

Project TNR
NJ's Humane Solution for Feral Cats



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What is TNR?

Trap-Neuter-Return, commonly referred to as “TNR”, is the only method proven to be effective, humane and cost-effective in controlling feral cat population growth. Using this technique, all the feral cats in a colony are trapped, neutered and then returned to their territory where caregivers provide them with regular food and shelter. Young kittens who can still be socialized, as well as friendly adults, are placed in foster care and eventually adopted out to good homes.

TNR has many advantages. It immediately stabilizes the size of the colony by eliminating new litters. The nuisance behavior often associated with feral cats is dramatically reduced including the yowling and fighting that come with mating activity and the odor of unneutered males spraying to mark their territory.

Another significant advantage to TNR is that, when practiced on a large scale, it lessens the number of kittens and cats flowing into local shelters. This results in lower euthanasia rates and the increased adoption of cats already in the shelters. For example, in San Francisco, after TNR had been widely implemented for six years, euthanasia rates for all cats, feral and domestic, declined by 71 percent. San Diego, after several years of TNR, also experienced substantially lower euthanasia rates.

In contrast to TNR, doing nothing, trap and remove or feeding bans have resulted in the current crisis where, in New Jersey, the feral cat population is likely to approximate 400,000 cats in summer and 200,000 cats in the winter.¹ Trying to “rescue” the cats and find them all homes is utopian and unattainable given their numbers and the futility of trying to socialize most of them. Trap and kill, the traditional technique exercised by animal control, is simply ineffective. If all the cats are not caught, then the ones left behind over breed until the former population level is reached. Even if all the cats are removed, new unneutered cats tend to move in to take advantage of whatever food source there was, and the cycle starts again. This explains why more and more animal control agencies are willing to try TNR.

Finally, TNR is an idea whose time has come. It recognizes there is a new balance in our urban and rural landscape, one that includes feral cats. It seeks to manage this new population with enlightened techniques that allow the cats to live out their lives and fulfill their natures, while minimizing any possible negative impact. TNR is a movement that will continue to grow as more and more people see its potential and, in time, it will become the predominant method of feral cat population control.

¹ New Jersey Animal Welfare Task Force Report, November 2004, Pg 70