

TNR Statistics

Nearly one million healthy cats and kittens are euthanized annually at shelters across the country. Of these healthy cats, feral cats often face the bleakest outcome. This is because feral cats are born and raised in the wild and are generally unsocialized towards people. Feral cats are not good candidates for adoption; they often hide in the back of their cages and do not seek affection from people.

Thankfully, trap-neuter-return (TNR) provides an answer to a near certain death for feral cats. TNR involves trapping the cats, providing them with spay/neuter surgery and vaccinations, and returning them where they were found outside. The cats are ear-tipped to identify those who have gone through the TNR process. TNR'd cats will have a colony caregiver who will provide them with continued food, water, and veterinary care. This method humanely handles cat overpopulation, while allowing the cats to live out their lives. TNR acknowledges that feral cats are unsuitable for indoor living and at the same time, helps shelters reduce their intake and euthanasia rates. Furthermore, the number of cats living in outdoor colonies will decrease over time because the cats can no longer reproduce.

TNR is not only the most humane option but the most practical. Trap-and-kill plans have proven to be ineffective because these plans do not address the root problem of reproduction. A study in Tasmania found that killing feral cats actually led to an increase in population. Researchers stated that this was probably due to new individuals taking over the area after dominant cats were removed[1]. TNR is also much less costly than trap-and-kill plans. One reason TNR is more cost-effective is because it reduces shelter intake and shelter euthanasia, saving local governments' time and resources. Lastly, TNR also helps curb problem behaviors such as wandering, howling, spraying, and fighting that eradication plans do not address; again, because TNR focuses on reproductive/mating issues.

TNR Reduces Shelter Intake and Euthanasia Rates

- After implementing TNR at The Fairfax County Animal Shelter in Virginia, the shelter noted a significant decrease in the number of feline offspring entering the shelter's foster care program. The shelter saw a 58% decrease in the number of feral offspring in the shelter's foster care program in 2011 versus in 2010. In addition, foster data from 2008 through 2011 showed a 41% decrease in the number of bottle-fed kittens entering the shelter and a 9% decrease in the total number of kittens needing foster care when comparing 2010 to 2011[2].
- Arlington, Texas had a 48% decrease in cat intake at the Arlington Animal Shelter after implementing a TNR program[3].
- In Alachua County, Florida a TNR program led to a 70% decline in animal control cat intake in the targeted area and a 13% decline in other areas. Further, per

capita shelter intake was 3.5 times higher and per capita shelter euthanasia was 17.5 times higher in the non-target area compared to the TNR target area[4].

- A TNR and spay/neuter voucher program resulted in a 50% increase in animals saved and a 50% decline in animals euthanized in Aiken County, South Carolina[5].
- In an 8 year period of implementing TNR, San Jose county shelter reduced its cat euthanasia rate from 66.6% down to 34.9%[6].

TNR Reduces Colony Size

- During an 11-year study at the University of Florida, the number of cats on campus declined by 66% after implementing TNR with no kittens being born after the first four years[7].
- The University of Texas at A&M began a TNR program and saw no kittens in the subsequent years and saw a decrease in cat-related complaints[8].
- The Stanford University Cat Network reduced its feral population from 1500 cats down to 300 over a ten-year period by implementing a campus TNR program[9].
- A city-wide TNR program decreased colony sizes in Rome, Italy by 21%, despite cat immigration (abandonment and spontaneous arrival)[10].

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