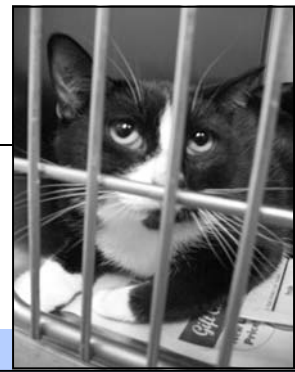


Alley Cat MEWS



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www.saveacat.org

Feeding Ferals at Apartment Complexes

On a freezing blustery day in November 1990, I helped a local rescuer trap a small colony of cats at an apartment complex in Mount Rainier, Maryland. Mama Cat was very friendly—obviously she had once been someone’s pet cat, but had either been dumped when she got pregnant, or perhaps she had wandered too far from home, to seek a mate. Her 5 kittens were unsocialized and needed some work. In the ensuing years, I have helped many residents of the different apartments in the area to trap and fix their feral colonies.



Often stray or abandoned cats congregate near a food source—usually a nearby dumpster or at one place that I helped, behind the local Chinese carry-out. This colony eventually split into 3 segments, with 3 different feeders. Sometimes the cat feeders and the facility management get in fights over the cats. I have been to quite a few condo meetings to try to resolve the issues. I have had to explain that the feeders are not the problem. The people who dumped the cats are the real problem. Caring people will always put out food when they find feral or stray cats trying to eke out an existence somewhere.

Feral cat colonies are growing in areas with low-income housing. Some places have put rules in place to prevent attracting such colonies, but have not been successful.

"They tell us not to feed the cats, but I can't sit back and do nothing," is a constant refrain I have heard over the years. A condo association employee said residents are fined \$25 per day for feeding cats, because they supposedly attract wild animals such as raccoons and rats. If anyone walks around at night in residential areas, they will see hundreds of raccoons and rats and other nocturnal creatures. Humans put their trash out in plastic bags or in dumpsters. Garbage is everywhere. These animals quickly find the food sources. They don't need a cat feeder to attract them, al-

though they will eat at the feeders.

I tell people to put food out first thing in the morning and wait for the cats to eat, and then remove the bowls. This will prevent the wildlife from eating at night. But even so, you can not stop the wildlife from being there. This was their home before all the condos and homes were built.

Still in some places, residents are forbidden to feed cats, and some say they have been approached several times by

FEATURES

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Feeding Ferals Continued

management and even threatened with eviction.

Housing complexes, especially those in low-income areas, attract colonies for several reasons, according to Marlena DiBianco of the Meriden Humane Society and Lori Ratchelous of Friends of Cheshire Feral Cats, in Connecticut. Cats become strays because their families cannot afford to take care of them or they leave them behind because they cannot bring them when they move.

Marlena DiBianco has the right idea: "If more places were cooperative, people could really help these animals out through TNR, and eventually colonies would die out. When you leave them be, they can be unhealthy, but they will keep multiplying."

Most complexes will not make the effort, or they may call in animal control for a quick fix: trap and kill the cats. This leads to a vacuum which can lead to a dramatic increase in the population. Of the cats DiBianco trapped from August to November, more than 75 percent were female.

Alley Cat Rescue recommends you speak to the management about implementing a trap-neuter-return plan. Tell them there will be some tame cats that can be removed right away and placed in homes.



Heartworm in Cats

When people hear about heartworms, they think of dogs. Most responsible pet owners use some kind of heartworm preventative on their dogs and get them tested regularly. Many people do not realize that cats are also susceptible to heartworms, and 10% of cats who have them experience sudden death. It is a serious disease in felines as well as canines, and there has been a recent push to increase awareness in cat lovers.

How do heartworms work in cats? Unlike with dogs, cats usually only get one or two heartworms. Heartworms are usually spread through mosquitoes, which have bitten an infected dog or coyote, and then bite your cat. Even indoor cats can get heartworm, because it is impossible to keep all mosquitoes out of your home. In a North Carolina study, 28% of the cats diagnosed with heartworm were inside-only cats.

Once a cat is infected, the immature larvae enter a blood vessel, where they are carried to the lungs and cause an inflammatory reaction. Most worms die at this stage, where they cause even more inflammation.

Heartworms do damage outside of the heart. In fact,

most of the damage done by heartworms to cats takes place in the lungs. The presence of these heartworms causes what is known as H.A.R.D. or Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease. One of the major problems with H.A.R.D. is that it is often misdiagnosed as asthma, because the symptoms are very similar.

How do I know if my cat has heartworms? Diagnosing

Symptoms of H.A.R.D.

- Loss of appetite
- Blindness
- Collapse
- Convulsions
- Coughing
- Diarrhea
- Difficulty breathing
- Fainting
- Lethargy
- Rapid heart rate
- Sudden death
- Vomiting



Heartworm Continued

heartworms can be very difficult. There are two steps: Antibody test and antigen test. The antigen test looks for a substance found primarily in adult female heartworms that creates an immune response in the body. A positive test is considered diagnostic, but a negative test is not enough to rule out heartworms.

The antibody test looks for the body's immune response to heartworm. Antibody production occurs even if the heartworms have not reached maturity. A positive test can indicate either a current or past infection, and is therefore not considered completely diagnostic, but a positive outcome does increase suspicion of heartworms. Again, a negative test is not enough to rule them out.

Other diagnostic tests include X-rays, echocardiography, complete blood counts and microfilaria testing. X-rays and echocardiography can detect adult heartworms in the heart. Complete blood counts cannot detect heartworms, but can rule out other diseases and increase suspicions. If circulating microfilariae are found, it becomes an absolute confirmation that heartworm disease is present.

How do I treat my cat if he/she has heartworms? Unfortunately, at the moment, there is no treatment for feline heartworms. The symptoms, however, can be treated. The best thing to do is to prevent heartworms. Keeping your cat indoors significantly decreases the risk of heartworms. Heartgard, the maker of dog heartworm preventative, has recently come out with a prescription heartworm preventative for cats. It is important to get separate heartworm preventative for your cat, as dog and cat dosages are very different. Preventative is given once a month. Please talk to your veterinarian about this potentially life saving treatment! Only 5% of cat owners give their cats heart-



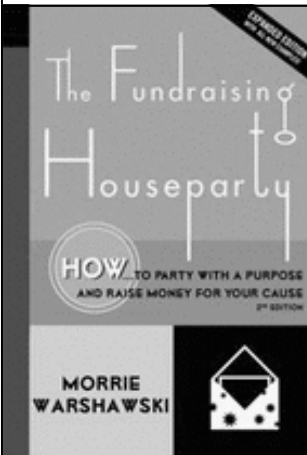
Additional Resources

American Heartworm Society www.heartwormsociety.org/
Know Heartworms www.knowheartworms.org/

Book Review: The Fundraising Houseparty

By Maggie Funkhouser

Author Morrie Warshawski works with nonprofit organizations to reach their potentials, through strategic planning. He has published several books on acquiring grant money and increasing donations for charitable causes. His latest edition of *The Fundraising Houseparty* spells out the fundamentals of planning a houseparty to raise money for whatever the cause.



This insightful book presents step-by-step instructions, from designing the invitations to the responsibilities of the host to presenting your cause to gathering the contributions. Warshawski provides numerous ideas and examples to help get one started and offers several sample invitations and brainstorming worksheets. If you or someone you know is considering organizing a fundraising houseparty, this book is a must have! Warshawski eliminates the stress of "where to start" and makes planning such an event simple and easy...and one of great success!

For more information regarding this book or others by Morrie

Does your company offer a matching gift program? If so, you can double or triple your gift!

California Cats Now Employed



Feral cats have been given a second chance and an important job in the state of California. Thanks to a local animal welfare organization, Voice for the Animals Foundation, these animals are doing what they do best...rodent patrol!

The group has established a "Working Cats Program" to promote TNR and the humane control of feral cats. After being spayed/neutered and vaccinated, the cats are relocated to businesses in the area that are experiencing rodent problems. Businesses slowly introduce the cats to their new home over a period of 30 days. Eventually, the cats become familiar with their surroundings and the dependable food source provided by care takers encourage the cats to stay put.

Feral cats are currently employed by the Los Angeles Flower Market, the Crossroads School campus, and recently by the Los Angeles Police Department Wilshire and Foothills Divisions. According to the Voice for the Animals, it is the cats' scent that keeps the rats at bay. Although they are great hunters, rats get one whiff of the cats and vacate the premises. In a recent Los Angeles Times article, the LAPD states they are happy with the outcome and are working on introducing more ferals to other divisions. There are officers at each station more than willing to care for the cats. "If I were a wild cat, that would be a great job. Your meals are there, your housing is there, you're at a police station so you're safe," says Commander Kirk Albanese.

"Compared to the methods that are most commonly used to control rats, this method proves to be effective, humane and environmentally friendly. It is a win-win-win situation!" proclaims the Voice for the Animals Foundation on their website.

Housing Foreclosures have Negative Effect on Pets

By Kylie Riser

Lately, there have been stories in news sources from across the United States about how the rising number of foreclosures as people can't pay their mortgages has correlated with a rising number of animals being brought to animal shelters. In the third quarter of 2007, the number of homes in some stage of foreclosure in the U.S. more than doubled from year-earlier levels. Cats and dogs are not the only animals affected- rural areas are seeing horses and farm animals abandoned on foreclosed farms. There have been reports of horses wandering the Florida Everglades and the coal mines in Kentucky, where owners set them free to forage on their own.

Some people don't even bother to bring their pets to shelters- they just leave them in the house when they move away. This can cause problems for more than just the pet, as abandoning an animal is illegal in most places, and can cause a steep fine for a person already having financial hardships.

This crisis highlights the need to have a plan in case of an emergency- whether that be illness, foreclosure, even death. There are enough homeless animals in the world, and having a place to take your companion animal in a time of crisis means that one less animal will have to be euthanized to make room for your pet. Before a crisis even occurs, talk to family and friends about your concern for your animal. Even if it means making financial arrangements as well, it is important to know that your animal will be taken care of.

Only 44% of American's have a will. Without a will, you lose control of your assets. Please include Alley Cat Rescue & homeless cats in your plans. Make sure to make arrangements for your animals as well!

Are You Feeding Stray and Feral Cats? *By Maggie Funkhouser*

A stray cat has been hanging around your house and neighbors do not claim him as a pet, so you feel sorry for him and put food and water out. You try to talk to him and offer your affection, but he is scared and keeps his distance; over time, he may allow a few quick pets. Either way, he will be back later for his next meal.

Sound familiar? Have you or someone you know been feeding stray or feral cats? If you answered yes (like so many of us do), there are a few things you can do to help. So often a stray animal will wander into a neighborhood in search of a meal and perhaps a cozy place to snuggle up for a nap. The majority of us feels sympathy for the animal and has no problem supplying food and water, but we still feel helpless that we should be doing more.

If the cat is friendly and loves the attention of humans, some of us will “rescue” him. We will take him in, provide veterinary care, and give him a permanent home; though sometimes circumstances prevent it from happening quite like this. Some of us already have “too many animals” or other personal reasons why we cannot take in an animal or the cat may also be “feral;” meaning he is *wild* and does not require assistance from humans in order to survive. These cats do NOT like human contact and flee at the sight of one. This behavior makes “rescuing” (in the sense of becoming a companion animal) utterly impossible.

So what can you do? Yes, the easiest place to start is by putting out food and water. You can also supply a cozy bed or somewhere for the cat to go to get out of the weather. An old shed is perfect or you can create a shelter using a plastic/rubber container (tote). Turn the tote upside down and cut a hole for a door; line the floor with straw. Cardboard boxes can be used, but do not withstand weather conditions for long. Periodically, change the bedding and clean out the shelter.

Providing the basic necessities for a stray or feral cat will not only make us feel better but also improve the health (and in some cases, social behavior) of the cat; however, this is not the only thing we can do for these animals. In order to stop the cycle of unwanted cats and to prevent further cats from becoming ferals, we need to stop the reproductive cycle. Along with feeding strays, individuals need to team up with local animal welfare groups and non-profit organizations to implement TNR programs and put sterilization plans into action.

Local animal groups can assist individuals by lending traps, offering advice and guidelines, and providing spay/neuter services. Individuals should contact a local animal welfare group, explain the situation, and state his/her willingness to help with TNR, so the group can devise the best plan of action. To locate a rescue group near you, use the phone book yellow pages, ask your veterinarian for contact information, and utilize the internet.

Visit our website www.saveacat.org and click on the “Cat Action Links” to search by state to locate help near you. Also, visit www.petfinder.com or www.worldanimal.net to search for animal rescue groups.

Simply feeding a stray cat, although a selfless act of compassion and a big help, will not get to the root of the problem; caring for strays and ferals needs to be coupled with sterilization. This is a large task, no single group, or animal rescue groups in general, can solve it without the assistance of the public and individuals like you. Therefore, we ask that everyone please get involved and get to know your local animal welfare organizations; help them help you. Donate necessary items like cat/dog food, litter, old newspapers, blankets/towels; make a monetary donation to help cover the cost of veterinary services and fund raising efforts; or donate your time and support by volunteering for an hour or two a week. Rescuing animals is a full-time endeavor that requires a lot of time, money, and energy; things that most of us do not have a lot of. However, if

Editorial Commentary: Passing The Hat

Many donors ask animal groups how much of their money goes directly towards helping animals. This is a legitimate question, as so many people who support animal groups and send their hard-earned dollars because they care about animals and want to help. At ACR we are very proud of the fact that 80% of our money goes towards hands-on work for stray, abandoned and feral cats and towards providing resources to others nationwide and even internationally to help animals.

ACR is unique in that we are one of the few national organizations that actually rolls up our sleeves and provides hands-on rescue for strays and TNR for ferals.

Last year we took 4 veterinarians and 2 vet techs to Mexico to spay and neuter cats there, after a local cat rescuer called us and asked for help. The vets (including our very own veterinarian, Dr. Pervaiz Manzoor) donated their time. And the rest of us worked to the point of exhaustion for 6 days to put this on. We were in beautiful Puerto Vallarta, but had to enjoy the wonderful



Feral Cat

sights on our way to the Acopia (a very sad place indeed, where lots of dogs are dumped in dog runs all mixed up—females, males, puppies, dogs used in dog fights—it just breaks your heart to go there. And they have no place to put the cats.) We spayed and neutered many cats that the locals brought to us.

My final impression of this gorgeous place was a sad one. After we worked so hard to spay and neuter the animals, and after we worked on placing most of the animals in the shelter, we were sitting in the warm Mexican sunset waiting for our rides to arrive, and several police vans pulled up outside the Acopia packed full of dogs. The Police in this area pick up stray and abandoned dogs.

Some dogs were wagging their tails, trustingly looking out to see if this was a new adventure for them. Others looked terrified; perhaps they had a sense that they would not leave this place alive. An eerie silence broke over the volunteers who had all worked so hard. My heart was broken. I had to walk away to hide the tears.

To end on a good note: we started a trend in PV, Mexico. The Mexican vets we trained went on to spay and neuter animals on their own; they had not done this before. And several volunteers went on to hold their own spay/neuter clinics. If anyone is interested in sponsoring other clinics in Mexico, please let us know. There is much work to be done.

On another note: in the October issues of *Animal People* they wrote that a charity that is dedicating most of its resources to mission fulfillment is not more virtuous than one spending all its money helping animals and none on also building the capacity to do more. In other words every charity, unless it is very old and able to survive on endowments, bequests and interest, has to spend some of its resources on attracting new donors and building its base to enable it to do more for animals. So please do for-



ACR Teaching Spay/Neuter Techniques

Call to Action: Sign the petition to stop the killing of feral cats in Petaluma, CA!

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/5/stop-killing-the-feral-cats-and-bees-in-petaluma>

Petaluma passed an ordinance back in 2004 to "control" the feral cat population but this method of "control" is not working. Since this ordinance, Petaluma Animal Control has euthanized over 1,500 ferals. Sign the

Will You Be Meow Valentine?

Is your cat the purrrr-fect Valentine? Does he have a best friend?
Does she spend all of her time in your lap?

We want pictures of your cat being a pawsome companion (with you, another kitty, even a dog or other animal!)

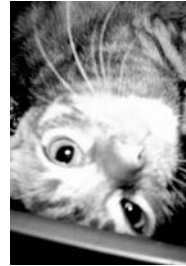
Winners will be published in a future newsletter!

Please send pictures to P.O. Box 585, Mt. Rainier, MD 20712 or email them to AlleyCatRescue@gmail.com
All pictures become property of Alley Cat Rescue and cannot be returned to their owners.



Recent Adoptions!

Here are some of our recent adoptions!



Where to Find Alley Cat Rescue

Address: PO box 585, Mt. Rainier, MD 20712

Phone: 301-277-5595

Email: AlleyCatRescue@gmail.com

Website: www.saveacat.org

Blog: http://alleycatrescue.blogspot.com



HOW YOU CAN HELP ACR

A: By CHECK

Make checks payable to *Alley Cat Rescue*

\$10 \$20 \$35 \$50

\$100 \$250 \$500 \$1000

Name _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Does your company offer matching gifts? You can double or triple your donation!

B: By CREDIT CARD

Please charge my ONE TIME \$

Contribution to my credit card

I would like to make a **MONTHLY** donation

\$6 \$9 \$12 \$15

\$20 \$25 Other \$ _____

Visa Mastercard

Other \$ _____

Alley Cat Rescue *The National Cat Protection Association* is a non-profit 501(c) 3

Donations are Tax Deductible

Alley Cat Rescue

P.O. Box 585

Mt. Rainier, MD 20722

Credit Card donations are processed through the **BRENTWOOD ANIMAL HOSPITAL**, credited to the account of Alley Cat Rescue. Brentwood Animal Hospital will appear on your credit card statement.



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A LEGACY OF COMPASSION

Please consider leaving something in your will and estate plans for the long-term care of homeless cats. It is really simple to do and can make a huge difference in the lives of cats long after we are gone.

Suggested Bequest Language

I give the sum of \$____ to Alley Cat Rescue, Inc., a nonprofit incorporated in the State of Delaware and located in Maryland, for its general purpose to help stray, abandoned, and feral cats.
 Federal Tax ID: 52-227 9100

ACR Wins Prestigious Mews Medallion

The Cat Writer’s Association has awarded “Alley Cat Mews” a Muse Medallion in the category Newsletter, Regional or Membership Circulation. Each entry in a category is scored independently by three CWA judges, and those with an average score over 90 are given a Certificate of Excellence. The highest scoring entry in each category is awarded the Muse Medallion. Kylie was proud to accept the award at the 2007 Annual Conference in San Francisco, California.



Alley Cat Rescue
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