (i.e., unregistered microchip, no collar tag, no owner was located).	Cat has ID for a possible owner. (Cat could be eligible after holding period if owner is not located.)

Are all cats who enter the program returned to their neighborhoods?

Staff at CVAC and PSAS decide if a cat will be returned. There are many options once a cat enters CVAC or PSAS, including return to the original location after spay/neuter, adoption, euthanasia or transfer to a rescue group. The cats can be returned if they come from the targeted jurisdictions, if they are healthy and do not have an identifiable owner, and if their location has not been deemed a public health and safety risk by animal control.

Are tax dollars being used to put cats back in neighborhoods?

No. This program is being funded with grants from Maddie's Fund and Best Friends Animal Society. Best Friends is working in partnership with CVAC and PSAS.

Who can I contact for more information on the community cat program? And when can I expect a call back?

The program hotline is 760-507-1228. The email is coachellacats@bestfriends.org. It can take a few days for a phone call to be returned because of the large number of calls, but we make every effort to return calls within 72 hours. Email is preferred and responded to more quickly, so please email if possible.

Answers to questions about TNR and borrowing traps

Why is TNR better than just removing the cats?

TNR is the only humane way to help keep community cats safe and out of shelters, while gradually reducing their numbers. The trap-and-remove method simply doesn't work because it doesn't stop the cats who are left behind from breeding. Because of that, the number of cats will grow as the remaining cats have more kittens. But with TNR, if all the cats are fixed, the number of cats will decline over time. If someone is feeding the cats, please let us know who that person is and we can direct him/her to a local group to help get the cats spayed or neutered.

I'd like to borrow a trap for TNR. What's the process?

Please contact 760-507-1228 or coachellacats@bestfriends.org. Your name will be added to the list to borrow a trap or to be given trapping assistance as resources allow. You may also search online to locate TNR and spay/neuter services available in your area.





How do I know if a cat has already been sterilized?

Cats who have been fixed and vaccinated will have the tip of their left or right ear removed during spay/neuter surgery (more often the left ear). Called an ear-tip, the cut will be about a quarter-inch straight across the top of the ear. Since an ear-tip means a cat has already been sterilized, if you trap a cat with an ear-tip, please release him where you trapped him, but only if he appears healthy.

Can I borrow a trap to have the cats removed from my property?

We do not loan traps to people for purposes other than spay/neuter.

Answers to questions from people complaining about cats

There are nuisance cats in my neighborhood and I don't want them around. Can the community cat program help?

We understand that not everybody likes community cats. The overall goal of this program is to reduce the number of community cats and solve nuisance behavior problems in humane ways.

Nuisance complaints associated with community cats are typically the result of behaviors associated with mating (for example, yowling, spraying, fighting). Sterilizing community cats resolves most of these complaints.

If you do not want the animals on your property, even after they've been spayed or neutered, we can provide easy, inexpensive solutions to help you humanely deter cats. Please contact Best Friends at 760-507-1228 or coachellacats@bestfriends.org for details.

I know the person who is feeding the stray cats in my neighborhood. Can that person help with this problem?

If you give us any information you have on the person feeding the cats (name, address, phone number) and the number of cats, we will forward the information to a local spay/neuter group so they can make sure the cats are sterilized and can no longer reproduce. We can also speak to the person caring for the cats and give him/her tips on how to care for them in a way that mitigates nuisance issues for neighbors.

Please be aware that once the cats are fixed, the nuisance behaviors (for example, fighting and spraying) will be reduced. In addition, we have some humane deterrents that we would be happy to give you to help keep cats off your property.

Answers to questions about humane deterrents

How do these deterrents work?

We use a variety of humane devices and techniques to help keep community cats off people's properties. Some examples are motion-activated sprinklers, ultrasonic alarms, digging deterrents, and scents that repel cats. We can work directly with property owners to offer the best suggestions for their individual issues.

How can I get a deterrent?

You can contact Best Friends at 760-507-1228 or coachellacats@bestfriends.org. You can then pick one up at CVAC at 72050 Pet Land Place, Thousand Palms, CA 92276. We will have one set aside with your name on it.

(Please update the call log with the information to set aside a deterrent for the caller.)



Answers to questions about adoption of cats

Do you accept cats for adoption through the program?

The program does not accept cats for adoption, but any cat who is brought into the shelter may be evaluated by CVAC and PSAS for adoption or other outcomes, including trap-neuter-return. Please be aware that CVAC is not yet a no-kill facility.

I have kittens who I would like to get adopted. Can I bring them to CVAC or PSAS?

CVAC and PSAS are both dedicated to building communities that respect and serve both people and animals. However, our shelters are frequently at or over capacity, and we cannot guarantee a positive outcome for all the animals that come into our care. We encourage you to seek other positive alternatives for these kittens, and are happy to assist you in doing so.

Information on conflict resolution

Conflicts typically arise from a clash of goals, values, beliefs or understandings related to a particular issue. The issue often involves high stakes, as well as an emotional component for one or more parties involved. Conflict is not necessarily an issue of right versus wrong, but rather one of incompatible viewpoints.

In the case of community cats, some people enjoy the cats' presence in their neighborhood and want to ensure their comfort and safety. This group includes staff, volunteers and caregivers associated with community cat programs. Meanwhile, others feel the cats are an unwelcome nuisance and want them promptly removed.

The primary aim of any conflict resolution or management technique is to identify a common goal. The common goal among people on both sides of this issue is to reduce the number of community cats and mitigate or eliminate nuisance behaviors created by these cats.

Step 1: Determine your involvement.

First, decide whether or not engaging with a particular person or conflict makes sense. Safety should be your first priority. Avoid engaging with anybody who appears threatening or aggressive. If someone requests that you leave his/her property, do so immediately.

Step 2: Try to understand where the other person is coming from.

Avoid making assumptions about people and adopting negative impressions before gathering the facts and hearing all sides of the story. Details are important. Consider the following script as an example of how to manage a conversation with a community member who has a complaint about community cats:

Volunteer: *So, I understand that some cats are creating some problems for you. I'd like to get some more info on specifically what the problem is so that I can help. Can you tell me what's happening?*

Community member: *They're going to the bathroom in my flowers and ruining them.*

Volunteer: *Well, that's no fun. OK, are the flowers in a garden area or in flower pots? I ask because we have several different solutions for keeping cats out of various types of gardens*

The person may even show you the area, which allows you to gather more information and formulate a solution suited to his or her particular problem.



Step 3: Work toward gaining trust and finding common ground.

Appeal to people's sense of empathy and the common goal:

- Cat caregivers did not create the homeless cat problem. We're just the people responding to it.
- Cat caregivers and volunteers care about community cats, just as people do their own pets. We recognize that the cats have individual needs and personalities, and we care about their quality of life
- None of us wants the cats causing problems for our neighbors. But we also know that simply removing the cats is only a temporary solution that doesn't actually address the source of the problem.
- We all want fewer cats on the streets. Reducing the community cat population means better overall welfare for the cats and fewer nuisance behaviors. (Don't bring up more specific nuisance behaviors — less howling, less spraying — unless the person has already referred to them.)

Explain the reality of the community cat situation:

- Any environment offering sufficient food, water and shelter will eventually attract cats. By removing the cats, space becomes available for more unvaccinated cats to quickly move in, reproduce and recreate the original problem. Through trap-neuter-return (TNR), the cats are spayed or neutered and vaccinated, which eliminates the chance for population growth, and addresses a number of health concerns.
- Cats will always be present in the community, one way or another. Through TNR, we can assist with spay/neuter and provide free humane cat deterrents

- Attempting to bait and trap cats on your own typically results in attracting more cats to your property, rather than fewer, which only adds to your problem. Instead, we provide you with effective methods for keeping them away from your home.

You can acknowledge that it seems counterintuitive that returning the cats to the same area would actually reduce the problems, and then offer further explanation. For example:

I completely understand that you just want the cats gone and that, obviously, the cats have caused some issues for you. I was also pretty skeptical about whether or not TNR would work when I first heard about it. And that's the case with most shelters, too. But shelters finally decided to give it a shot when it was obvious that the same people were trapping cats and bringing them in over and over again, year after year. They finally decided that removing and killing the cats wasn't working.

One man I spoke to said he couldn't believe it actually worked, but that after we did TNR in his neighborhood and gave him some information on how to keep cats out of his yard, he didn't have to spend time trapping or dealing with cats for the first time in 12 years. He admitted that a cat still wandered through once in awhile, but it wasn't a big deal.

Most community cat problems have only four possible solutions, but only one of them will be both convenient for you and ultimately solve your problem:

1. Do nothing (which usually makes matters worse).
2. Repeatedly trap the cats and take them to the shelter (a temporary solution at best).



3. Repeatedly trap the cats and relocate them (often considered abandonment and is illegal).
4. Let us try TNR and see how it works.

Step 4: Resolve the problem.

Once you've reviewed all the facts with the person and discussed the issue, map out a customized solution for that individual. Be careful to not make any commitments that you might not be able to keep. If you offer to supply someone with a motion-activated sprinkler the following week, for example, make sure you follow through. If you can't follow up on the request, find someone else who can. (Sometimes, we want to protect the cats so much, we're inclined to overcommit.)

Be sure to follow up. See how the plan worked, and be prepared to develop a new one, if necessary. Make sure to define any future expectations.

Step 5: Recover and go on.

Remember that you can't make everybody happy. You will occasionally encounter people who just won't be satisfied with any solution, and that's just the way it goes. Focus on all of the positive changes that you've already created for cats and community members, and then keep moving forward.)

Engaging in active listening

You can always express genuine empathy for someone without agreeing with his or her point of view. So, make sure you don't accidentally reinforce someone's beliefs or concerns by using phrases like "I agree" or "Yes, that's true." Instead, use phrases like "I hear you saying ..." or "I understand that" The idea is to show the person that you understand and empathize with his or her concerns.

Managing yourself during conflict

When things get heated, it can be challenging to stay calm and collected. Here are some suggestions (or perhaps reminders) for when you find yourself in the middle of a difficult situation:

- Think before you speak or act. Be thoughtful and proactive, not reactive.
- Stay calm and objective (easier said than done, we know). Emotional responses usually lead to more conflict — and regrets.
- Be sincere and upfront with the other person. Don't waste time or avoid addressing the issue.
- Make sure you're having a conversation, and not lecturing. It's important that the other person gets a chance to speak as well, and preferably earlier in the conversation.
- Put yourself in the person's place. You're more likely to resolve the problem if you're able to walk in the other person's shoes for a moment to appreciate his or her perspective.
- Be flexible and tolerant. Differences in opinion are what make the world go around. Keep an open mind. Embrace complex situations and think of everything as a learning experience.

Thank you for so much for being part of this program and helping community cats — some of the most at-risk pets in shelters.

**Together, we can
Save Them All®.**



**SAVE
THEM
ALL**



#ThanksToMaddie

Example of letter of support from a municipality



Animal Care Services
 4710 State Highway 151
 San Antonio, TX 78227
 210.207.4PET www.saacs.net



CITY SUPPORTS TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN FOR COMMUNITY CATS

The City of San Antonio Animal Care Services Department supports and embraces Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), a program for community cats. We currently support this program by providing free spay/neuter services for community cats in targeted zip codes. The services for selected zip codes are funded by both a grant from Best Friends Animal Society as well as the Department's Budget. For the other zip codes in San Antonio and the surrounding areas, The San Antonio Feral Cat Coalition (SAFCC) provides subsidized low-cost surgeries, resources and volunteer assistance. SAFCC is a local non-profit, all volunteer organization. Find out more at their website www.sanantonioperalcats.org. You can also contact them by calling their helpline at 210-877-9067 or by sending an email to info@sanantonioperalcats.org.

TNR has assisted many communities across the United States in dealing with their cat overpopulation challenges. In accordance with Chapter 5 of the City of San Antonio Municipal Ordinance, spayed or neutered outdoor cats are legal. As part of this program, any feral or community cats brought into the shelter as strays will be spayed or neutered, vaccinated, ear tipped and returned to the area that they were taken from, provided they are healthy and appropriate for surgery (weight and age).

As part of this nationally accepted program, cats are returned back to their original territory fully vaccinated and sterilized. They have no more kittens, their population stabilizes, declining over time. Bad behaviors associated with mating, such as yowling, spraying and fighting, decreases. The cats live out their lives and over time, the colony reduces in numbers as the cats naturally die off while no new kittens are born into the colony.

The typical trap-and-kill methods used in the past were cruel, inhumane and ineffective at solving the cat overpopulation issue. It just doesn't work. Worse, trapping and killing actually perpetuates the problem due to the "vacuum effect". This "vacuum effect", which happens when cats are trapped and removed from the colony, allows other cats to move in and take advantage of the newly available resources and to breed as early as 4 months. Attempting to relocate cats also creates a vacuum effect. Think about this--if just 3 kittens survive in a litter, those kittens and their descendants can produce over 11,000 cats in 5 years! TNR solves the problem at its root by making sure the cats are healthy and cannot reproduce.

Below are a few frequently asked questions:

What if the cat is sick or injured?

All cats brought into our shelter receive a medical examination. Sick/injured cats will not be returned to their colony.

Who is going to care for the cat, once it returns?

Cats coming into the program that are a healthy weight most likely have someone in the neighborhood feeding and helping care for them. If you want to learn how to care for community cats, visit the website at felines.bestfriends.org

What if I don't want the cat back in my neighborhood?

The law allows for outdoor cats. It does not require that a cat have an owner or a care taker. As such, the cat will be returned to where it was impounded or trapped. ACS and the program coordinator can assist you with humane, legal deterrents to keep cats off your property.



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 24 CCP Operations: Saving Kittens

Saving Kittens

Introduction

Programs focused on saving kittens are not only a great asset to CCPs, they are among the most essential programs being used to save the lives of community cats and their offspring. From foster programs to kitten nurseries, all of them are focused on increasing lifesaving for this vulnerable population. This chapter gives an overview of one specific program and contains information that can be extracted and adapted based on your agency's resources to create the best fit for your community.

The following information has been extracted and adapted from the *Best Friends Kitten Care Center Volunteer Manual*, developed for use at the Best Friends Lifesaving Center in Salt Lake City, Utah.



About the Best Friends Kitten Care Center

Best Friends Animal Society is working to increase the number of pets saved in Utah shelters each year. Newborn kittens are especially at risk of dying in shelters because they are too young to take care of themselves, they are weeks away from being eligible for adoption, and they are more likely to contract and transmit disease than other animals in shelters. Most shelters have difficulty finding and dedicating the resources necessary for caring for newborn kittens and the steady flow of feline newcomers throughout “kitten season” further exacerbates the problem. Fostering not only helps kittens find adoptive families, it saves their lives and greatly decreases the number of cats and kittens who do not survive in shelters.

The Best Friends Kitten Care Center in Salt Lake City is one of the many programs that Best Friends has developed to achieve this goal. The center provides lifesaving care to kittens coming into shelters across Utah. The center acts as both a fostering hub and a resource center where neonates are admitted, assessed by a veterinarian and sent to foster homes until they can eat on their own. The center initially was a kitten nursery providing around-the-clock care to newborn kittens; now, the main focus is kitten fostering and the goal is to not have a kitten stay overnight at the center unless it's absolutely necessary.

Kittens at the center are eligible for foster care or transfer to one of our coalition partners at any time. If people are interested in fostering, they fill out a foster application online and attend a scheduled orientation and training session. In this session, care center staff go over the kitten foster care manual and answer any questions the new foster caregivers have about the program. To pick up kittens, the foster volunteers schedule an appointment with the foster coordinator, who assesses what age of kittens will work best with the foster volunteer's lifestyle.

Care for foster kittens includes a strict feeding schedule, cleaning, and lots of snuggling and playtime. Foster caregivers are also asked to provide transportation to and from veterinary appointments as needed. When volunteers pick up their foster kittens, they receive a Kitten Foster Goal Sheet, which contains the dates that the kittens' vaccines are due and any pertinent medical or behavioral information needed for that group of kittens. If the kittens need medication, care center staff show the volunteers how to administer it before they take the animals home.

We prefer to have at least two kittens in a foster home so they can socialize with and learn from each other. Sometimes there are special circumstances in which a kitten goes to a foster home alone, but it's usually for a medical or behavioral reason.

Kittens are very susceptible to illness and can carry or catch dangerous ailments easily. For this reason, we require that foster caregivers isolate foster kittens with their own supplies for at least two weeks to try and ensure that the kittens are healthy before exposing them to any personal pets.

Once kittens weigh 700 grams (about 1.5 pounds) and if they have no ongoing medication or medical issues, they leave their foster homes to be spayed or neutered and given age-appropriate vaccinations. After the kittens' surgeries, foster volunteers can either pick them up so they can recover at home for a few days or they can stay at the Best Friends Lifesaving Center for recovery and then be placed for adoption. Foster caregivers are also given a foster animal biography form to fill out so they can tell potential adopters about any special or fun personality traits that the kittens have or anything else that they think adopters would want to know about the kittens.

Although fostering kittens is a lot of work, it is a very rewarding experience. By participating in this program, you are saving lives and helping kittens find families. Please see the Q&A section in the appendix for more information on the kitten care center.

Transitioning to a foster-based model

Kitten nurseries are costly and require a lot of staff resources. For these reasons, many shelters are moving toward a community-supported solution, which involves greatly expanding the foster base by proactively encouraging community members to participate in fostering and save the lives of kittens. Through foster programs, shelters also increase their capacity, giving them more flexibility and allowing them to have more positive outcomes for kittens. For more information, see the "Additional Resources" section at the end of this chapter and Chapter 26, "Additional Cat Lifesaving Programs."

Caring for kittens in your facility

With a foster-based model, most of the kittens who enter a shelter will ideally be sent out to foster homes before the end of their arrival day. However, it is important to have protocols and procedures in place for staff and volunteers for the times when the kittens are in the shelter's care. This section describes in detail how to properly care for very young kittens.

Keeping kittens warm. It is crucial to keep the kittens' living space warm, dry and draft-free. If a kitten feels cool or cold, warm him or her immediately (see instructions below). Never try to warm a kitten with your own body heat because your body temperature is much lower than that of a kitten, and the kitten's body temperature could continue to fall. If a kitten's body temperature falls too low, he can begin to fade and may not survive. Kittens also need to be warm to be able to eat.

When born, a kitten's body temperature is 97 degrees Fahrenheit. This temperature gradually increases and, by four weeks of age, normal body temperature is 99.5 to 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit. Kittens under three weeks of age cannot regulate their body temperature.

To keep kittens warm:

- Place a heated snuggle disc (a Snuggle Safe Pet Bed Microwave Heating Pad) wrapped in bedding in the kittens' cage. Snuggle discs are heated for four to five minutes in the microwave, based on microwave wattage (see instructions on the microwave), and will stay warm for hours. Heat only when the discs are cold, since too much heating can cause them to deteriorate.
- Check the discs at each feeding to be sure they are still warm.



- Never place a kitten directly on an uncovered snuggle disc or heating pad.
- There should be space in the kennel where the kittens can move away from the disc if they're too hot.
- Check the bedding at each feeding to make sure it is dry; change it if it's wet. Wet or damp bedding can chill the kittens even if there's a heat source in the kennel.
- If kittens are soiled, clean them gently, taking care to dry them with a towel thoroughly before returning them to their kennel.



- Before you begin feeding, check that the kitten is warm. Never feed a cold kitten. If a kitten feels cold despite being on a heat source, immediately work to warm the kitten up and alert a veterinarian.
- Don't allow kittens to become chilled while feeding them. Make sure they stay on the heating pad while they're out of the kennel.
- Food should be warm so that the kittens do not become chilled. Kittens cannot properly digest food when they are cold.

Weight management. Weight is an important indicator of a kitten's development and health. Kittens weigh 90-100 grams (3 1/4 to 3 1/2 ounces) at birth and should gain approximately 10–15 grams (1/3 to 1/2 ounce) per day. They should double their birth weight by seven days and triple it by 21 days.

To track their growth, weigh them before and after every feeding with a small scale. It's very important to keep accurate records of each kitten's growth because weight loss of 10% or more of the kitten's body weight is cause for alarm and a veterinarian should be alerted.

Exercise and socialization. Kittens need exercise to promote muscular, circulatory and mental development. They will really start to play and explore at about three to four weeks of age. As appropriate, provide toys and enrichment items in their kennel. These toys should be replaced regularly to avoid the spread of disease. Make sure that all the kittens get some hands-on socialization time on a regular basis.

To minimize the risk of infectious disease, different groups of kittens should not be mixed unless the veterinary team deems it appropriate. For example, in the Best Friends Kitten Care Center, healthy single kittens are mixed with other healthy single kittens for the purpose of socialization. Single kittens who are on medication may be mixed with kittens who have the same medical condition.

Please see the "Additional Resources" section at the end of this chapter for more information on general kitten care.

Feeding kittens

Feeding groups. Based on their age and size, kittens can be separated into groups for feeding. For example, in the Best Friends Kitten Care Center, kittens are divided into three groups:

- Bottle feeders (B). Kittens without erupted incisors who need to be bottle-fed formula are listed as B kittens. As a general guideline, B kittens who weigh under 200 grams (7 ounces) are bottle-fed every two hours throughout the day. B kittens weighing more than 200 grams are fed every four hours.
- Weaning (W). When kittens' teeth erupt, they will begin to be weaned off the bottle and onto kitten food. As they wean, kittens are fed gruel (wet food and formula mixed together) four times per day. Initially, they may also get a bottle supplement as necessary. The focus at this time shifts from weight gain to kittens learning to eat on their own.

- Independent eaters (I). Once kittens can eat on their own, they are fed wet food three times a day and weighed at least once daily.

Formula. When mixing up kitten formula, you may need the following clean and sanitized items:

- Large stainless steel mixing bowl
- Whisk
- Funnel
- Strainer
- Measuring cup
- Water
- Powder formula
- Formula storage container

Because formula only lasts for 24 hours (refrigerated) once mixed, it is important to make only as much as you will need so that it doesn't go to waste. Once you have chosen how much you will need, measure out one part powder formula and two parts water. Whisk thoroughly in the mixing bowl, then pour through the strainer and the funnel into the storage container. Label the formula with the date and time you mixed it and then refrigerate.

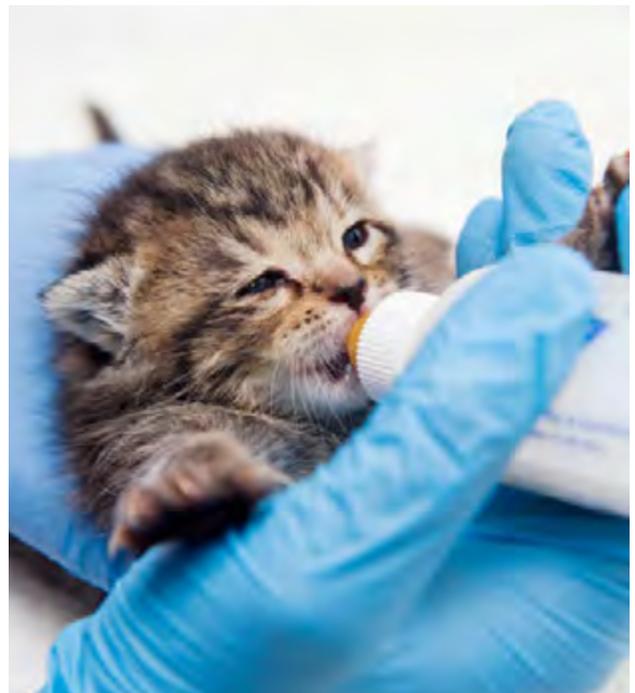
Bottle-feeding basics. Be sure to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer between litters and always wear clean gloves when feeding. When you are feeding a kitten, follow this sequence of steps: stimulate, weigh, feed, weigh, stimulate. Remember to place the kitten on his stomach on a puppy pad covering the heating pad. Never hold kittens on their backs or in the air when they are drinking from the bottle, as this could cause them to choke or aspirate. Aspiration occurs when kittens accidentally suck formula into the lungs, and you will see milk coming out of the nose. If this happens, hold the kitten upside down until he stops choking and immediately alert the veterinary staff.

Feeding reference charts should be located at each feeding station to offer guidance on approximately how much weight kittens should gain with every feeding, relative to their size. They may not gain this amount with each feeding, and that is acceptable. What is most important is that they are gaining weight overall, and that they are near their weekly milestone weights.

Keep in mind that some kittens don't take easily to bottle-feeding. Kittens rely on scent and instinct — and a mother — to guide them to feed properly. Always try to let the kitten eat from a bottle first. If a kitten is not eating a sufficient amount from the bottle, or is not eating at all, then supplementing with syringe-feeding may be appropriate.

Syringe-feeding. Bottle-feeding is a very foreign thing to most kittens. The bottle does not look, smell or taste like their mother, so it can take several feedings for a kitten to get used to the bottle. In these situations, or if a kitten does not seem to be eating or gaining weight appropriately, syringe-feeding is an acceptable process.

Weaning. At three to four weeks, a kitten's teeth will begin to break through the skin. Around this time, kittens may start to bite the nipple. They may seem hungry yet not want to suckle, and they will have a



greatly increased appetite. These signs usually mean that they are ready to be weaned and to begin eating on their own. We recommend weaning the kittens as soon as they are ready.

Weaning kittens are fed a gruel made from wet kitten food and formula. For the first few days of weaning, their diets can be supplemented with a bottle. It is very important that all weaning kittens have access to fresh food and water in their kennels. This gives the kittens the chance to learn about solid food and water at the appropriate age. You can also introduce kittens to litter and litter boxes at this time.

Independent (weaned) kittens. At around five to six weeks of age, kittens will be eating on their own. Weaned kittens should always have dry food and water available. They can be fed wet food three to four times daily. It is still important to monitor the kittens' weight and health. At this age, they are able to use the litter box independently. They are much more active and sometimes make their kennel very messy in between feedings. When caring for these kittens, your focus should be on cleaning and socializing, since they will eat throughout the day without your help.

Stimulation for urination and defecation. Mother cats groom their kittens to stimulate urination and defecation on a regular basis. In the absence of their mothers, it becomes our responsibility. Kittens under three weeks of age won't be able to urinate and defecate on their own, so this is a crucial job.

Before and after each feeding, gently rub the kitten on or near the genitals and rectum with a baby wipe or soft paper towel. Make sure you rub only enough to get the kitten to eliminate because overstimulation will irritate the area. Keep an eye out for chafing and lingering dirt and do not let the kitten get chilled. Some additional information:



- Kittens need to be stimulated until they're about three to four weeks of age.
- Kittens should be stimulated before and after each feeding.
- Kittens should urinate every time and defecate at least once daily.
- Record the kitten's elimination on the daily care sheet, noting anything abnormal.
- If a kitten has diarrhea, make a note in the medical log and alert the veterinary staff.
- If a kitten has not defecated within the last 24 hours, please note this in the medical log.

A kitten's urine and feces are helpful indicators of health. Look at their urine and feces to make sure they appear normal. The urine should be pale yellow or clear. Normal stools for bottle babies will be yellowish and the consistency of toothpaste. The stool of weaning kittens and independent eaters should be pale to dark brown and partially formed. Note anything abnormal on the daily care sheet and in the medical log. If you see bloody stool, please alert the veterinary staff immediately.

Suckling. It is natural for kittens to suckle on each other or on your fingers, even after they've finished eating. This kind of activity, however, can cause irritation to the other kittens' fur, skin and genitals. It is a good idea to regularly check each kitten's genitals to ensure that the suckling activity is not causing problems such as swelling and redness. If this occurs, please alert the veterinary staff right away.

See the "Additional Resources" section at the end of this chapter for more information on feeding kittens.

Medical issues

Newborn kittens do not have fully developed immune systems, so they are susceptible to many illnesses and parasites, some of which they get from their mothers at birth. Kittens need proper care and attention to ensure that they grow up to be happy, healthy cats.

We recommend keeping a medical log for reporting symptoms of illness. It's important to be as specific as possible when describing symptoms. The following symptoms can be noted in the medical log:

- Sneezing
- Nasal discharge (note what color)
- Eye discharge (note what color)
- Coughing
- Diarrhea
- Straining to urinate or defecate
- Loss or decrease of appetite
- Weight plateau or weight loss over three or more feedings
- Behavior that is unusual compared to the normal behaviors of litter mates
- Vomiting (note consistency and color if possible)
- Constipation for 24 hours

Alert the veterinary staff immediately if you notice any of these symptoms:

- Aspiration (milk coming out of a kitten's nose during feeding)
- Wheezing or difficulty breathing
- Bleeding from any part of the body
- Abnormal twitches
- Walking in circles or appearing disoriented
- Loss or decrease of appetite for more than two consecutive feedings
- Change in attitude or behavior
- Lethargy
- Unable to sit or stand up
- Blue color in the nose or pads of the feet
- Excessive vomiting (note consistency and color if possible)
- Weight loss of 10% or more
- Bloody diarrhea
- Low temperature (cool to the touch)

Common illnesses in kittens

The following information is intended to help those caring for kittens better understand and recognize some of the more common illnesses in cats. Any of these illnesses can cause a loss in appetite.

Upper respiratory infection (URI). The acronym URI is used to refer to any illness that affects a cat's upper respiratory system; it is basically a kitty cold. These colds are very common in cats at shelters and kittens born outdoors.

URIs are frequently caused by herpesvirus or calicivirus. It is generally difficult to determine which virus the cat has, since they often have similar symptoms. Extra care is necessary when feeding these animals.

Signs and symptoms: Runny nose and/or eyes, sneezing, thick mucosal discharge, fever and loss of appetite. Herpesvirus may cause ocular ulcers. Calicivirus may cause painful joints, limping and oral ulcerations. Rare strains of calicivirus may cause more serious disease (or even be fatal for some kittens) but most commonly kittens show signs of typical URI with oral ulcers and/or limping.

Treatment: Medication and supportive care.

Transmission: URIs are very contagious to other cats and kittens through direct contact, and can also be transmitted via objects (called fomites) like bottles or bedding. Volunteers should be especially diligent about sanitation protocols when tending to sick kittens and should wash their hands after handling kittens with URIs. The viruses that cause URI can persist for extended periods of time in the environment, so appropriate disinfection is necessary.

Conjunctivitis. Eye infections, also known as conjunctivitis, are quite common in kittens. Sometimes a URI can move into the kitten's eyes (often due to herpesvirus), and these kittens may have eye ailments. In most cases, conjunctivitis is easily treated with eye medication. If you notice eye discharge and the kitten is not currently being treated for any eye issues, alert the veterinary staff for further evaluation and treatment.

Signs and symptoms: Watery eyes; white, yellow or green discharge. Black crust can be dried blood. The eyelids and third eyelid may be red, swollen and raised.

Treatment: Veterinary care, including eye ointment or drops, antibiotics and supportive care.

Transmission: Very contagious to other cats through direct contact via bowls, bottles, hands.

Dehydration. Just as with people, kittens must be properly hydrated to be healthy. When a kitten is not getting enough water, is vomiting, or has diarrhea or another illness, he can become dehydrated. If you believe a kitten is dehydrated, alert the veterinary staff for further evaluation.

Signs and symptoms: Dark yellow urine, decreased skin elasticity, constipation.

Treatment: Subcutaneous fluids (fluids injected under the skin) will be administered by the staff.

Transmission: Not contagious, but may be a warning sign of something more serious.

Diarrhea. Because it can rapidly dehydrate a kitten, diarrhea can be a life-threatening situation. Diarrhea is caused by a wide variety of factors, including stress, diet, parasites, illness and infection. Be sure to alert the veterinary staff when you observe any abnormal feces, so that the kitten can be evaluated and treated quickly.

Signs and symptoms: Can range from liquid stool without form to explosive drips. May also include mucous or blood.

Treatment: Various medications, depending on the cause and severity, as well as supportive care.

Transmission: Can be highly contagious, depending on the cause. Handle with caution, since diarrhea can be indicative of a more serious illness.

Panleukopenia. Panleukopenia is a viral infection that most commonly affects kittens and young cats. You may hear this disease referred to as "parvo." This is because the panleukopenia virus is a type of parvovirus and is in the same family of viruses as canine parvovirus. A veterinarian can perform a test for the presence of the parvovirus when she suspects infection.

Signs and symptoms: Sudden onset of fever, high fever, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, weight loss, lethargy, sudden death. Once a kitten has been infected, symptoms can take 3–14 days to present.

Treatment: Antibiotics and supportive care. Once panleukopenia is suspected or confirmed, the kittens are put into isolation for treatment.

Transmission: Easily transmitted through direct contact with saliva, vomit and feces. Left untreated, it is almost always fatal. Because the virus is difficult to kill and can survive in the environment for up to a year, extreme diligence is required in contamination control. Unvaccinated cats can become infected with panleukopenia simply by coming into contact with places where an infected cat has been. When a kitten is diagnosed with panleukopenia, or even suspected of having panleukopenia, the entire area must be decontaminated.

It is critical that all sanitation protocols are followed when tending to the kittens in your care so that the possibility of transmitting this disease is lessened. Staff and volunteers are strongly advised to have their personal pets vaccinated to prevent transmission of this deadly disease into their households.



Feline leukemia virus (FeLV). FeLV is a viral infection that affects a cat's immune system and bone marrow.

Signs and symptoms: There are a variety of symptoms, including a suppressed immune system. Diagnosis is made only through blood testing.

Treatment: There is no cure for FeLV, so most treatment of FeLV-positive cats involves supportive care. Because FeLV-positive cats have weaker immune systems, they need to be treated for upper respiratory infections more often than FeLV-negative cats. FeLV has a low prevalence in cat populations (usually around 3%). With such a low prevalence, the chances are high that a positive test result might be a false positive. While it was common practice at one time for shelters to routinely test every cat for FeLV, that practice is in decline. Many shelters have chosen instead to advise adopters that testing is best performed and results interpreted by a private-practice veterinarian.

Transmission: The virus is typically spread from infected cats to non-infected cats through close personal contact, usually involving saliva. It can be spread by grooming, shared food bowls, bites and other forms of close contact. It can also be transmitted from a mother cat to a kitten in utero and from the milk of an infected cat. Some less common but possible causes of transmission include fleas, blood transfusions or contaminated needles. FeLV is typically not spread through waste.

The virus does not live long outside of a cat host, so spreading FeLV via human clothing and hands is very unlikely. If an FeLV-positive cat is housed in a separate room from an FeLV-negative cat, it is unlikely that transmission will occur. To be on the safe side, food and water bowls should not be shared. If FeLV is present, it should be noted on the litter's kennel.

Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV). FIV is a virus that can cause a multitude of health problems in cats due to reduced immune system function.

Signs and symptoms: There's a variety of symptoms, including a suppressed immune system. Diagnosis is made only through blood testing.

Treatment: Supportive care.

Transmission: People cannot get FIV from cats, but it is contagious to other cats and is most commonly spread through deep bite wounds. Less commonly, FIV is transmitted by an infected mother cat during birth

or through sexual contact. Most cats with FIV live a normal life despite the virus and they can live well with other cats if there is no aggressive fighting. It is worth noting that spaying or neutering cats greatly minimizes the risk of transmission. Cats living indoors in a stable social structure have little chance of passing the disease to other cats in the household. If FIV is present, it should be noted on the litter's kennel.

Feline infectious peritonitis (FIP). FIP is a syndrome that may occur after a cat is infected with the coronavirus. If not cleared by a competent immune system, this virus can mutate within the cat's body. Once mutated, it provokes an immune response causing severe and progressive inflammation of organs and tissues. There are two types of FIP — wet and dry — though most infections present along a spectrum between the two.

Signs and symptoms: Fever, lethargy, loss of appetite, unresponsive to antibiotics. The wet form includes a large fluid-filled belly or fluid in the chest.

Treatment: There is no readily available, effective treatment for FIP, but we can treat symptoms to slow the progress until the kitten no longer exhibits an acceptable quality of life.

Transmission: FIP itself is not transmittable, but the coronavirus is, via stool and saliva. Once a kitten has contracted the coronavirus, the virus may or may not mutate into FIP. It can often look like fading kitten syndrome (see below).

Ringworm. Not an actual worm, ringworm is a fungal infection affecting the skin, hair, and occasionally the nails of animals and people. It is in the same family as athlete's foot, and is not a life-threatening condition. In fact, it does not affect the general health of animals or people. Three species of ringworm fungus most commonly affect cats and dogs. The species that affect cats and dogs can be passed between these two species as well as to humans and other species.

Signs and symptoms: Hair loss, most commonly on the face, ears and paws. Irritated, scaly skin.

Treatment: Treatment options include isolation, lime sulfur dips, topical antifungal creams and oral medications. When kittens and cats in your care have ringworm, we recommend that they be moved into medical isolation.

Transmission: Ringworm can be spread readily on grooming implements, contaminated toys and bedding, or by humans on their clothing and hands. It can be found on the hair of animals from a contaminated environment, even when the animal himself is not showing any signs of infection. Ringworm is very durable in the environment and, if left untreated, can persist for months in objects like carriers, furniture, carpets and dust. And it can infect animals housed in this contaminated environment. In nature, the incubation period for ringworm is between four days and four weeks. Close contact with the infected animal or his bedding is usually required for transmission.

Common parasites in kittens

Ear mites. Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal. If you see a dark brown discharge that looks like dirt or coffee grounds in a kitten's ears, it is probably ear mites. Ear mites can be passed from one kitten to another, but transmission usually requires direct contact.

If you see dirt in a kitten's ears, please have the kitten checked by the veterinary staff so he can be evaluated and treated. Do not clean the kitten's ears without first checking with the staff. A kitten's ear canal can be easily damaged by the improper use of cotton swabs.

Roundworms, tapeworms and hookworms. Worms affect a cat's digestive system and are very common in kittens. You can sometimes see worms in or around a kitten's rectum; you may see a long worm or what looks like rice protruding from her anus. Indications of worms are a large belly, diarrhea and an inability to gain weight. If you see signs of worms, alert a veterinarian and begin treatment. Various

medications can easily take care of the problem. All kittens over two weeks of age are regularly treated with dewormer.

Coccidia and giardia. Coccidia and giardia are very common protozoa that can invade a kitten's digestive system and cause diarrhea. These parasites are contagious and can be spread through feces, but they are easily treated with oral medications. Remember to always wear gloves when cleaning up or handling feces.

Fading kitten syndrome

Fading kitten syndrome is a life-threatening emergency in which a kitten, sometimes one who was previously healthy, "crashes" and begins to fade. If not dealt with immediately, this situation can result in death. There is no clear cause or reason for this condition, though it has been linked to birth defects, environmental stress and infectious diseases. Early detection and treatment are imperative; sadly, though, many of these kittens will still die.

Symptoms of fading kitten syndrome include:

- Low body temperature: The kitten feels cool or cold to the touch.
- Extreme lethargy: The kitten appears unable to get up or stand, is not responding to touch, and can't hold his head up.
- Trouble breathing: The kitten is gasping for breath or exhibiting open-mouth breathing.
- Meowing: The kitten is crying out.

When a kitten is fading, two things are happening: hypothermia (being too cold) and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). The kitten's body temperature and blood sugar level must be raised immediately. If you suspect a kitten is beginning to fade, get the kitten on a heated pad and alert the veterinary staff immediately. Please understand that even with our best efforts, some of these kittens still won't make it.

Deceased kittens

It is never easy to lose a kitten, and it affects each of us differently and personally. It's important for staff and volunteers to understand that we are operating against nature much of the time, because these kittens are not with their moms.

In the Best Friends Kitten Care Center, we focus on the positive outcomes of the work we do, but we do not pretend that we can save every kitten we rescue. Of course, every kitten we take in is worth all of the effort and care we have to give. If a kitten passes while in your care, please notify the staff immediately.

Sanitation

Because of the fragile nature of kittens, it's important to have many sanitation procedures in place to protect their health. For example, to minimize the spread of disease in the kitten care center, each room in the center has separate brooms, dustpans, mops, food containers, litter containers, disinfectant spray bottles and handbooks. These items are marked with the color corresponding to the room in which they belong. Items must always stay in the correct rooms, except for things that need to be refilled and/or washed in the kitchen.

As we've mentioned, newborn kittens do not have fully developed immune systems, so they are susceptible to many illnesses and parasites, some of which they get from their mothers at birth. Many of the kittens in our care are too young to be vaccinated, which means they are especially vulnerable to dangerous viruses.



One of the major challenges of caring for kittens is preventing the spread of disease. Because many animals pass through and reside in an animal care facility, a high risk of cross-contamination and pathogen transmission exists. Kittens may enter the facility in poor health, potentially introducing diseases to the environment and risking infection to other kittens. Some kittens will appear healthy but may be shedding various harmful germs. With all of this disease around and so many opportunities for transmission, it is critical to remain diligent in following proper sanitation processes.

A pathogen, or germ, is any disease-producing agent, especially a virus, bacterium or other microorganism. Germs are spread by contact with an infected animal or by fomites. A fomite is any object or substance capable of carrying infectious organisms from one individual or another. Pathogens are spread by hands, on fur, on paws and feet, and via doorknobs, clothing, carriers, tables, pens, clipboards and kennels. Anytime a dirty surface contacts another surface, the germ is spread. People's hands and the clothes we wear are the most common fomites.



Carefully following sanitation protocols and procedures helps to prevent the spread of germs from one kitten to another, from one room to another, and from one environment to another.

To correctly clean a surface, organic material, including food and fecal matter, must be removed with soap or detergent prior to disinfection. Items that are not properly cleaned cannot be disinfected. In the kitten care center, we use a product called Rescue to disinfect. Rescue (accelerated hydrogen peroxide technology) is extremely effective at killing viruses, bacteria, fungi and other microorganisms. It has a short contact time and only needs to sit on a surface for five minutes to kill germs.

Hand-washing is the most important and effective procedure to prevent the spread of disease. Some hand-washing protocols:

- At the beginning of each shift, wash your hands with soap and warm water for 30 seconds.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer between litters. Be aware that hand sanitizer does not kill panleukopenia or ringworm.
- If you come into direct contact with feces, urine or vomit, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for 30 seconds.

We recommend the use of barrier protections such as shoe covers, gowns and gloves. Please keep in mind:

- Always wear clean gloves and isolation gowns when handling kittens. When you're finished with feeding and cleaning a kennel of kittens, throw away the soiled gown and gloves.
- You do not need to change gloves or gowns between kittens if they're from the same kennel.
- Avoid handling kittens and anything in their kennel that may be contaminated, and then handling clean supplies or food.
- Never handle clean supplies or food while wearing dirty gloves. After handling kittens and their kennels, remove your gloves before handling clean supplies.

Additional resources

- [Alley Cat Allies' Kitten Progression: At-a-Glance](#)
- [Best Friends Kitten Foster Manual](#)
- [Foster Programs Training Playbook](#)
- [Caring for Abandoned Kittens](#)
- [Bottle-Feeding Kittens](#)
- [How to Determine the Age of Newborn Kittens: English](#)
- [How to Determine the Age of Newborn Kittens: Spanish](#)
- [Weaning Kitten Care: Four to Eight Weeks Old](#)
- [Kitten Pocket Reference Brochure](#)

APPENDIX

Frequently asked questions about the Best Friends Kitten Care Center

Q: How many kittens does the kitten care center save?

A: In 2019, our total intake was 1,556 (1,327 kittens, 229 adults and nursing moms). We had a save rate of 89%.

Q: Where do all these kittens come from?

A: We accept kittens from shelters across the state of Utah.

Q: How do the kittens end up as orphans?

A: Most of the time, we don't know the specifics of how a shelter obtained the kittens. The mom could have been off searching for food when the kittens were found; the mom could have been injured or died. There are many possible scenarios that could result in the shelters getting kittens.

Q: My friend found a litter of kittens. Can she stop by and drop them off?

A: Best Friends is not able to accept kittens from the public. The best thing to do for most kittens is to leave them with their mother and then contact your local shelter for trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) resources when they are over eight weeks old. Taking newborn kittens to your local shelter should be a last resort. Most animal shelters are unable to provide the around-the-clock care that kittens need. In fact, at many shelters, young kittens are at risk of being euthanized within a few hours of arriving.

Q: Does the kitten care center ever close?

A: It used to close during winter months, but starting in 2019, it stayed open even during the winter to accept adult cat intakes, operate as a fostering hub and take any kittens that shelters called us about.

Q: Are kittens in the center healthy?

A: Many of the kittens we take in are sick and sometimes injured. Most of these kittens have been found out in the elements, exposed to every type of parasite and contagion imaginable. They are also exposed to predators and other means of injury that house cats aren't exposed to. These young kittens do not have fully developed immune systems or fully developed digestive systems, so they commonly bring illness with them. They are evaluated at intake and treated for any known illnesses or injuries at that time.

Q: Why is it so important to keep kittens warm?

A: Very young kittens cannot regulate their body temperature. If a kitten becomes chilled to the point that his body temperature drops, it can cause the kitten to fade. The kitten can die if steps are not taken to prevent this temperature drop and warm the body.

Q: Will my pets at home be safe from contracting any illness that's in the center?

A: If your pets are current on all vaccinations and you adhere to sanitation protocols, your pets should be safe from contracting the illnesses with which you come into contact in the center. Be aware, however, that your pets could contract an illness if their own health is compromised in some way or if they are not vaccinated. The chances of infection also increase if you don't follow all sanitation protocols.

Q: Can I bring my pets or foster pets to the center with me?

A: Because of the possibility of spreading contagion to the cats and kittens in the center, you cannot bring any personal pets or foster animals into the center at any time.

Q: Can groups of kittens be mixed together for socializing?

A: To minimize the risk of infectious disease, different groups of kittens should not be mixed together unless the veterinary team deems it appropriate. A healthy single kitten can be mixed with another healthy single kitten of similar size for the purpose of socialization.

Q: What should I wear when volunteering at the center?

A: Wear comfortable clothing, preferably in layers. The rooms can get very warm, and you will be wearing a gown over your clothing for long periods of time. We ask that you wear closed-toe shoes for safety.

Q: I've noticed that bottle babies and "weaners" seem to always be in the top row of kennels. Why is that?

A: We only move kittens to the bottom row of kennels after they have been vaccinated. Because the bottom row of kennels is considered "downstream" due to potential food, water, urine and feces contamination coming from the kennels above, we want the kittens there to have some protection via vaccine.

Q: How do you determine when you will vaccinate a kitten for the first time?

A: We pay close attention to when a kitten's canine teeth fully erupt (around four weeks old). When this happens, we take the opportunity to vaccinate the kitten, since this is the only chance of protection against panleukopenia.

Q: I saw a really disgusting long worm in a kitten's litter box. Do you need to deworm him?

A: Actually, seeing that worm is a good thing (it's usually a roundworm), because it means we did deworm him, and the dewormer is working. But with that said, please let us know about anything like this; we like to be aware. Specifically, let us know if you see what looks like rice in the litter box (they're usually tapeworm segments), as we will need to use a different kind of dewormer in that instance. We administer dewormers to kittens starting at approximately two weeks of age, and then give another dose every two weeks until they reach two months old.

Q: One of the kittens I'm working with hasn't pooped in 15 hours. What should I do?

A: We expect kittens to defecate about every 24 hours. If a kitten hasn't pooped in 24 hours, alert a veterinarian and he or she will determine if an enema or other treatment is needed.

Q: When I stimulated a kitten who came in earlier today, I noticed that her stool was green. Should I note that in the medical log?

A: It is pretty normal for a kitten who has been with us for only a short period of time to have green poop. She's just digesting what she was eating before she arrived at the center. If the kitten has been with us longer than a few days and you see green poop, however, it is important to note this in the medical log.

Q: Isn't all of this contamination stuff overkill? How can cute little kittens possibly have anything wrong with them?

A: Kittens are actually one of the most high-risk animals for contracting several infectious diseases, so our contamination protocols are in place for a very good reason. You'd be surprised by how easy it is to spread infection, so we have to be really vigilant.

Q: Why can't I cuddle with the little bottle babies?

A: These babies are very vulnerable, and need to come out to the table and immediately return to their kennels to sleep. They can lose a great deal of body heat while out at the table, and expend precious calories while they are moving around. Plus, kittens don't start benefiting from cuddling and human affection until they're about three to four weeks old.

Q: I'm really upset that a kitten I took care of last week passed away today. Should I continue to volunteer?

A: Sadly, the reality of this work is that some kittens won't make it. All of us — staff, volunteers and interns — do the best we can. We also accept that sometimes it wasn't meant to be for a particular kitten. As far as continuing to volunteer goes, that is a decision you have to make for yourself, but we believe that you do make a difference in all of the lives that you touch at the center. We hope you'll join us in continuing to focus on those lives we save every day.

Job description: Volunteer kitten care center assistant

Volunteer assistants in the kitten care center have two job functions:

- Feed and provide basic care to orphaned kittens ranging in age from birth to eight weeks
- Help maintain sanitation in the center according to established protocols

The volunteers provide humane care for the kittens in the center and help keep the environment clean, healthy and safe for the kittens and cats there. In addition, assistants must follow established policies and procedures at all times and must be able to work calmly and efficiently when the center is at full capacity. Volunteers are responsible for the following tasks and other duties as assigned:

- Feed kittens according to feeding procedures and sanitation protocols.
- Make accurate notes on kittens' daily care sheets and the feeding board.
- Alert the staff about any health issues needing attention.
- Clean kittens' cages (including, but not limited to, litter boxes) thoroughly and according to protocols.
- Maintain sanitation in the center according to established protocols.
- Empty trash and recycling containers as needed.
- Wash dishes and do laundry as needed.

Volunteer assistants must be able to:

- Lift and carry at least 10 pounds
- Bend and stoop to tend to kittens in the lower cages
- Be emotionally prepared to care for fading kittens and those who pass away
- Work well with others
- Follow the established chain-of-command to solve problems when they arise

For safety purposes, the dress code when volunteering at the kitten care center is as follows:

- Volunteers must wear closed-toe shoes.
- Long hair must be pulled back to prevent cross-contamination when handling kittens.
- Please don't wear any dangling jewelry.



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 25 CCP Operations: Safety Equipment for Handling Community Cats

Safety Equipment for Handling Community Cats

Introduction

While the information in this chapter may be applicable to certain situations when working with fractious shelter cats, our purpose here is to provide guidance about safe handling of free-roaming cats who are eligible for TNVR or RTF. Ideally, feral or fractious cats in traps should not be handled, but it is inevitable that a cat will escape and need to be recaptured or a cat may require medications to be ready for spay/neuter surgery.

Handling cats who may not want to be touched by people can be dangerous work. To help you stay safe and protected from injury and illness, we've compiled this information about safety equipment to have on hand and how to handle cats safely when the need arises.

Gloves and arm guards

Gloves and arm guards are available in three levels of protection. Choosing the correct pair for the task will depend on the activity and whether you need more dexterity with less protection or more protection with less dexterity.

Level 1: Offers a base layer of protection with very little bite or scratch resistance but full dexterity. These gloves are ideal for carrying already trapped cats and other minimal contact activities. Gloves and arm guards in this level are usually made of Kevlar or other lightweight synthetic materials. This level of protection offers less insulation, allowing for extended wear during summer months. Options include:

- Operator SOG tactical gauntlet gloves ([Safariland](#))
- TurtleSkin search gloves and arm sleeves ([TurtleSkin](#))
- Gorilla Grip gloves ([Gorilla Grip](#))
- HexArmor AG9X arm guards ([HexArmor](#))

Level 2: Offers more bite and scratch resistance, especially when worn with Level 1 gloves, but with less dexterity. Level 2 gloves are made of leather (typically the less expensive option) or synthetic materials and can include extended forearm coverage. They are generally easier to wear after being broken in and can be worn under some clothing. They are not worn comfortably for extended periods of time in certain environments. Options include:

- Humaniac Duty Gloves with Spectra lining ([ACES Animal Care Equipment and Services](#))
- TurtleSkin full coverage gloves: A lightweight, high-puncture-resistant glove to be worn over a Level 1 glove ([TurtleSkin](#))
- Humaniac Critter Handling Gloves: A glove and arm guard combo ([ACES Animal Care Equipment and Services](#))
- Tomahawk Live Trap Bite Guard gloves: A glove and arm guard combo, not made with animal skins ([Tomahawk Live Trap](#))
- HexArmor AG10009S arm guards ([HexArmor](#))
- Ray Allen leather gauntlets ([Ray Allen Manufacturing](#))

Level 3: Made from heavyweight synthetic material and offer maximum bite and scratch protection and the best crush protection, but are difficult to wear because there is little or no dexterity. Level 3 gloves can be worn with Level 1 gloves for extra bite and scratch protection as well as crush protection, but they

cannot be worn under clothing due to their cumbersome design. Here are some options made with leather or synthetic materials, with extended forearm coverage:

- Humaniac Maxima gloves ([ACES Animal Care Equipment and Services](#))
- HexArmor Hercules 400R6E gloves: For extreme protection with moderate dexterity ([HexArmor](#))
- HexArmor AS019S arm sleeves ([HexArmor](#))
- Bitebuster glove and sleeve combination ([Bitebuster](#))

Note: Typical welding gloves also meet Level 3 criteria, but they have less bite and scratch protection and very little crush protection.

Animal capture and other safety equipment

Feral cat dens. We recommend that a feral cat den be placed in each occupied cat kennel, as it gives the cat a safe place to hide and an additional measure of safety for staff and volunteers. Dens are available from [ACES Animal Care Equipment and Services](#), [Tomahawk Live Trap](#) and other suppliers. Dens are also used to transfer cats from traps to kennels or vice versa. In occupied kennels, dens should be placed inside the kennel with the pivoting door open. The door can then be used to cover the opening when cleaning or feeding. See Chapter 18, “Housing Cats and Kittens,” for more information on this topic.

Trap dividers. Also known as trap forks or trap separators, these useful tools help restrict a cat’s movement within the trap, allowing you to safely open it for cleaning. The tines of the divider should be long enough to go all the way through when inserted horizontally. Do not use the divider vertically, as the cat may be able to push past. Trap dividers are also important for safety when you’re transferring cats from carriers to traps or even making trap-to-trap transfers. [TruCatch](#) and [Tomahawk Live Trap](#) both have dividers that fit most standard cat traps.



Nets. These helpful tools are available in a variety of sizes with differing handle lengths. Be sure to avoid nets with wide mesh because cats can become entangled in them, which can cause injury to both them and you. The nets described below can be purchased through [ACES Animal Care Equipment and Services](#) or [Tomahawk Live Trap](#). You can find instructional videos online.

- The Versa Net is Best Friends’ primary net for emergency operations because it can be stored easily and deployed quickly.
- The Freeman Cage Net, a larger alternative to the Versa Net, is very user-friendly and ideal for cats, reptiles and other animals. Cats transfer easily right into their traps.
- The Freeman Hammock Net has a flexible hoop and easy-to-pull drawstring closure. Its long handle and net length make this the best net for use in the field.
- The Freeman Multi-Purpose Net has a shorter handle so you can get into tight spaces and avoid hitting walls and other obstacles.

Sacks. We recommend using Evacsaks rather than pillowcases for felines because they offer better ventilation and are made from a sturdier material, so they are less prone to tearing. If you are using a sack, you will want to wear Level 2 gloves and arm guards while placing the cat inside.

Scruffing. You can temporarily immobilize a cat by using your hand to grasp the nape of his neck, mimicking how a mother cat picks up and moves her young. To avoid being swatted at by the cat, use your other hand to wrap the cat's legs with a blanket or towel. Scruffs should be held for only a few seconds, or long enough to transfer the cat into a suitable container. Scruffing can be dangerous and stressful for both you and the cat, so it should only be done in an extreme emergency.

Never use a catchpole for handling a cat. Catchpoles cannot be used on cats or small animals because the risk of strangulation or injury is too high to justify using them.

Cat bites and zoonotic diseases

Despite your best intentions and appropriate use of equipment, there is a chance that you could be bitten by a cat. Always take bites seriously. Cat bites are 10 times more likely than other animal bites to become infected. If you are bitten or scratched, wash the wound immediately and see your personal physician for further care. In areas of the country where rabies is prevalent throughout the year, it may be beneficial for staff and volunteers to receive the pre-exposure vaccine series as a precautionary measure, and especially where it is required of shelter staff.

While the risk of disease transmission during trapping is extremely rare, there are a few things we recommend to limit potential exposure:

- Always wear the recommended clothing and footwear.
- Clean your workspace daily and sanitize cat housing areas often and after each cat.
- Always wear latex gloves if you will be exposed to feces and wash your hands thoroughly after handling each cat and when cleaning traps or litter boxes.
- To minimize the risk of transmitting a disease or parasites to your own pets, we strongly recommend that you change your clothes and shoes as soon as you arrive home.



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 26 CCP Supplemental: Additional Cat Lifesaving Programs

Additional Cat Lifesaving Programs

Introduction

CCPs quickly create the space for shelters to focus on saving other cats. By returning all the cats who are eligible for return-to-field (RTF), shelters can use their resources to provide positive outcomes for cats who end up in the shelter for other reasons. But there are many other ways to help cats besides creating CCPs. In this chapter, we describe some lifesaving programs and strategies that are quickly becoming the norm in shelters around the country.

Expanding adoption options

Open adoptions. When community cats go back to their neighborhoods instead of being impounded, shelters have more space, but cats in the shelter may still have a long length-of-stay before finding homes. Restrictive adoption requirements can keep cats in cages at shelters waiting for the “perfect” home. Implementing open adoptions — a nonjudgmental approach that removes arbitrary barriers to adoption — is a great way to encourage all members of the community to open their homes to cats from shelters.

Open adoptions are conducted by having conversations with prospective adopters rather than having them fill out a lengthy application. The adoption counselor’s focus is on sharing information and listening to prospective adopters in order to help them find the cat who suits their lifestyle. The shelter not only becomes a resource for adopters, adopters become ambassadors for their local shelter. For more information on open adoptions, see our [online module](#).

Reduced adoption fees and promotion. Implementing reduced-fee adoptions and creatively marketing the cats in shelters are other proven strategies for finding homes for cats more quickly. Reducing adoption fees is an effective way to drum up interest in adopting, and fun, quirky promotions catch the attention of the public. Cats in high-risk categories (e.g., senior cats, shy cats) can especially benefit from an extra promotional push. At right is an example of such a promotion from Best Friends.

Once an adoption promotion has been created, the next step is to reach as many people as possible by spreading the word in a variety of ways, using traditional media (e.g., radio, newspapers), social media (e.g., Facebook and Instagram) and grassroots techniques (e.g., giving a stack of flyers to local businesses to distribute to customers). See the “Additional Resources” section at the end of this chapter for more information on these topics.



Reducing intake

Managed intake. One of the best ways to prevent pets from entering shelters in the first place is to work with community members to keep pets in their homes and neighborhoods. Managed intake (aka managed admissions) involves strategies such as limiting drop-off hours, closing night drop boxes, scheduling intake appointments, developing a formal process for pet surrender interviews and giving the public alternatives to surrendering their pets.

By scheduling intake, shelter staff can plan for incoming animals and also help people explore avenues for retaining their pets. Having comprehensive resources on the shelter’s website about alternatives to surrender can provide assistance without people even needing to come to the shelter. Check out this

page from the website of [Palm Valley Animal Society](#). The “Additional Resources” section at the end of this chapter has more information on this topic.

Keeping kittens out of shelters. In previous chapters, we covered the necessity of stopping the intake of healthy free-roaming cats and kittens. Because of the intensive care they require, newborn kittens do not fare well in a shelter environment. No one can care for healthy kittens better than their mothers. That’s why neonates should only be rescued by community members if the kittens are injured, sick or truly abandoned. If the kittens appear to be clean and well-fed, mom is probably nearby and will return to her babies shortly.

Sharing information with members of the public about what to do if they find a litter of kittens is a critical component of preventing intake of kittens. The “Additional Resources” section contains flyers and videos on this topic that can be distributed to the public.

How to determine if kittens need rescuing

If you find a litter of kittens and the mom is not around, don’t assume that the babies have been abandoned. Mom may not be with her kittens because she is looking for food or a new location to move the nest. She may have been temporarily startled away by humans or loud noises. Generally, a mother cat will not return until she deems that it’s quiet and safe.

To determine if mom has been caring for her kittens:

- Are their stomachs full? Pick up the kittens and gently touch their bellies. If the belly feels slightly firm and round, the baby ate recently.
- Are the kittens clean? Mom cats do a great job of cleaning up messes from their kittens, so she won’t allow the kittens or the nest to stay soiled for long.
- How are the kittens acting? If they seem warm and content and respond when they are disturbed, they are most likely healthy kittens. If they are cold to the touch or barely react when being handled, they probably need your help.

If you are still feeling uncertain about whether the kittens need to be rescued, another trick is to create a ring of flour around the kittens. If the flour has paw prints in it or is otherwise disturbed when you return to check on the kittens, mom has probably come back to feed her babies.

Building foster programs

By building out their foster programs, shelters can dramatically increase their capacity beyond the four walls of their brick-and-mortar structure. Having a robust foster program gives a shelter more flexibility and allows more cats to have positive outcomes. Kittens and cats with medical issues have been the primary beneficiaries of foster programs for felines, but any cat can benefit from being in a home environment rather than in a shelter.

In fact, shelters are enlisting the support of the community more and more through foster programs, starting right at the moment of a potential intake. People bring animals to the shelter because they care and, more often than not, they want to do what they can to provide a positive outcome for the pet. For example, if someone has found a couple of kittens who have been abandoned and brings the kittens to a shelter, staff may ask the person if she would be willing to foster the kittens, rather than taking the kittens into the shelter. The foster volunteer increases the kittens’ chances of survival by giving them the one-on-one attention they need. The shelter provides support and resources to help the volunteer care for the kittens until they’re old enough for adoption.

By posting about the cats on social media and talking to friends, family and co-workers, foster volunteers can even play an active role in finding homes for the kittens or cats they are fostering. And in a foster-to-adopt program, prospective adopters are allowed to foster a cat while considering whether to adopt.

Revamping medical care policies

With the goal of saving more lives, many shelters are changing their adoption policies regarding cats with minor medical issues such as ringworm or upper respiratory infection (URI). Previously, cats with these conditions were held at the shelter until treatment was complete, but the new strategy is to make them available for adoption while they are still in treatment, which is easily administered by adopters. The cats benefit from being out of the stressful shelter environment and with people who can provide more one-on-one time to care for them. The shelter benefits by freeing up space for incoming animals.

Shelters are also changing their policies regarding adopting out cats with feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukemia virus (FeLV). Cats with FIV or FeLV have weakened immune systems and may require some additional care, but they can be adopted and live happy lives. See “Additional Resources” below for more information on this topic.

By adopting out these cats or placing them in foster care, the shelter frees up resources for helping pets with major medical problems.



Conclusion

Organizations all over the country have successfully implemented robust cat lifesaving programs. Especially when paired with a CCP, additional cat lifesaving programs can drastically reduce the number of animals in shelters and increase positive outcomes for more animals in the community.

Additional resources

- [Reduced-Fee Adoptions: Why They Work](#)
- [Tips for marketing homeless pets](#)
- [Managed Intake or Admissions Training Playbook](#)
- [Best Friends Kitten Series: videos](#)
- [Caring for Abandoned Kittens](#) (includes downloadable flyers in English and Spanish)
- [Foster Programs Training Playbook](#)
- [Cat Ringworm: Diagnosis and Treatment](#)
- [FIV in Cats FAQs](#)
- [FeLV in Cats FAQs](#)

APPENDIX

Found kitten flyers

What to do if you find kittens



Are the kittens visibly sick or injured?

YES: Contact an animal welfare organization or shelter that can help you assess whether the kittens need intervention. If that isn't possible, take the kittens to a veterinarian immediately.

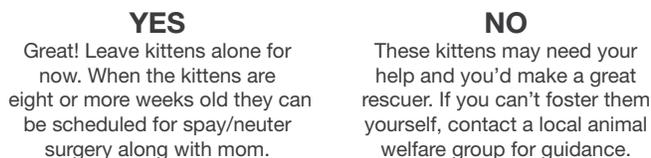
NO: Estimate the kittens' age by how they look.



Avoid handling the kittens and watch them from a distance for 10-12 hours. If the kittens seem healthy and content, mom will usually return when she feels it's safe. If the kittens are exposed, attempt to find a safe hiding spot nearby, move them and monitor them from a safe distance for 10-12 hours.

Great! Kittens this age usually don't need much from people or their mom. As long as they are not in immediate danger, you can contact a local provider to schedule spay/neuter surgery.

Did mom return?



Taking newborn kittens to your local shelter should be a last resort. Many animal shelters can't provide the kind of around-the-clock care that kittens need. In fact, within a few hours of arriving at many shelters, young kittens are at risk of being killed.

The best way to help most kittens is to leave them with their mother, and then when they are more than eight weeks old, contact your local shelter for spay/neuter resources.



¿Qué debe hacer si encuentra gatitos?



¿Están los gatitos visiblemente enfermos o heridos?

SI: Comuníquese con una organización o albergue dedicado al bienestar de los animales, donde pueden ayudarlo a evaluar si los gatitos necesitan alguna intervención. Si esto no es posible, lleve a los gatitos a un veterinario de inmediato.

NO: Calcule la edad de los gatitos en base a la apariencia que tengan.

<p>Aún tiene los ojos cerrados o apenas comienza a abrirlos.</p> <p>1-2 semanas de vida</p>	<p>Tiene los ojos abiertos y alertas, y se está volviendo activo.</p> <p>2-4 semanas de vida</p>	<p>Muy activo y haciendo sonidos, ya puede comer alimentos.</p> <p>4-6 semanas de vida</p>	<p>Muy activo y juguetón, pesa 1-2 libras.</p> <p>6-8 semanas de vida</p>	<p>Muy activo y juguetón, pesa 2 libras o más.</p> <p>8+ semanas de vida</p>
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Evite tocar a los gatitos y obsérvelos de lejos durante 10-12 horas. Si los gatitos parecen estar sanos y tranquilos, por lo general la mamá regresará cuando sienta que es seguro hacerlo. Si los gatitos están expuestos, trate de encontrar un lugar cercano y seguro donde esconderlos, trasládelos ahí y obsérvelos desde una distancia segura durante 10-12 horas.

¡Estupendo! Por lo general, a esta edad, los gatitos no necesitan mucho de las personas ni de la mamá. Mientras no estén en peligro inmediato, usted puede comunicarse con un servicio local para programar la cirugía de esterilización/castración.

¿Regresó la mamá?

SI

¡Estupendo! Deje a los gatitos solos por ahora. Cuando los gatitos cumplan ocho semanas o más, puede programar la cirugía de esterilización/castración para ellos y la mamá.

NO

Estos gatitos podrían necesitar su ayuda y usted podría ser un gran rescatista. Si no puede cuidarlos temporalmente, comuníquese con un grupo dedicado al bienestar de los animales para que lo orienten.

Llevar gatitos recién nacidos al albergue local tendría que ser la última opción que debería considerar.

Muchos albergues de animales no pueden proporcionar el tipo de cuidado que los gatitos necesitan durante las 24 horas del día. De hecho, los gatitos corren el riesgo de que los maten en las siguientes horas luego de llegar a muchos de los albergues.

La mejor manera de ayudar a la mayoría de los gatitos es dejarlos con su mamá y luego, cuando cumplan más de ocho semanas de vida, usted puede comunicarse con su albergue local para obtener información sobre los servicios de esterilización/castración disponibles.





Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 27 CCP Supplemental: Building a Successful Working Cat Program

Building a Successful Working Cat Program

Introduction

Working cat placement is not only a great option for cats who are not candidates for traditional adoption, but sometimes it's the only option for getting them out of the shelter alive. Implementing a working cat program (WCP) gives asocial cats who have been put in the shelter a chance at a live outcome. This chapter provides information on WCPs and tips on how to start one at your shelter or rescue organization.

What is a “working cat”?

A “working cat” is a feline who does not qualify for traditional adoption because he or she is asocial or may have never lived indoors. Adopting them out as working cats allows them to thrive and live their lives happily in a non-traditional home. The “job” of working cats is to provide adorable, eco-friendly rodent control for their employers' (i.e., their adopters') home or business. In return, the adopter provides food, water, shelter and any necessary medical care.

Cats who are suited for working cat placement enter shelters for several reasons. They may come from hoarding cases or be owner surrenders who have not been socialized. They may be cats who are not completely asocial but can't be safely placed in a home because of behavior issues. They also sometimes come in as strays who are not eligible for return-to-field because they don't have a location to which they can be returned. (If there is an address provided for a free-roaming cat to be returned to, that's always the first option.)



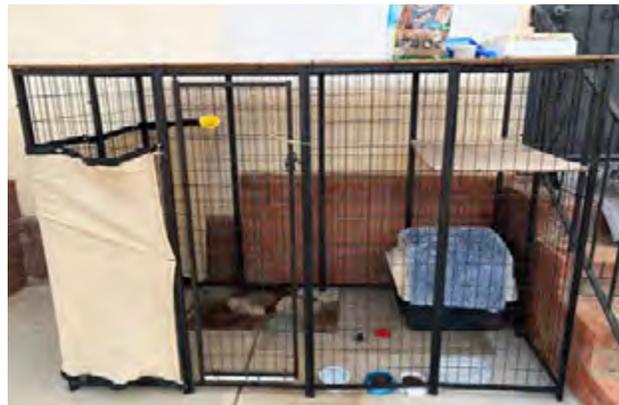
Working cat placement locations

Although many people choose to adopt working cats for their homes, it is more common for these cats to be employed at businesses that would otherwise be hiring companies that do insect or rodent control. Rural locations are perhaps the most popular traditional setting, but there are many great options in urban areas, such as warehouses and breweries. In rural locations, the cats are often provided with a barn, stable, tack shed, garage or unused chicken coop as shelter from the weather and other threats. Among the various options to consider are farms (large and small), ranches, riding stables or equestrian centers, and wineries.

Urban and suburban sites have advantages of their own. For example, they have fewer potential predators than wide open spaces. In addition, many communities simply have few rural options nearby, so expanding the program to include urban and suburban locations allows many more potential sites for working cat placement and for the normalization of these non-traditional adoptions. Some common options include:

- Fire stations
- Police stations and sub-stations
- Auto body shops and auto repair garages
- Warehouses
- Urban flower and produce distributors
- Garden stores

- Hardware and home improvement stores, especially those with garden centers
- Feed stores
- Carpet stores or warehouses
- Amusement parks
- Breweries
- Sports stadiums
- Ports



The article [“What’s a Bodega Cat?”](#) specifically describes urban spots as being more than suitable for working cats. It is important to note that no suggested location should be turned down automatically. Because every situation and every cat is unique, a staff member should always go and check out any potential placement location.

The process

Cats are naturally social animals and often live in groups outdoors, so many shelters adopt out working cats in groups of two or more. By placing two or more working cats together, you prevent a single cat from wandering in search of a group to join. The acclimation period (see below) is also a key step in ensuring that your working cats stay put. All working cats should be spayed or neutered and vaccinated. To make adopting them even more appealing, consider waiving their adoption fees.

Transport to the site. After an adopter has been identified, the next step is transporting the cats to their new job location and setting them up for the acclimation period. Just like pet cats, some working cats adapt easily to traveling in a vehicle, while others may howl and cry. To lessen the cats’ stress during transport, cover the bottom of the traps with newspaper or cloth and keep the traps covered.

Place only one cat in a trap and make certain that there’s adequate ventilation. If the trip to the relocation site is lengthy, provide food and water, but make sure you secure the containers properly to avoid spilling. While you’re driving, avoid sounds that are unfamiliar to the cats, such as a blaring radio, and use common sense to make the experience less traumatic. Cats should never be transported in a vehicle’s trunk or in the open bed of a truck.

Acclimation period. Cats typically take two to four weeks to acclimate to their new location, but the exact time frame will depend on the individual cats. Here are commonly used supplies to have on hand for the acclimation period:

- A large dog crate or cage for the cats
- A feral den or cardboard box to provide a safe place for the cats to hide, especially while the adopter cleans their cage and refreshes food and water
- Litter box
- Food and water dishes
- Sheets or blankets to cover the crate

Start with the crate about 90% covered and slowly pull back the sheet or blanket bit by bit as time goes on. This gives the cats a chance to take in their new environment gradually, rather than all at once.

The setup for the acclimation period should always be in a safe and covered area that protects the cats from the elements and any potential predators. The two to four weeks that they spend in this enclosure allows

them to acclimate to their new environment without being able to escape and to start identifying their adopter as their food source.

Keep in mind that cats can be escape artists, especially when they are stressed. During the cats' acclimation period, make sure that they cannot escape from their enclosures or become injured while trying to do so. Some cats will even try to dig out of an enclosure, so be sure the bottom is secure. To ease the cats' transition to the new location, bring some materials such as bedding, food dishes and toys.

Once the acclimation period is over, the cages can be opened. The doors can be left open so that the cats are able to come and go until the acclimation supplies are removed. It is always a good idea to keep areas of shelter around for the cats to access moving forward. These working cats are now ready to start their new jobs.



Marketing a WCP

Although working cat placements are becoming more and more popular, it isn't uncommon for people to be unaware of this option. Because of this, advertising your WCP and getting the word out is very important. Tell stories about the cats on social media, advertise their availability on Craigslist, create flyers that can be posted in local businesses and call the types of businesses mentioned above to see if they could use a working cat or two. Doing a variety of outreach allows you to reach potential adopters who maybe didn't even realize that they needed or wanted working cats.

While WCPs are growing in popularity, the idea of hiring a group of cats to keep rodents away is a new concept to most people, so lighthearted videos and pictures, along with a catchy name or slogan, are effective ways to grab the public's attention. SpokAnimal in Spokane, Washington, created some hilarious [flyers for their Farm Livin' program](#) and posted them in local businesses. Other successful examples include [Cats at Work, a program created by Tree House Humane Society in Chicago](#), and [Cats Clocking In](#), a program from Lafayette Animal Shelter & Care Center in Louisiana.

Sharing working cat success stories on your shelter's social media channels is a nice touch as well. Empirical Brewery in Chicago has an [awesome page on their website](#) that is all about their feline employees: Venkman, Ray and Egon. However you choose to do it, actively and creatively marketing your WCP is the way to get these cats employed.

Conclusion

By finding safe places for these felines to live and thrive, we are getting them out of shelters and creating space and opportunity for cats and kittens who are eligible for traditional adoption. Shelters benefit because WCPs free up shelter resources for cats who need homes, and adopters benefit because they can reduce damage to their property from rodents without spending a lot of money. But it's the working cats who benefit the most from these programs, because they are being given a chance to live the lives they deserve.

Additional resources

- [Best Friends' "Cats for Hire" article](#)
- [True Leaf Market working cats](#)
- [Simple Performance SLC working cats](#)

APPENDIX

Working cats flyer template



**Team up with
a working
cat today.**

Traditional family homes aren't for every cat. Working cats are healthy but independent cats from local shelters available to community members looking for natural pest deterrents. Whether you run a business or maintain a barn, we can help you find the perfect working cat for your work space.

Benefits

- No adoption fee
- Provides natural pest control
- Vaccinated and spayed/neutered
- Frequently adopted in pairs to keep each other company
- Ideal for barns, warehouses, churches, factories, etc.
- Provides previously homeless animals with a safe place to live
- Helps reduce the number of cats killed in shelters

Requirements

- Adopters must provide food, water and any necessary veterinary care.
- Adopters will need to allow two to four weeks for the cats to acclimate to the new space.



Examples of working cats in action around the country

Los Angeles Flower Market
Los Angeles, California

Empirical Brewery
Chicago, Illinois

Austin Police Mounted Patrol
Austin, Texas

Ramy Turf Products
St. Paul, Minnesota

Included:

Use this space to add information about what is included with your relocation. For example: acclimation enclosure, microchip, food, ongoing check-in's, etc.

Get started today.

Use this space to add your contact information.

Insert logo in box below.

Example of community cat relocation guidelines



Community cat relocation



Relocating cats — especially as a colony — is an enormous undertaking that can be very stressful for the animals, as well as the people who care for them. Therefore, it should be considered only as a last resort, usually when the cats are in immediate danger. In the vast majority of cases, it's best to return community cats to the location from which they were trapped.

Many colonies exist and thrive in locations that are less than ideal. The location itself may lack proper cover or shelter, leaving the cats unnecessarily exposed. Or a neighbor may want the cats moved because they're too close to his property. However, there are effective ways to address these kinds of problems that require less effort and less risk than relocation (see "Solutions to Cat-Related Issues").

Another major and often overlooked downside to relocating a colony is the risk of a new one moving in. And if the new cats aren't sterilized, their number could quickly surpass that of the original colony.

Colony dynamics and adoptability

Identifying friendly adults and pulling them out of the colony for adoption might be an option for some of the cats. But it's important to remember that just because a cat is affectionate toward a caregiver doesn't mean she'll respond well to living indoors with unfamiliar people. Colony cats often form strong bonds with one another and being separated can cause them stress.

Kittens under four months of age are ideal candidates for being pulled from the colony and socialized for adoption. The younger the kittens, the better their chances for becoming socialized to people. But even some adolescents are excellent adoption candidates. Local rescue groups can often help find foster homes and adopters for kittens and young cats.

Safe relocation sites

Typically, rural locations are the most popular option for colony relocation because they offer more space and safety for cats than urban settings. On private rural property, the cats are provided with structures that can be used for shelter, such as barns, stables, tack sheds, garages or unused chicken coops. The property owners and caregivers, in turn, receive a group of healthy, vaccinated and spayed or neutered cats who serve as a natural deterrent to pests. Farms, ranches, riding stables and equestrian centers, wineries and similar locations all have the potential to serve as ideal sites for a cat colony.

While urban and suburban sites may not offer the same amount of space and degree of safety that most rural sites do, they do have some advantages. Large predators that pose a threat to the cats are less common in more developed areas and the proximity of these locations allows for easier caregiver screening and transport of the cats. Also, by including them in your search for relocation sites, you can often increase the number of cats you're able to help, particularly in areas lacking rural properties. Fire stations, police stations, automotive shops and garages, warehouses, flower and produce distributors, garden stores, home improvement stores, feed stores, certain athletic venues and shipping ports are potential sites.

Recruiting and screening caregivers

The best caregivers are often people who are recommended or referred by trusted friends and colleagues. Check with shelter staff, volunteers and other caregivers you know well to see if they have any promising contacts. Placing ads in local papers, posting notices in online communities and hanging flyers in area shops can help, too.

Potential caregivers should be asked if they will commit to providing food, water, shelter and medical care on a daily basis for the cats. People who agree to keep cats on their property must be willing to fulfill these basic needs to ensure the colony's health and well-being.

You should also establish an agreement with caregivers regarding follow-up contact, letting them know you would like to call and/or visit to check on the cats' progress for the first few months. Anyone unwilling to comply with this request should not be considered as a potential caregiver for your relocated colony.

If the cats haven't been neutered or vaccinated, be sure to make arrangements in advance to take the cats directly to a veterinarian after trapping. The cats should undergo a general checkup, be spayed or neutered, and given any necessary vaccinations. Request that dissolvable stitches be used in surgery to avoid a second visit for suture removal.

Transport to the relocation site

Just like pet cats, some colony cats adapt easily to traveling in a vehicle, while others may howl and cry. To reduce stress during transport, cover the bottom of the traps with newspaper or cloth and keep the traps covered. Do not place more than one cat in a trap and make certain there is adequate ventilation. If the trip to the relocation site is lengthy, provide food and water, but make sure you secure the containers properly to avoid spilling. While driving, avoid sounds that are unfamiliar to the cats, such as a blaring radio, and use common sense to make the experience less traumatic. Cats should never be transported in a vehicle's trunk or in the open bed of a truck.

Acclimation period

Once the cats arrive at their new location, it might be necessary to keep some of them caged individually for several days if, for example, they're still recovering from surgery or they need regular doses of medication.

Most, however, can be housed together in a large enclosed or caged area for two to four weeks while they become familiar with their new environment. They can be released into a closed barn, shed or other large shelter, such as an unused chicken coop or covered dog pen. The idea is to give them enough room to become familiar with their new home without permitting them free access to the outdoors.

Keep in mind that cats can be escape artists, especially when they are stressed. During their acclimation period, make absolutely sure that the cats cannot escape from their enclosure or become injured while trying to do so. Some cats will even try to dig out of an enclosure, so be sure the bottom is secure. In addition, provide smaller shelters within the larger shelter or enclosure to give the cats a safe place to hide while caregivers are feeding and cleaning, and while other humans are in the area.

It's important for the cats to come to regard this enclosure as their permanent feeding station before they are permitted to roam freely outside. Feed the cats canned food at least once a day, and always at the same time; regular feedings will help them to realize they have a reliable food source. Always have dry food and water available for the cats.

During the cats' confinement period, the new caregiver must regularly visit the cats to ensure the bonding that is essential for successful relocation. Speaking to the cats, even if they remain hidden, helps them to overcome their fear of humans. After their two-to-four-week confinement period, the cats can be given access to the outdoors. A small opening should be provided so they may come and go whenever they want. After the cats have acclimated to their new surroundings, the enclosure can be removed.

To ease the cats' transition to the new colony location, bring some materials, such as bedding, food dishes and leaves, from the original colony location. This will provide the cats with some familiar scents. And if possible, have the original caregiver alternate daily feeding duties with the new caregiver for a few weeks, so the cats have an additional sense of continuity.

Ongoing commitment

Your commitment to relocating community cats doesn't end when they're delivered to their new home. Build a friendly relationship with the new caregiver by making regular phone calls and visiting, if possible, for the first few months. It's very important that you're available to the caregiver, providing him or her with information that might aid the cats in adapting to their new environment.

Since you discussed your desire to maintain contact with the caregiver when you found the new home, your actions will likely be seen as supportive rather than intrusive. And in some instances, the new caregiver will become part of your support network for future community cat relocation projects.

Example of relocation process terms of agreement



Relocation Process Terms of Agreement

Best Friends Animal Society is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to end the killing of homeless cats and dogs in shelters, and provide humane alternatives for community cats. By accepting outdoor cats on your property, you are saving cats who have no other option or may be killed in a shelter. We appreciate you accepting care of these cats.

The relocation process is necessary to allow the time for cats to adjust to their new surroundings. It's important to understand that upon arrival the cats entrusted to your care may be quite stressed and have a natural inclination to go in search of their old home. The acclimation period provides cats with time to adjust to their new food and water sources, their new caregivers, and new sights, sounds, smells and surroundings.

By accepting care of these cats you agree to the following Relocation Process Terms of Agreement.

Ensure that cats have a two-to four-week acclimation period in a cage. The acclimation period is necessary to allow time for the cats to adjust to the new property.

Provide daily food while the cats are in the cage, as well as during the remainder of the time they live in the area. While cats hunt for sport and will still go after mice and insects, they need a consistent food source (cat food) and should not be expected to live solely off the land. We recommend food that has meat as the first ingredient. And the best option is a food without by-products, corn or grains. Canned wet food is a great choice because it contains protein and moisture.

Provide daily clean water while the cats are in the cage, as well as during the remainder of time that they are living in the area. It's important to ensure that there is clean water available daily. (Relying on a nearby pond is not sufficient.) In the summer months, water tends to dry up faster and in winter months it can freeze quickly. Check out this link for more tips: alleycat.org/wintertips

Provide clean litter box conditions. You agree to maintain the litter box while the cats are in the cage. This includes daily scooping of the litter box and providing new litter when necessary. If you prefer, the litter box, soft dirt or sand can be made available after the cats are out of the cage. The benefits of a litter box are that the cats will have a designated area to eliminate and they will be less likely to disrupt nearby flower and vegetable gardens.

Protect the cats from the weather. Cats kept in your care should have a proper structure to protect them from the elements, especially extreme weather conditions like heat, cold, rain and snow.

Keep them safe from injury and illness. Do your best to trap cats who show signs of injury or illness, and then take them to a local vet who can assess them for treatment and provide care.

Arrange care when you are out of town or away for extended period of time. In the event you are away, please arrange for someone to provide daily care for the cats.

You may open the cage door after the two- to four-week acclimation period. We also recommend feeding the cats outside of the cage at this time in case they don't want to go back in the cage.

You may remove the cage, but still keep the shelters, food and water dishes and litter box accessible to the cats. The shelters should be covered (with a wooden board or something similar) in an effort to keep out rain and snow, and to prevent shifting in the wind.

The feeding station should be available the remainder of the time the cats are in the area. Although the cats may initially leave the area, they often return within a couple of weeks. Therefore, we recommend that you continue feeding for a few weeks to allow time for them to return to the site.

CAGE CLEANING

After the cats are out of the cage and acclimated to the location, you may dismantle the cage. This is usually done by cutting the zip ties to release the panels. The panels or kennel may be rinsed with a hose to remove debris that has accumulated during the cats' stay.

2005 South 1100 East • Salt Lake City, UT 84106 • (801) 574-2454 • bestfriends.org/communitycats

The community cat coordinator will contact you to find out when to pick up the cage. If you are unable to break down the cage, the community cat coordinator will dismantle the cage on arrival.

RELOCATION ENCLOSURE CAGE LOAN AGREEMENT

The cage is the property of Best Friends Animal Society and cannot be used for any purpose other than to temporarily house outdoor cats for the acclimation period.

Please do not use the cage to house other animals or for any other purpose or project. The cage should be returned to Best Friends Animal Society’s Salt Lake City location or picked up by a community cat coordinator after the cats have undergone the acclimation period.

After the cats have undergone the two- to four-week acclimation period, please remove the contents of the cage and keep them available in a safe area for the cats. Rinse and clear any debris with a spray.

ONGOING CARE

The cats should have access to shelter, food and water for the remainder of the time they are there.

It is essential that they have a safe, quiet place to hang out, with insulated shelter, as well as a proper feeding station with daily food/water.

For more information and caregiver tips: alleycat.org/ColonyCare

Failing to provide proper care of these cats, as well as food, water and a shelter source, or harming the cats in any way can be considered animal cruelty and is punishable by law. Cats should remain properly cared for in the designated area, and under no circumstances should they be released to another area or taken to a shelter without first contacting Best Friends Animal Society’s community cat coordinator.

801-574-2413, email utahtnr@bestfriends.org
2005 S 1100 E, Salt Lake City 84106

I agree to the relocation process terms of agreement and enclosure loan agreement.

Signed here _____

FYI:

According to Alley Cat Allies, the following can help ensure that the cats remain in the area:

- Relocating several cats together from the same area
- Ensuring that cats are confined in an adequate climate for two to four weeks in large cages inside sheds, barns, basements or escape-proof shelters (Alley Cat Allies recommends four weeks.)
- Making sure that cats are fed canned food every day for a short period (two to six weeks)
- Having the caregiver make frequent attempts (minimum twice daily) to verbally bond with the cats

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Pima Animal Care Center WCP application

Pima Animal Care Center Working Cat Program

4000 N. Silverbell Rd.
Tucson, AZ 85745

Phone: 520-724-5983
Email: Tyler.Bator@pima.gov

1. PERSONAL DATA (PRINT)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Email _____

2. HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION

Living accommodations: ___House ___Trailer ___

Rent ___Own Home ___Other _____

Landlord/Apt. Mgr.'s Name/Phone: _____

If applicable, does your lease allow pets?

Yes ___ No ___ Unsure ___

Do you live here full-time? ___Yes ___No

What is the size and description of your property?

How far from the road/traffic is your barn located?

Volume of traffic: ___light ___medium
___heavy

What is the speed limit? _____

3. ANIMAL CARE INFORMATION

Why do you want a barn cat? _____

You will need to confine your barn cat for 2-3 weeks. Are you prepared to allow this much time? ___Yes ___No

What experience have you had in caring for sick or orphaned animals? _____

Who will be responsible for the barn cats' care? _____

Who will care for your barn cats if you are away?

Have you had pets before? ___Yes ___No

What happened to the pets who are no longer with you? _____

Do you have pets of your own at this time? ___Yes ___No
Please list the pets you currently own.

Species	Breed	Sex	Age	Spayed/neutered?
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

If you have a dog, is it permitted to run loose? ___Yes ___No

If yes, what provision will you make to protect the cats? _____

By signing below, I certify that the information I have given is true and that I recognize that any misrepresentation of the facts may result in my losing privilege of acquiring a barn cat. I authorize investigation of all statements on this application. I understand that this application is property of Pima Animal Care Center.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Pima Animal Care Center checklist for working cat placement



CHECKLIST FOR WORKING CAT PROGRAM

Name and location of Caregiver/Barn _____

ITEM	STATUS
Initial Inspection <i>Date</i> _____	
Is the property on a busy road?	
How large is the property?	
What type of structure will the cats be in?	
Are there safe places for them to hide?	
Do the caregivers live here full-time?	
What arrangements will be made if they go out-of-town?	
Do they have any plans to relocate within the next year?	
Are there horses or livestock on the property?	
Are there other domestic cats or dogs? If dogs, are they aggressive toward cats?	
Why do the caregivers want barn cats?	
Do they currently have barn cats?	
Are they willing to keep the cats confined for 2-3 weeks?	
Will they provide daily water and food?	
Will they provide long-term vet care as may be needed?	
Delivery <i>Date</i> _____	
How many cats were delivered?	
How are the cats confined?	
What plan is in place for changing food, water, litter?	
First Follow-up Inspection <i>Date</i> _____	
Have the cats been released to their new home?	
Are all of them still around?	
What problems has the caregiver had?	

Make additional comments/notes on back.

Signature of PACC Representative

Date



Community Cat Programs Handbook

Chapter 28 CCP Supplemental: Disaster Preparedness for Caregivers

Disaster Preparedness for Caregivers

Introduction

Anniversaries of past disasters are reminders of the importance of having a plan for caring for our pets if we become unable to do so. The same is true for community cat caregivers, whose tireless efforts ensure that community cats receive food, water, shelter and (where practical) veterinary care. Caregivers have a unique bond with the cats and often go to great lengths to provide care for them. They will want to make sure the cats continue to get care even if they are unable to deliver it themselves for a short time.

Preparing for a disaster

Animals are resilient and in times of disaster, they follow their instincts to give themselves the best chance at survival. In the aftermath of a disaster, however, animals may require the assistance of humans to help them survive, especially in situations (e.g., flooding or wildfires) when many of their resources have been destroyed or when they have been physically injured or forced to relocate. The following information will help community cat caregivers prepare for specific disaster circumstances.¹

Here are the steps that caregivers can take to help the cats in their care survive:

- Develop a preparedness plan for yourself to ensure that you can continue to care for the cats after the disaster has passed. Go to [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) for more information.
- Keep a record of the cats you care for and their location. Include information such as the number of cats, descriptions and photos, any visible or known injuries, places where they tend to sleep and eat, and feeding routines by the community. Keep that information updated as it changes. Make copies of the document and be sure to take it with you if you ever have to evacuate.
- Secure a copy of the document to any areas where the cats tend to sleep. Include the names and phone numbers of caregivers and place the document in a plastic sleeve for waterproofing.
- Let any other people who feed the cats, as well as local partner animal organizations, know that you are unable to care for the cats temporarily and give them a copy of the document.
- If you must evacuate, provide plenty of food for the cats, since it may be a few days or even weeks before anyone can return to the area, depending on the scope and scale of the disaster.
- If you live in a flood-prone area, get in the habit of placing shelters and feeding stations on higher ground.
- Ensure that the cats have safe, secure spaces to hide in during a storm or weather-related event. If the cats tend to find refuge in a secured building or structure, ensure that they have additional (cat-sized) escape routes if any get blocked.
- Stockpile extra food and/or straw in case you need to establish safe, warm spaces for the cats.



¹ The information in this section and the next was adapted from the NYC Feral Cat Initiative website. animalallianceny.org/feralcats/trn-colony-care-resources/disaster-preparedness-community-cat

- Do not attempt to move or relocate healthy community cat groups to get them out of harm's way in the event of a disaster. Animals are very resilient and can find ways to survive. Their best chance of survival is for you to continue to support their needs after the disaster.
- With that said, take extra steps to protect the most vulnerable cats, such as pregnant cats, young kittens and elderly cats. If they can safely wait out the storm indoors somewhere, that might be the best option. However, do this only for friendly cats and only if you are either not going to be evacuated or can take the cats with you when you evacuate.

Hurricanes and flooding

There are particular things to do if a storm surge is predicted. Caregivers should turn the openings of the cat shelters and feeding stations away from the direction that the surge will come from. If possible, the shelters and feeding stations should be moved to higher ground. If there is no higher ground close by, consider trapping and taking the cats inside temporarily, but only if you are not in danger of being evacuated and can realistically, safely and comfortably house the cats for at least a week. See Chapter 18, "Housing Cats and Kittens," for suggestions.

Providing TNVR for large groups of cats may be limited in the aftermath of the storm due to clinic closures. In the meantime, caregivers can drive spay/neuter focus for when surgery slots are available by keeping a spreadsheet of locations with pregnant cats or those who have given birth.



Stand-in caregivers

Having back-up feeders in place in case an evacuation occurs or when you are physically unable to reach the cats can give you peace of mind during a turbulent time.² If you do not live or work near the cats you provide care for, befriend a local resident or neighbor or enlist animal-loving friends or family members in that area. Other options are to ask members of local cat organizations to serve as backup caregivers or see if your local humane society or shelter has a directory of caregivers so you can partner with others. You can also contact national groups like Best Friends' [2025 Action Team](#) or Alley Cat Allies' [Feral Friends Network](#) to find local activists and caregivers.

You'll want to share some information about the cats with your stand-in caregivers well in advance to avoid scrambling at the time of the disaster. In addition to emailing it to them, print it out and put it on your refrigerator or inside your front door so that the information can be found easily. Ideally, your stand-in caregivers should learn your routine and go with you a few times before a disaster occurs so the cats can become familiar with them. Here's the information to collect and document:

- Exact location of cat feeding stations: Draw a map or pinpoint the stations on a Google satellite or street-view map. Take photos of landmarks such as light



²The information in this section was adapted from the Alley Cat Allies website. alleycat.org/resources/a-brief-guide-for-community-cat-caregivers-during-covid-19

poles or groupings of trees nearby. Be sure to give parking and entry codes or any other instructions that may be needed to access the sites.

- Feeding details: Describe what to feed and how much. Provide instructions on refilling water bowls if that's part of your routine. Include the times that the cats are normally fed. If the substitute caregivers cannot accommodate this schedule, ask them to be consistent with any new feeding times they set.
- Cat descriptions: Document how many cats are in each location and, if possible, include descriptions or photos with their names. Indicate microchip numbers for each cat if they have them.
- Contact information for all fill-in caregivers: Provide the names and contact information of all the potential fill-in caregivers you have identified. If extra help is needed, these individuals can reach out to each other.
- Name of organization or veterinarian: If known, provide the name of the clinic, veterinarian or organization that spayed or neutered and vaccinated the cats. If you are able, have surplus food for the cats on hand to give to the fill-in caregiver. Get the food and supplies to them in advance, if possible.

When the danger has passed

During the storm, caregivers ought to periodically contact their stand-in caregivers for status reports (provided they have power and cell service and were able to make it to the feeding site to care for the cats). The first instinct immediately after a disaster may be to check on the cats right away, but caregivers must wait for local authorities to lift any travel restrictions to the area where the cats reside and should observe any curfews in place in that area. When it is safe to return to the cats, here are some suggestions:



- Be mindful of fallen debris and do not approach downed power lines or trees.
- Take fresh food and water and clean dishes with you. Check the feeding stations and shelters for damage and make a note of what needs to be repaired or replaced.
- Do a head count but bear in mind that it may take a few days for all the cats to come out of hiding.
- If cats are missing, you can contact your local shelter, rescue groups and aid organizations in the area that are assisting animals and provide descriptions and photos of the missing cats. Ask what the procedure is for claiming the cats if they are found. We recommend visiting the shelters or holding facilities in person to look for distinguishing markings.

Conclusion

Having a strategic plan of action can be especially helpful if a disaster occurs suddenly or without much notice. So, it's important for community cat caregivers to be prepared for disasters ahead of time. Doing so will not only benefit the cats that they care for, but can give caregivers peace of mind knowing that they are doing their best to keep the cats as safe as possible.

Additional resources

- [New York City Feral Cat Initiative Disaster Preparedness for Community Cats](#)
- [Alley Cat Allies COVID-19 Guide: Community Cat Caregivers](#)

- Best Friends' [General Pet: Disaster Preparation](#), a collection of articles (some in Spanish)
- [Cat Stats](#), a free online resource for tracking and managing groups of cats
- [Emergency Pet Care Authorization Form](#), which can be used to alert animal control that you have a cat community that needs assistance
- Red Rover's [Pet Disaster Preparedness](#), with a checklist available in [Spanish](#)
- Alley Cat Allies' [Disaster-Proofing a Community Cat Colony](#)
- The ASPCA's [Disaster Preparedness Tips](#) for pet owners, some of which are applicable to community cats
- HSUS's [How to Protect Community Cats from Disasters](#)
- Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals blog post: [New York Caregivers Prepare for Hurricane Sandy](#)