COMPASSION IS THE WAY:

The Care & Feeding of Feral Cats

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IT TAKES A COMMUNITY

No More Homeless Pets. A decade ago it would have sounded like science fiction. Now we are poised to make it a reality. But whether you call it No More Homeless Pets, No Kill, or other things, in a nutshell, the challenge is to build a humane "society."

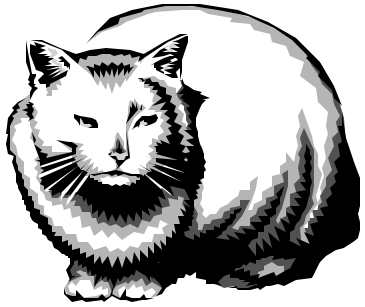
To meet that challenge, we need to get the community excited, to energize people for the task at hand. Everybody needs to be a part of the mission. And the measure of how much we succeed—or fail—is a function of what happens to the cat living in an alley in our community, whether the business downtown adopts a 'pets at work' policy, whether landlords will help our lifesaving goals by saying yes to renters with dogs, whether our neighbors adopt imperfect pets because they believe in our lifesaving mission. It is about the cafes, the storefronts, the squares, the neighborhoods. That is how we will be measured. And that is what it takes to save all the lives at risk—regardless of how big or how small your shelter is.

What confuses a lot of people in this movement, what stops them before they start is the completely false idea that to end the killing of healthy and sick homeless pets, you need to start with big bucks and big shelters. That helps, it helps a lot, but it is putting the cart before the horse. And that's not so great an idea when our cart and our horse have a long way to go.

To reach our goals, we must first focus our energies, *not* on building a shelter, but on rebuilding our relationship with the community.

If No Kill is going to become a reality in our hometowns, the ethic, the beliefs, the desire must penetrate the community. No-Kill may be *defined* by what happens to the animals within the halls of the shelter, but it can only be *achieved* by what happens outside of them. How much the lifesaving ethic is embraced in the cafes, storefronts, squares and neighborhoods. By how much we build our image by reflecting the values that people hold dear, and in turn expand the resources to save more and more lives at risk.

Let me give you one example. Jamie had never heard of feral cats, didn't know what a Tomahawk trap was, did not know that there was anyone to turn to. All Jamie knew was that after she fed the hungry stray in her yard, she started noticing others. Whenever she would turn down the alley to make a shortcut to her house, she saw the cats staring at her. Some were skinny, some looked pregnant, most were wild, all of them were hungry. So she started feeding them. And she wanted to have them spayed.



She managed to catch them—one by one. And since she paid full price, over $200 for an exam, vaccinations, and spay/neuter, she could only afford one cat every two weeks after she got paid. Jamie was sacrificing for "down and out" animals. And she had no one to turn to. Imagine what Jamie could have accomplished with a trap and low-cost or free spay-neuter.

When the local SPCA opened a feral cat spay/neuter clinic and began loaning out traps for free, Jamie went on to trap and alter over 120 cats in one year alone. And a team of 70 "Jamies" put together a neonatal foster network that reduced kitten deaths by 85% throughout the city.

Jamie exists in every community. We need to tap into that energy, that compassion, that desire to do the right thing—and harness it. We build a humane *shelter* within our walls. We become a humane *society* by embracing the landlords, merchants, and feral cat caretakers in our communities—and energizing them for the lifesaving effort ahead.

It is absolutely essential for the humane movement to embrace the community we serve. We cannot save the lives of animals without people's help.

If you reflect the community's values, if you are doing a good job for animals, if you tell them about it, and then ask for their help. They do help. They want to be a part of the effort. Jamie traps cats for spay/neuter. Landlords make their apartments "pet friendly." Others give donations.

Whether its pets in rental housing, dogs at work, cats in alleys, or finding homes for older, sick, injured or traumatized pets in our shelter, if we are going to save lives, we need four things: desire, creativity, flexibility, and most importantly, community support.

The big, beautiful shelter, the expanding resource base, the successes will all be a byproduct of that, not their cause.

FERAL CATS

NO ONE KNOWS how many there are, or even exactly how to define them. Webster's dictionary defines feral as "having escaped from domestication and become wild," but this definition does not cover all the cats we know as feral.

Cats in our society occupy a spectrum that runs from the cherished pet to ferals who may have had little or no human contact or support. Some of these elusive felines were born in parks and alleyways and will never become accustomed to people. Others may be "marginally owned," living in someone's backyard, garage, or barn, or traveling from doorstep to doorstep in search of food and occasional shelter.

In many cities, feral cats proliferate unabated with no safety net of care. But there are effective, humane methods to control their population. Humane organizations and rescue groups can control the feral cat population, provide medical care, keep the cats adequately fed, and, when possible, adopt them into living homes. This safety net of care is key to our goal of no more homeless pets.

THE FERAL CAT ENIGMA

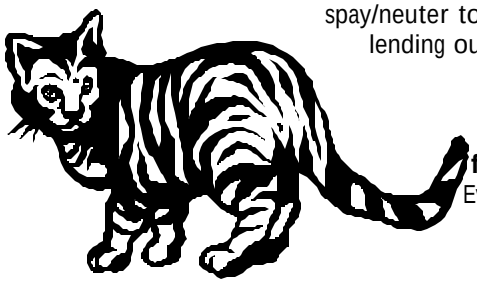
Strategies for saving feral cats (and their offspring, who can make up the bulk of the kitten population in our shelters) cannot rely solely on aggressive adoption programs or strategies appropriate for healthy and treatable pets. The answer for feral cats lies in community-based programs that allow them to live out their lives side-by-side with the rest us, while we devise other programs to humanely control their numbers.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A FERAL CAT PROGRAM:
- **Free or low cost spay/neuter**
- **Free humane trap rental**
- **Support of cat caregivers**

STARTING A FERAL CAT PROGRAM

Although the "Trap, Neuter, Return" (TNR) method of feral cat colony management has become increasingly accepted within the humane community, organized programs to help feral cats are not nearly commonplace enough. TNR is not only humane, it is the most effective way to reduce the number of homeless cats. In addition, feral cat caregivers are a dedicated "army of compassion," and can be one of a shelter's greatest resources in the community.

Organizations on even the smallest budget can start a feral cat program. It's as simple as offering spay/neuter to one caregiver or lending out one humane trap:



Offer free or low-cost spay/neuter for feral cats. Even one free or subsidized spay/neuter is a start! Not only will it prevent more litters from being born, it will be the beginning of a relationship between your organization and feral cat caregivers.

Buy a humane trap—or several—and share them with cat caregivers. Some trap distributors offer discounts to humane organizations. Or ask local pet supply stores or hardware stores to donate a trap to your group.

Meet with local veterinarians to request that they provide free or discounted services for feral cats.

Hold cat food drives for feral cat caregivers—ask your members to donate to the feral cat cause.

Offer classes on feral cat issues. Ask caregivers to lead the classes and provide them with classroom space. Advertise by telephone tree, flyers in local veterinary offices, and free announcements in newspaper calendar section.

Start your own cat volunteer team. Even a small number of people will help. And as word spreads, you will recruit more members.

Advocate on behalf of cats and their caregivers. Let legislators, public officials, and the media know that they can contact your organization for expert opinions and advice on cat-related topics.

Start a foster program for feral and neonatal kittens, Recruit foster parents through volunteer orientations, blurbs places in company newsletters, and flyer hung at pet-supply stores.

Build trust with local cat caregivers by respecting their privacy and seeking their input. Do not require caregivers to register or license cats, reveal colony locations or conform to "minimum standards" of care.

TRAP, NEUTER, RETURN

What is TNR?
TNR is widely recognized as the most humane and effective strategy for reducing feral cat populations. TNR involves humanely trapping feral cats and transporting them to a veterinary clinic where they are spayed or neutered. At this time, they may also receive a health check, vaccinations, and can be treated for routine medical conditions. After surgery, the cat recuperates for a day or two and is then returned back to his colony habitat where he will live out his natural life. Since the cats are no longer reproducing, the colony will gradually diminish in size. And by reducing or eliminating mating, fighting, and wandering, TNR makes the colony more stable, impacts the influx of newcomers, and improves the health of the cats.

Trap and Kill
As a general rule, feral cats cannot be adopted into human homes, and relocating them to another area is extremely difficult. Therefore, in most cases, if feral cats are taken to an animal shelter instead of being altered and returned, they will be killed. Besides being inhumane, trap and remove is only a temporary "solution," opening up an ecological void which more cats—unneutered—will eventually fill, starting the breeding process all over again. Trap and remove, then, is an endless cycle of breeding and killing, while TNR is a lifesaving and permanent solution.

Case Studies
A survey of feral cat caregivers conducted in San Francisco found that *every* caregiver who implemented a TNR program saw their colony stabilize or decrease in number. In San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, one feral cat colony has been reduced from 85 cats to two through TNR. And after caregivers at Stanford University started a successful TNR program, the campus cat population reached zero population growth almost immediately. Today, through natural attrition and the adoption of tame cats, the colony has decreased by over 50%.

In contrast, Sonoma State University administration implemented a trap and kill program over the objections of campus cat caregivers. Less than one year after the cats were removed, more cats were again making their home on campus. At Georgetown University, school officials trapped feral cats and took them to the local animal control agency where the cats were killed. Less than six months later, 10 new unaltered cats and 20 kittens appeared on the campus in one location alone.

One of the primary misconceptions about feral cat caregivers is that they "establish" cat colonies. In fact, the opposite is true. Feral cat caregivers are helping cats who are already there. And by working to feed and alter the cats, they are improving the lives of the cats and reducing potential problems. Through TNR, the caregivers are actively helping the cats and working to reduce their numbers over time. By feeding the cats, they are reducing wandering and other behaviors that may lead to "conflicts" with others.

How You Can Help
While it is advisable to provide food and water on a daily basis, for those who do not wish to take these steps, just having the cats altered will help a great deal. Here are four good reasons to get started with TNR:

1. **It's effective**. Having the cats altered and returning them to their habitats is the quickest way to permanently reduce feral cat populations.
2. **It's easy**. All you need is a humane cat trap and some common-sense tips.
3. **It's humane**. There are very few feral cat sanctuaries and even fewer volunteers seeking to adopt feral cats. If you trap the cats and take them to animal control shelters, they will be killed since feral cats cannot be adopted into homes.
4. **You'll be in good company.** Tens of thousands of compassionate people are helping feral cats by having them spayed or neutered. Join the crowd!

THE CARE AND FEEDING OF FERAL CATS

FERAL CATS ARE NOT socialized to people. They range from cats who have never had human contact to semi-tame cats who were once pets. Often living in loose associations known as "colonies," they become well-adapted to their territory and can live safely and contentedly in alleyways, parking lots, vacant lots, backyards, and a host of other locations-urban, suburban, and rural.

Determine if the cats are being cared for

- Veterinarians usually notch or tip one ear to show the cats have been spayed or neutered. Unless all the cats have clearly clipped ears, you should assume they are not yet altered.
- If you notice kittens, there are cats who need to be altered.
- Do you see evidence that the colony is being cared for such as food dishes, water bowls, or shelters? If someone is already feeding the cats, perhaps you can help to have the cats neutered.

Start feeding

- Feed the cats once a day. Dry food is preferable, and should be left as inconspicuously as possible. Place food under shrubs, behind bushes, or near walls. Don't forget fresh water!
- Stick to a regular schedule if you can. Consistent feeding will make trapping easier.

Spay/neuter

- For trapping instructions, see "Humane Trapping" section. Spay/neuter is the single most important thing you can do to help feral cats, and is the most humane and effective way to control their populations. Not only does spay/neuter prevent more kittens from being born, it also decreases behavior like spraying, fighting, howling, and roaming. In addition, it greatly improves the cats' health.
- Spay/neuter should take precedence over socializing and adopting. Even if you do not wish to continue feeding and caring for them, you should still have the cats altered and return them to their habitat.

FEEDERS vs. CAREGIVERS?

- **Each has a role in the community**
- **Don't condemn or exclude feeders**
- **Help feeders to become caregivers**

- Decide where you will have the cats altered. To find low-cost or free spay/neuter in other areas, call your local humane society or (800) 248-SPAY.

Managing the colony

- Minimize the number of feeding locations—fewer feeding stations means less work for you and less chance of someone noticing. It also makes it easier to keep an eye on the cats and to monitor the colony for newcomers.
- Feed the cats in areas as secluded as possible, away from people and centers of activity.
- If possible, do not feed at night. Conflicts with wildlife are one of the primary reasons neighbors complain about feral cat colonies, and daytime feeding reduces the chance of wild animals helping themselves to the cats' food.
- Keep feeding areas clean. Pick up trash even if it isn't yours. Don't leave empty cans or large piles of food. Dry food is less messy than canned, and if you only feed dry food, canned food will be a more enticing treat, making trapping much easier.
- Watch for newcomers, and have them spayed or neutered right away.
- "Out of sight, out of mind" is the motto of many feral cat caregivers. Try to be inconspicuous in your feeding and trapping activities. If someone notices and asks what you are doing, explain that altering and feeding the cats will decrease their numbers quickly and humanely. Most people are supportive of what you are doing.
- Share responsibilities. Do you have friends, co-workers, family members, or other caregivers who will feed the cats one day a week or colony sit while you're on vacation? Perhaps they can socialize a kitten or keep a cat for post-surgery recovery while you continue trapping. The more people who participate in caring for a colony, the better off the cats—and you—will be.

Resources for help

- Local veterinarians: Ask if they can put you in touch with anyone else who is caring for feral cats for advice and support. Do they have a humane trap you can borrow?
- Humane societies: Do they offer free or low-cost spay/neuter? Or medical care if you find a sick or injured cat? They may have humane traps to borrow or a volunteer who can teach you how to trap.
- Pet supply stores: Find out if they have humane traps to borrow, rent, or buy, or referrals to volunteers or local feral cat groups. Tell them what you are doing, and ask for cat food donations, or request permission to set up a donation bin where customers can deposit cat food they purchase at the store.

HUMANE TRAPPING

How Humane Traps Work

A humane trap is a small wire cage with a door on one end and a trip plate on its floor. There may be a second door on the back of the trap. To set the trap, push in then lift up the front door and latch it open with the small hook above the door. The hook is connected to the trip plate, so when you press on the trip plate, the door closes.

Where to Find Humane Traps

Traps can be borrowed or rented from your local humane society, pet supply store, veterinarians, or your local humane society. Traps can be purchased through pet supply stores, hardware stores or distributors like Tomahawk at (800) 272-8727 or Animal Care Equipment Services at (800) 338-2237.

Important Tips

- Understand how the trap works before you set it.
- Never leave a trap unattended.
- Once the cat is trapped, keep the trap loosely covered with a sheet or towel.
- When carrying a trapped cat, hold the trap away from your body.
- Always be sure both doors are securely latched to prevent escape.

Conditioning the Cat to the Trap

Some cats can be trapped immediately, but more wary cats will need to be conditioned to the trap.

To do this, feed the cats daily at the same time in the same location. Place a trap in the area you feed. Open the door of the trap and secure it open with a piece of string or wire. Put the food outside the trap, but near the open door. Each time you feed, move the food nearer, then into the trap. The door should still be wired open. You can also use a cage, medium or large pet carriers, or a cardboard box.

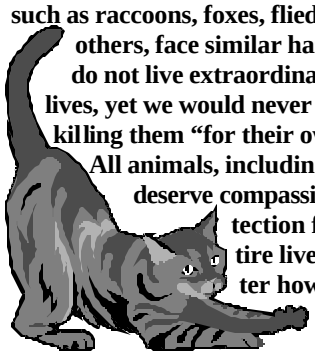
Trapping

Set the trap at the cats' normal feeding time. You may want to withhold food for one day prior to trapping to ensure that the cat is hungry enough to go into the trap. Line the bottom of the trap with a thin sheet of newspaper and put some wet food, mackerel, anchovies, or tuna in a paper or plastic dish set all the way in the back of the trap. Trail a tiny bit of food inside the trap from the front to the back.

To avoid accidentally trapping skunks or raccoons, try to trap before dark or just after dawn.

After the trap is set, hide out of sight-in your car, behind bushes or trees, or anywhere the cat cannot see you. Once the cat is trapped, approach quietly and cover the trap with a sheet or towel. This will quickly calm the cat down.

Some people believe that feral cats lead "short, miserable" lives and that for this reason, TNR programs should not be implemented. On the contrary. As most caregivers can attest, feral cats frequently lead long, healthy lives. And while feral and abandoned cats may face hardships, death is not better than a less-than-perfect life. Many animals, such as raccoons, foxes, flied mice and others, face similar hazards and do not live extraordinarily long lives, yet we would never consider killing them "for their own good." All animals, including feral cats, deserve compassion and protection for their entire lives—no matter how long that might be.



Hard To Catch Cats

For very wary cats, you may need two weeks or more of conditioning before they will go in the trap. You can make a trap more enticing by putting a bit of canned food, baby food, or catnip on the outside of the trap.

Cats love the smell of a pungent herb called valerian- try boiling some in water to make a strong-smelling broth. It is hard for cats to resist.

If ongoing trapping has caused some of the cats to become trap shy, try waiting a week or two before resuming trapping. A short break can reduce the cats' fear of the trap.

Sick cats can be particularly difficult to catch. Try baiting the trap with warm chicken broth, warm water, valerian, or warmed up baby food.

Trapping Kittens

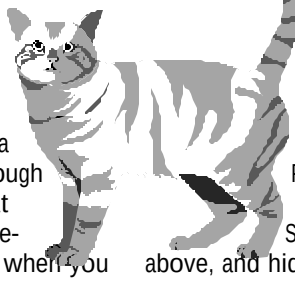
It is best to use a kitten-sized trap. If you cannot find one, tie a string to the door of a plastic pet carrier. Then run the string through the inside of the carrier and out the holes at the back. Set a brick or something heavy behind the carrier so it will remain stationary when you pull the string. Hide out of sight holding the string. When the kitten enters the carrier, pull the string and hold tight so she cannot push the door open. Keep the string taut until you latch the door.

If you are trying to catch a mother cat and her kittens, first catch the kittens and place them in a plastic pet carrier. Then set a humane trap and place the carrier with the kittens behind the trap. (The door of the carrier should be facing the back of the trap.) Cover the end of the trap and the whole carrier with a sheet or towel. The food and the sound of the kittens crying will lure the mom cat into the trap.

Selective Trapping

In colonies where most of the cats have already been trapped, you may need to control when the trap door closes so you can catch the right cat. This is called selective trapping.

To modify a trap for selective trapping, purchase a small hook (the type used for a hook-and-eye latch) at the hardware store. Attach it on the trap next to the hook that normally holds the trap door open. When the door is held open with your new hook, stepping on the trip plate does not shut the door. Tie a string to the new hook. Pulling the string will release the door.



Set your modified trap as described above, and hide out of sight holding the string. Put extra food in the trap, as many cats may go in and out before the right one does.

POST SURGERY RECOVERY CARE

AFTER SPAY/NEUTER SURGEY, feral cats should be kept in a safe location and monitored for approximately 24 hours until they are ready to be returned to their habitats. The holding period may be longer if any complications were encountered during surgery.

Do not let the cat loose in your house or attempt to transfer her to another cage. Transferring is difficult and if the cat gets loose, you cannot properly monitor her recovery.

Prepare the holding area ahead of time. A garage, extra room, bathroom, basement, or laundry room can work well. The area should be quiet, sheltered, and off-limits to any other animals. It must also be warm and dry.

Following are guidelines for post-surgery care:

- Prop the trap up on bricks, chairs or anything to raise it off the floor a few inches. Make sure it is stable and sturdy.
- Underneath the trap, place a disposable tray with a little kitty litter in it or a piece of plastic topped with newspaper. This will absorb any urine or spilled water. Do not put any litter in the trap or allow the cat to use clay kitty litter for several days following surgery, as it can irritate the incision site and cause infection. Most feral cats do not use kitty litter, but if necessary, shredded newspaper can be used instead.

- The cat may be groggy after surgery, but should be fully awake by the evening. There may be a few drops of blood on the paper in the bottom of the cage, but that is normal. When you get home, place the covered trap in the recovery area and leave the cat alone for a little while.
- That evening, offer the cat food. Open the trap door one to two inches and slip in a couple of small plastic or paper dishes. You can refill them with dry food and water from outside the trap.
- Feed kittens as soon as you get them home.
- Make sure both trap doors are securely shut and latched. The cat will usually move to the end of the trap away from you, but always be cautious when opening the trap door.
- If necessary, dishes can be moved around with blunt sticks. Do not use anything sharp that could injure the cat.
- Feed the cat once or twice a day during the holding period.

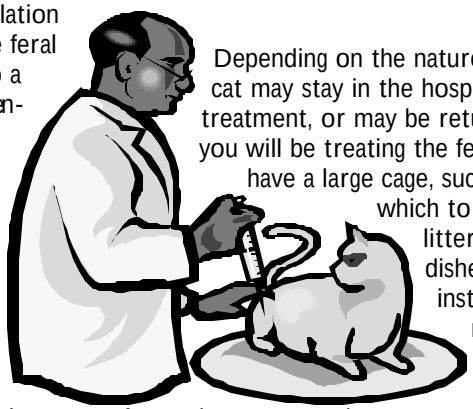
Recovery and Release

- Males generally need 24 hours to recover and females a little longer. You want to be sure that the cat is eating and drinking, and that there are no signs of infection (discharge from surgery site, bleeding, or swelling).
- If the cat seems lethargic beyond the first day, or if you notice any of the above signs, the cat should be brought back to clinic to be rechecked.
- The cat might not urinate or defecate during the first day or two of the holding period. This is normal.
- Once the cat is eating, is alert, and has clear eyes, he can be returned to his colony habitat. Try to release the cat as close as possible to where you trapped him, and choose a time of day when fewer people will be in the area.

FERAL CAT MEDICAL ISSUES

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION is intended to provide a basic overview of feral cat medical issues. It should not be used to diagnose an animal, nor is it intended to provide veterinary advice. For more information on these issues, or if your cat is injured or sick, please consult a veterinarian.

Feral cats do not experience significantly more or worse medical issues than do housecats. In fact, feral cats may actually be healthier as a population than domestic pet cats. This is because feral kittens will develop natural immunity to a variety of illnesses. Nonetheless, prevention and early treatment of medical problems play an important role in helping all cats to live long, healthy lives.



Prevention

- Spay/neuter improves cat health and behavior and eliminates the risk of certain types of cancer.
- Feed the cats regularly (dry food is important for dental health) and provide fresh water. Keep food areas clean.

Treatment

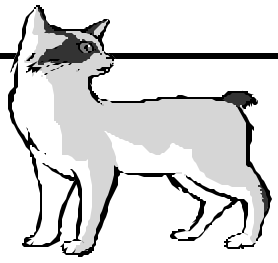
- If you notice anything unusual such as eye discharge, limping, or sudden unexplained weight loss, sick cats, take the cat to a veterinarian. If your regular veterinarian does not treat feral cats, contact other caregivers or feral cat organizations for referrals.

Depending on the nature of the illness or injury, the cat may stay in the hospital, return home for further treatment, or may be returned directly to his habitat. If you will be treating the feral cat at home, you should have a large cage, such as a dog kennel or crate, in which to confine him. Provide a small litterbox and plastic food or water dishes. Follow your veterinarian's instructions for administering medication. Even if treatment is lengthy, a cat can be returned to her colony once she has recovered.

Feral cats may be harder to treat than most pet cats, but do not be discouraged from seeking veterinary care. Long-lasting injections, liquid medications, crushed pills, and other methods are available to make treatment as easy as possible. And the minor stress of confinement and treatment is well worth it—remember, you are helping to save a life!

Definitions

- Abscess: A puncture wound that closes over on the surface of the skin while infection spreads below the surface. If an abscess opens, you will notice blood, pus, and a bad smell. Otherwise you may see a lump under the fur anywhere on the body. An untreated abscess can spread infection throughout the body.
- Ear mites: Microscopic parasites that irritate and inflame the ear.
- Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV): Feline diseases of the immune system. FIV is transmitted cat-to-cat via biting, and FeLV is transmitted cat-to-cat via saliva or from mother to kitten. Many cats remain asymptomatic while in others, secondary infections may develop. FIV and FeLV affect less than 3% of the feral cat population-lower than in domestic pet cats. By stopping breeding and fighting, spay/neuter further reduces the incidence of these diseases.
- Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP): A viral disease which many cats (domestic and feral) are exposed to but that few develop. There is no reliable test or vaccine.
- Flea allergy: Some cats have a severe allergic response to flea bites, resulting in hair loss, scabs, and/or severe itching. In most cases, eliminating fleas greatly reduces symptoms. Flea infestation in kittens can also lead to life-threatening anemia.
- Gestation: A cat is pregnant for approximately 64 days.
- Gingivitis: Gum disease. It can be a secondary infection of FeLV or FIV, or can occur on its own. Symptoms include swollen gums, loose teeth, oversalivation, and difficulty eating. Left untreated, it can become life threatening.
- Lactation: Mother cats produce milk until kittens are weaned at approximately four to seven weeks of age. Lactating females should not be spayed until the kittens are weaned.
- Lice: You may notice the eggs, which look like sawdust but cannot be brushed off the kitten's fur. Lice often requires repeated treatment with special shampoos available from your veterinarian.
- Ringworm: A fungal skin infection. A veterinarian should check suspicious lesions. When handling a cat suspected of having ringworm, you should wear gloves.
- Distemper (Feline Panleukopenia): Distemper is relatively rare in feral cats-most have developed a natural immunity. Most cat vaccinations include a component to prevent distemper.
- Roundworms and tapeworms: Intestinal parasites. Some cats are asymptomatic, or you may notice worms in cat droppings.
- Upper respiratory infection (URI): A viral infection similar to the flu in humans. Symptoms may include nose and/or eye discharge, noisy breathing, and/or sneezing. URI can lead to secondary infections and in some cases can become life threatening if untreated.



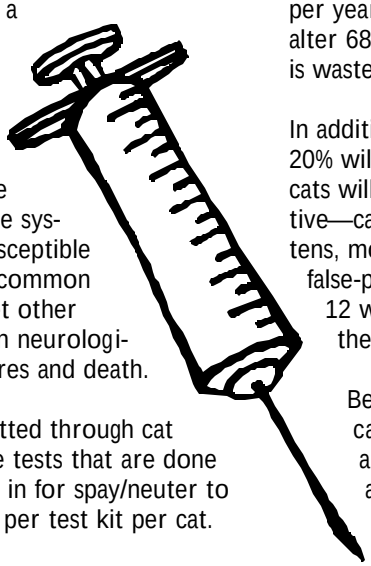
For More Information on Feline Medical Issues:

- Pet First Aid courses are offered by Fast Response at (800) 637-7378 and the American Red Cross (telephone your local chapter for more information).
- Cat Fanciers Association at www.cfainc.org.

SHOULD WE RERELEASE FIV+ CATS?

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) is, as its name implies, a virus. It is from a family of viruses, called retrovirus, which means they have a specific enzyme that allows them to insert themselves into cellular DNA and thus do their damage.

Early infection can materialize as mild flu-like symptoms: lethargy, lack of eating, a fever. These tend to be transient, they go away and the cat appears normal. Cats who die "from FIV" actually die from other diseases or secondary infections since the virus suppresses their immune system and thus makes them susceptible to other illnesses. The most common is pneumonia. But cats can get other secondary infections and even neurological problems leading to seizures and death.



The virus is generally transmitted through cat bites and birth. And there are tests that are done at the time the cat is brought in for spay/neuter to test for it. It costs about $12 per test kit per cat.

Some studies claim that since birth and cat bites are the most common modes of transmission that FIV is more common where there are large numbers of stray cats. However, in San Francisco where over 8,000 feral cats have been trapped, altered, and tested, the incidence rate of positive cats was shown to be the *same* for feral cats as it is for the pet cat population: about one and one-half to three percent of all cats who are tested.

That is a very low number of cats who test positive, and that is the first reason why the expense of testing ($12 per cat) is not cost-effective. Only about two cats out of one hundred will test positive. A lot of resources are being spent which could be better used on things that will impact and improve the lives of cats significantly more than testing.

In 1999, the San Francisco SPCA spay/neuter clinic altered approximately 2,000 feral cats. At $12 per test, the SPCA spent $24,000 on testing for only about 40 incidents of a positive test. $24,000 could have bought 369 humane cat traps. Or it could have purchased 48,000 pounds of kibble, enough to feed a colony of 20 cats for 31 years. It could have been used to send a feral cat assistance packet, including factsheets on all aspects of feral cat care and rescue to every shelter and rescue group in the United States with enough money left over to buy a new car. The $24,000 could have been used to hire a full-time employee to trap cats five days a week, eight hours a day and bring them into the shelter for spay/neuter. If they caught four cats a day, that is an extra 900 cats per year. Or, if it costs $35 per surgery, one could alter 685 cats. From a resource point of view, testing is wasteful.

In addition, of the 40 cats who test positive, about 20% will be false-positive cats. In other words, eight cats will not be FIV+ but will erroneously test positive—cats who will then be killed. If one includes kittens, more healthy kittens will be killed since the false-positive error rate is higher for kittens under 12 weeks old since they carry the antibodies from their mother without actually having the virus.

Besides wasted money and false-positive healthy cats and kittens being killed, in the end only about 10% of cats who are infected with FIV actually come down with the disease. 90%—nine out of 10 infected cats—will lead completely normal lives. Many will destroy the virus.

So, of the 40 positive cats, eight are false-positive, leaving only 32 infected cats. Of those, 28 will lead completely normal lives. That leaves only four infected cats out of 2,000 who may suffer from the disease. $24,000 was spent and 36 healthy cats were killed to isolate four who are infected and likely to get sick. And of those four, if they are provided good nutrition (a high quality kibble which can be purchased with the money saved by not testing) and the colony is monitored, these cats can be cared for and treated if, and when, they develop symptoms, which may take years. If they are not showing symptoms, they can live a long time.

Mass testing is therefore not recommended. In addition, if a test is done and the result is positive but the cat is outwardly healthy, he should still be rereleased into his colony.

Skeptics may disagree. Testing for FIV, this line of thinking goes, is not only about preventing suffering in infected cats, it is also about preventing the spread of the disease. But because the primary modes of transmission are bites and births, spaying and neutering

alone will actually go a long way to prevent the spread of FIV because altering affects both: reducing or eliminating fighting as well as roaming and mating. In addition, because feral cats develop immunities if they survive kittenhood, cats become more resistant to viral diseases as time goes by, and FIV is no exception. This further reduces transmission.

And, in the end, if we take the position that we should kill FIV+ cats, while we do not have the same rules for pet cats, aren't we establishing a double standard? Aren't we saying that feral cats are worth less than pet cats? And isn't this exactly the type of thinking that feral cat advocates and caretakers have been fighting against for years?

Ultimately, the decision of whether we should rerelease feral cats who test positive for FIV, like the question of whether we should test at all, is really an ethical and not a medical one. This goes back to our philosophical starting point: do feral cats lead miserable lives? Or, is it OK to be a feral cat? Feral cats do not lead short, miserable lives. San Francisco's experience with over 8,000 cats and hundreds of caretakers is that feral cats often lead long, contented lives.

There are risks that street cats face that indoor cats do not. Ultimately, however, they are no different than other wildlife. Some of these animals do not lead extraordinarily long lives but we would never think about "euthanizing" them for their own good. Another double-standard for feral cats.

Feral cats deserve our compassion and protection no matter how long their lives may be. If you share the view that it is OK to be a feral cat, that life on the street is better than death at the pound, then if an outwardly healthy cat tests positive for FIV, ethics demands that we give him a year or two more living the high life in the sun, while we continue to monitor him as we would any of our cats.

If he should get sick (and there is a 20% chance he doesn't even have the disease and another 90% chance that even if he does, he'll fight it off), we can retrap him and then make the decision about euthanasia. Killing him for his own good because he *might* get sick years down the road is the same mentality that dominates animal control shelters—kill them now because they might suffer later. That is not what feral cat caretakers are about. Feral cat advocates have always been the champions of life. FIV+ cats should not suffer the prejudices of the mentality that says death is better than a less than perfect life.

If, on the other hand, the cat is symptomatic, if the cat is outwardly sick and tests positive for FIV, the analysis changes. If the cat tests positive and is showing outward symptoms of the disease, secondary infections such as pneumonia, urinary tract problems, or some other illness, the cat should not be rereleased.

To the extent that the caretaker can do so (which should be easier from the money saved by avoiding mass testing), the caretaker's goal should be to treat the cat as one would a pet cat. See a veterinarian, check the diagnosis, see if he is suffering and how long the feral cat has to live. If it is his time, euthanasia may be appropriate. The Webster Dictionary definition of euthanasia is the killing of an individual animal in a relatively painless way because the animal is suffering—*emphasis on suffering*—from an incurable disease, for reasons of mercy. That is Webster's definition and it should be the caretaker's definition.

If the caretaker cannot do that, a symptomatic cat who is positive will likely deteriorate in the colony. However, if the symptoms are mild, then the approach should be wait and see. Keep the cat in someone's garage or a spare room or wherever the caretaker does surgery recovery to make sure the symptoms are not transient.

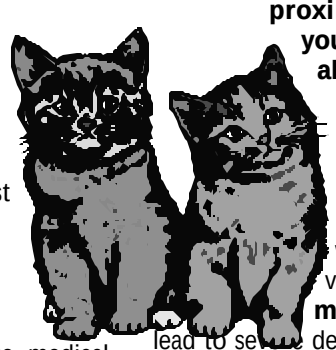
What we do as feral cat caretakers is not easy. We do it because we care—because we love cats. There is a lot of fear around FIV. But our cats should not become the innocent victims of that fear. Their lives are too precious.

BASIC KITTEN CARE

If You Find Kittens
First, determine whether they have a mother. Mother cats may be out for several hours at a time, so try to wait somewhere unobserved to see if she comes back.

If the kittens have a mother, you have several options:

- Take the mother and kittens into your home and confine them in a large cage or a small room such as a bathroom. This prevents the mother cat from moving the kittens and she will take care of raising them until they are old enough to be socialized and placed in homes. Once the kittens have been fully weaned, the mother can then be spayed and returned to her original habitat.
- Allow mom to care for her kittens where you found them. Unfortunately, she may move them at any time, so try to make the location as attractive and comfortable as possible. Give her a comfortable shelter and provide food and water every day. If you catch the kittens when they are weaned they can be socialized and placed in homes.
- Take the kittens from the mother, have her spayed, and raise the kittens yourself. This ensures that the mother will not move the kittens and they will be socialized to humans, but remember that in most cases it is best to keep kittens with their mother for the first few weeks of life.



If the kittens are indeed orphans, bring them into your home to establish their age, medical, and feeding needs. At this point, you must act quickly because neonatal kittens are fragile. Delay can be fatal.

Kittens should be alert and warm to the touch. **If the kittens are cold and listless, they must be warmed up immediately.** Chilling is the major cause of death of neonatal kittens, and can happen in just a few hours. Do not attempt to feed chilled kittens. Place the kittens in a box or pet carrier with a towel-covered heating pad set on low inside the box. Be sure the heating pad covers only half of the bottom of the box—the kittens must be able to move off the heating pad if it becomes too warm.

Determining Age

- Under one week: Eyes shut, ears flat to head, skin looks pinkish. Part of umbilical cord may still be attached.
- 1 week-10 days: Eyes beginning to open, ears still flat. A kitten this age is smaller than your hand.
- 3 weeks: Eyes are fully open, ears are erect, teeth are visible. Kittens this age are just starting to walk and will be very wobbly.
- 4-5 weeks: Eyes have changed from blue to another color and/or kittens have begun to pounce and leap. Kittens this age will begin to eat regular cat food.
- 8 weeks: Kittens this age weigh approximately two pounds. If they have not been exposed to humans, they will likely be feral and unapproachable.

The following instructions are for kittens approximately four weeks old and younger. If the kittens you find can already eat regular cat food, see section on "Socializing Feral Kittens."

Feeding
Kittens cannot be fed until they are warmed—feeding chilled kittens is very dangerous. **Do not feed cow's milk—**it causes diarrhea which can lead to severe dehydration**.** You will need KMR or other kitten milk replacement formula, along with special bottles for feeding. The pre-mixed liquid formula is easier to use than the powdered form. These supplies are available at veterinary offices, pet supply stores, and in some cases, your local humane society.

Depending on their age, kittens will need to be fed every two to six hours around the clock. To prepare the bottle, pierce a hole in the nipple with a pin or make a tiny slit with a razor. Make sure the hole is big enough for the milk to get through. Test the formula on your wrist—it should be slightly warm, **not hot, not cold.**

Health
In addition to chilling, there are other conditions which must be treated without delay:

- Fleas can cause anemia in kittens and even death. If you notice fleas, you should flea comb the kitten as soon as possible. Do not use insecticides or any other flea products.
- Diarrhea and upper respiratory infection (similar to a human cold) are serious and should be immediately treated by a veterinarian.
- If a kitten cannot suck on the bottle, she may need to be fed with a veterinary feeding syringe (no needle). See a veterinarian.
- Kittens must be stimulated by gentle tapping with a moist cotton ball in order to 'poop and pee.'

Weaning
At about four weeks of age you can begin offering canned and dry kitten food. The kittens will begin using a litterbox as well.

SOCIALIZING FERAL KITTENS

KITTENS WHO ARE NOT EXPOSED to humans early in their lives learn from their mothers and quickly become feral. However, if they are caught and handled at a young enough age, feral kittens can be socialized and placed in loving homes.

Remember that spay/neuter is the single most important thing you can do to help feral cats. It is best to alter as many cats in a colony as possible before you begin socializing.

Kittens under four weeks old can usually be socialized in a matter of days, and kittens up to eight weeks old can take approximately two to four weeks to socialize. 10-12 weeks old kittens can also be tamed, but it may take longer. Taming feral kittens over 12 weeks old can be difficult and they may never be fully socialized to people.

Getting Started

- Kittens cannot be socialized while they are still in their colony. They must be brought inside and confined so you have regular access to them. If you cannot do this, have the kittens altered and return them to their colony.
- Kittens can be taken from their feral mothers when they begin weaning--at approximately four weeks of age.

Housing the Kittens

- You will need to confine the kitten(s) at first, preferably in a dog crate, large pet carrier, cat condo, or cage. If you do not have a cage or carrier, you can keep the kittens in a small room. Be sure to block up anything they could crawl into or under and remove anything that could injure them.
- Do not let feral kittens run loose in your house. They can hide in tiny spaces and are exceptionally difficult to find and coax out. In addition, a large room can be frightening and hinder the taming process.
- If possible, kittens should be separated from each other to facilitate taming. Left together, one kitten can become outgoing and playful while another remains shy and withdrawn. If you cannot separate them, the kittens can be housed together, but be sure to spend time alone with each one.
- The cage should contain a small litterbox, food and water dishes, and something to cuddle in like a towel or piece of your clothing.

Socializing

- Food is the key to taming. Make dry kitten food available at all times and give the kitten a small amount of wet food at least twice a day. The kitten may hesitate to eat in your presence at first, but be patient. Eventually the kitten will associate your presence with food.
- Chicken-flavored baby food is a special treat that almost no kitten can resist.
- How soon you begin handling the kitten depends on the kitten's age and temperament. Older kittens and those who are more feral are harder to handle. With these kittens, start by offering baby food or wet food on a spoon through the cage. Once they are used to this, you can begin handling them.

- Younger and less feral kittens can be picked up right away. Wear gloves if you will feel more comfortable, as it is important to be confident and gentle when picking up any animal. Wrap the kitten in a towel allowing her head to stick out. Offer baby food or wet food on a spoon. If she does not respond, dab a tiny bit on the end of her nose. Once she tastes it, she will soon want more. When petting a feral kitten, approach from behind his head. Gradually begin to pet the kitten's face, chin, and behind the ears while talking gently. Try to have several feeding/petting sessions (15-20 minutes) with each kitten as many times a day as you can.
- Progress will depend on the kitten's age and temperament. Each day you will notice improvement--falling asleep in your lap, coming towards you for food, meowing at you, purring, and playing are all great signs. Once the kitten no longer runs away from you but instead comes toward you seeking to be fed, held and pet, you can confine her to a small, kitten-proofed room rather than a cage. Siblings can also be reunited at this point.
- Expose the kittens to a variety of people. Everyone should use low voices at first, and approach the kittens in a non-threatening manner.

Important Tips

- Handle feral kittens cautiously—nails and teeth are sharp.
- Do not give kittens cow's milk--it can make them sick.
- Once the kitten is willing to play, offer toys and use a string (not yarn) or a cat dancer for him to chase. Do not let the kitten bite, scratch or play with your hand.
- If the kittens are staying awake at night, try to play and socialize with them more during the day and cover their cage(s) at night with a towel or blanket.
- Leave a television or radio on (not too loud) during the day so the kittens get used to human voices.

FERAL CAT RELOCATION

RELOCATING FERAL CATS should be undertaken as a last resort after all other alternatives are exhausted. Because feral cats bond strongly to both territory and their caregiver, it is best to leave the cats where they live. Most often, there is no reason to remove them from their habitats. Feral cats become well-adapted to their territory and can live safely and contentedly in alleyways, parking lots, vacant lots, backyards, and a host of other locations--urban, suburban, and rural. While there may be a few barns or sanctuaries that accept feral cats, in all cases the demand for space is much higher than what is available. Finally, relocating all or most of the cats in a colony can open up a void that allows unneutered cats to move into the area, starting the cycle all over again.

ALTERNATIVES TO RELOCATION

"I found a group of feral cats. Where can I take them?"

If you have found a colony of feral cats, it is best to have the cats altered, return them to where you found them, and provide them with food and water each day. Even if you choose not to provide ongoing care, you should still have them spayed and neutered and return them to their habitat.

"My neighbor is complaining and threatening to trap the feral cats I care for."

First, be sure all the cats you care for are neutered-this prevents the causes of many neighbor complaints. Next, explain that TNR is the most effective and humane way to reduce the population of feral cats.

Explain that if they are trapped and taken to the animal control agency the cats will be killed and more cats--probably unneutered—will move back into the area starting the cycle all over again.

Talk with your neighbor and find out what her concerns are, then be creative and see if you can reach a compromise. If the cats are using your neighbor's yard as a litter box, set up sand-filled, covered litter boxes in your yard, or offer to periodically clean up her yard. Consider installing a cat fence on either of your yards.

Don't give up.

"My colony is in a dangerous location/a location where construction will soon start."
Start immediately, and gradually move the cats to a safer area. Every few days, move the feeding location a little further away from the danger, and a little closer to where you want the new feeding site to be. The cats will follow. The longer you are able to extend the transition, the easier it will be for the cats. Keep feeding stations to a minimum and place them in secluded areas.

"Can I relocate a feral cat to my friend's colony in the park?"
No. You cannot relocate to an open, unmonitored space such as a park, parking lot, pier, etc. For relocation to be successful, the cat needs to be confined for an extended period and you cannot do that in an open space.

"I'm moving! What should I do with my feral cats?"
The answer depends on where you are moving and how many feral cats you have. In some cases, the best thing to do is find someone who will take over the care of your colony. It's good to plan ahead and start sharing duties with someone (or several people) even if you think you'll never move. Finding a new, responsible caregiver allows the cats to remain in their home territory even though they'll be losing their caregiver.

If you will have a backyard in your new home, another good option is to take the cats with you. With a little planning, safe transportation, and an appropriate destination, you can successfully relocate the cats with you.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL RELOCATION

If other alternatives fail and relocation becomes necessary, consider the following important tips.

Before you start

- Make sure all cats are spayed or neutered prior to relocation.
- Have a plan and a place to take the cats before you start trapping.

Items to have ready

- Humane trap(s)
- Cat carrier(s)
- A place to comfortably and safely confine the cats temporarily in their new location. A large cage, a cat condo, or a dog kennel can work well. Some people use a garden shed or a small room in their house. Just be sure the cat cannot escape.

Catching the cats

See section on "Humane Trapping."

Transportation

The cats can be transported in humane traps or in standard carriers. If you are driving, make sure the temperature is maintained at a comfortably cool level. Secure carriers in the vehicle by using seatbelts if possible. You may want to lightly cover the traps or carriers, but do not block air circulation. Do not leave food and water in the carriers, but do stop to offer water every few hours.

If you are flying, take the cat in the cabin with you rather than placing her in cargo.

General relocation recommendations

- Relocate more than one cat from a colony, if possible.
- Feed on a regular schedule--preferably twice a day. Meals should include both wet and dry food. Rattle the food in a box or bowl each time you feed so the cat associates the sound with food. Give the cat treats occasionally as well.
- Cat(s) will need to be confined for approximately two weeks. Some people keep relocated cats confined for longer, but it is important to pay attention to the individual cat's comfort level. If you confine her for too long, she may run off once released.
- Cat(s) should be confined where they can see and smell their new surroundings (especially other cats, the caretaker, and the feeding location).
- Set the confinement cage/room up so that it is as clean and comfortable as possible. Be sure there is adequate air and light available.
- Talk to the cat and let him see and smell you several times a day—especially when you bring food.

- When you release the cat into her new yard, continue feeding on the same schedule as before.

Once released, maintain access to the room or cage where the cat(s) were confined. Leave out bedding and litterbox for smell. Some people sprinkle the used litter around the yard.

RESOLVING NEIGHBOR CONFLICTS

WHILE MOST PEOPLE SUPPORT the concept of humanely caring for feral cats, conflict can sometimes arise. One of the best ways to prevent conflict is to ensure that the cats are spayed or neutered and feeding areas are clean and inconspicuous. Following are the most common reasons people complain about feral cats, and ideas for addressing their concerns.

- **Wild animals**. Feed cats during the day and pick up any leftover food once the cats have eaten.
- **Kittens**. Spay/neuter will prevent more kittens from being born. In some cases, feral kittens can be socialized and adopted.
- **Spraying, fighting, howling**. Neutering quickly reduces or eliminates these behaviors. Regular and sufficient feeding will also prevent fighting.
- **Cats using yard as a litterbox**. Caregivers can place covered, sand-filled litter boxes in their yards, and/or offer to periodically clean the neighbor's yard.

Conflict Resolution

- **Listen closely and ask questions**. A person might start out by saying the cats are "bothering" them, but on further discussion reveal that cat droppings in her flower garden are the specific problem. In another case, a neighbor demanded—without explanation—that a caregiver stop feeding cats in the neighborhood. After asking several questions, she discovered the neighbor was upset because he didn't like cat footprints on his new car. To keep the peace, the caregiver bought her neighbor a car cover and he never complained again.
- The person's concerns may seem reasonable, they may not, but it is important to listen respectfully and be constructive. By asking questions and offering solutions, it becomes possible to focus on the person's specific concerns rather than their generalized objections to feral cats.
- **Sit down and talk**. Calmly share your concerns with the goal of amicably resolving the problem. It can be a good idea to prepare a small packet of written materials in support of caring for feral cats. If relations are seriously strained, community mediation services may be beneficial.
- **Offer concrete solutions**. Once you have determined what the person's specific complaints are, you can address them. If you haven't had the cats neutered yet, do so, and let your neighbor know how much it will improve the cats' behavior while gradually decreasing the size of the colony. Offer to keep litter boxes in your backyard for cats to use, or put a cat fence around your yard. Don't be afraid to brainstorm—creative ideas can save lives.
- **Explain the value of TNR programs**. TNR is the most humane and effective way to control feral cat populations and minimize the most common concerns people raise about feral cats. Be sure to explain the ramifications of trapping the cats and taking them to an animal shelter: most will be killed since feral cats are not candidates for adoption. In addition, more cats—probably unneutered—will move back into the area starting the cycle all over again.

FERAL CATS AND PUBLIC SAFETY

DO FERAL CATS LIVE short, miserable lives? Are outdoor cats a public health and safety risk? Do feral cats threaten birds? The answer to all these questions is a resounding *no*.

TNR Programs Enhance Public Safety
Feral cats are naturally inclined to keep away from humans. In addition, when cats are fed away from populated areas, contact is further minimized. However, when caregivers are prevented from feeding, the cats are forced to forage populated areas in search of food. Soon compassionate individuals begin feeding the cats close to work or home, thus increasing the cats' proximity to people. TNR programs, accompanied by ongoing colony management, instead reduce the chance of contact by keeping cats away from human population areas.

TNR Humanely Controls Feral Cat Populations
TNR and colony management are also effective in reducing the number of cats, and therefore, the number of chance encounters with humans. Prevention of TNR or the use of lethal methods, on the other hand, actually allows the population to continue multiplying.

Are Feral Cats a Risk to Public Health?
A study conducted by Stanford University's Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) found virtually no risk to humans from feral cats and diseases associated with cats. EHS also concluded, after consultation with the Santa Clara County Health Department and Stanford's Department of Comparative Medicine, that there was a general consensus that feral cats pose virtually no health and safety risk to individuals.

Rabies
As they are not a natural vector for rabies, cats pose a very low risk for contracting and spreading this disease. In 1998, only three cats tested positive for rabies in all of California. There are no known cases of a human ever contracting rabies from a cat in the state of California. Rabies is more prevalent in some species of wildlife, and in Europe, a very successful oral rabies vaccine has proven an effective, economical, and humane form of rabies control.

Toxoplasmosis
A study in the July 15, 2000 issue of the British Medical Journal confirms that "contact with cats, kittens, cats' feces, or cats who hunt for food was not a risk factor for infection." The author continues, "No significant associations were detected between infection and presence of cats (whether adult or kittens), the diet and hunting habits of the cats, or cleaning a cat's litter tray." The study concludes that eating undercooked meat is the primary risk factor in contracting the organism.

TNR Reduces Costs to Taxpayers
In addition to being the most humane, effective, and healthy option for controlling feral cat populations, TNR is also the most cost-effective. TNR and colony management by compassionate individuals is accomplished wholly at private expense while trapping the cats and taking them to animal control agencies requires taxpayer dollars for intake, housing, handling, feeding, killing and "disposal."

Do Feral Cats Lead "Short, Miserable Lives?"
Feral cats do not experience significantly more or worse medical issues than do housecats. In fact, feral cats may actually be healthier as a population than domestic pet cats. This is because feral kittens develop natural immunity to a variety of illnesses. Spay/neuter further improves cat health by reducing wandering, mating, and fighting.

It is also not uncommon for feral cats to live ten or more years-a lifespan comparable to many domestic cats. And while feral and abandoned cats may face hardships, we don't think death is better than a less-than-perfect life. Many animals, such as raccoons, foxes, and field mice face similar hazards and do not live extraordinarily long lives, yet we would never consider euthanizing them "for their own good."

Opponents of TNR have also argued that potential cruelty by malicious humans is another reason why homeless cats should be rounded up and euthanized. In order to ward off the potential painful death of *some* animals, they argue *all* homeless cats should be killed as a preventive measure. This argument is as preposterous as it sounds.

Predation

Every reputable study to date has shown that claims of cat predation affecting bird and wildlife populations are wholly overstated, and that the true causes of population declines are factors such as habitat loss, pollution, pesticides, and drought.

Cats are also widely recognized to have low success at bird predation. Studies have shown that the bulk of a feral cat's diet consists of garbage, insects, plants, and other scavenger material.

Unless we are going to conclude that studies on four continents are all wrong, feral cats should not be unfairly implicated in any perceived decimation of wildlife populations.

CAT ADVOCACY

Legislation is often thought of as a quick solution to pet overpopulation. "If only we had a law," the argument goes, "all the bad, irresponsible people out there would take care of their pets properly, and shelters wouldn't have to kill so many animals." But experience has proved that legislation is not the cure-all many have sought. In fact, it can have the opposite effect.

Study after study has shown that the primary reasons people fail to alter their pets are cost and lack of access to services in the pet owner's neighborhood or language. The same is true for licensing. The higher the cost, the lower compliance with the law is.

Because of this, lower-income pet owners, those who are ignorant of the law, and truly irresponsible people will not comply in significant numbers. And compassionate individuals who are caring for homeless animals are particularly threatened by ordinances like cat licensing. Punitive legislation will only discourage people from caring for homeless pets or drive disadvantaged pet owners "underground," making them even harder to reach and help.

Compounding the problem is the fact that enforcement of ordinances such as pet limit laws, cat licensing, mandatory spay/neuter, cat confinement, and "nuisance" laws is often selective and complaint-based, leaving pet owners and feral cat caregivers vulnerable to retaliation from neighbors and others. Worse, legislation may be worded so that the result of non-compliance is the impoundment and death of the animal.

Legislation can also be costly to enforce and divisive in the community, with fewer positive results than are gained by offering free or low-cost spay/neuter, a feral cat assistance program, and voluntary identification programs.

At the same time, legislation that focuses on requiring *shelters* to improve the quality and quantity of their services can be of benefit. Shelters are in a position to set the standard and act as an example of proper animal care. Therefore, legislation requiring shelters to alter all their animals before adoption, to provide medical treatment to the animals in their care, and to lengthen holding periods, can go a long way towards saving the lives of companion animals in a community.

The humane movement was founded on the idea of treating animals kindly—replacing the stick with a carrot. Similarly, the carrot (programs, services, information, and assistance) is preferable—and more effective—to the stick (coercive legislation) in dealing with people also.

It is important to keep abreast of the issues and to act quickly. The following is a list of places to check regularly.

- Cat Fanciers Association: Legislative alerts are available at www.cfainc.org.
- Your state legislative website: You can read the text of existing or pending legislation, locate Committee hearing schedules, and find out who your legislators are and how to reach them.
- Your local animal commission: Many communities have a commission on animal welfare--a public body that meets to make decisions and take public testimony on animal-related issues.
- Your Board of Supervisors and/or City Council: Ask to receive weekly agendas by fax or e-mail.

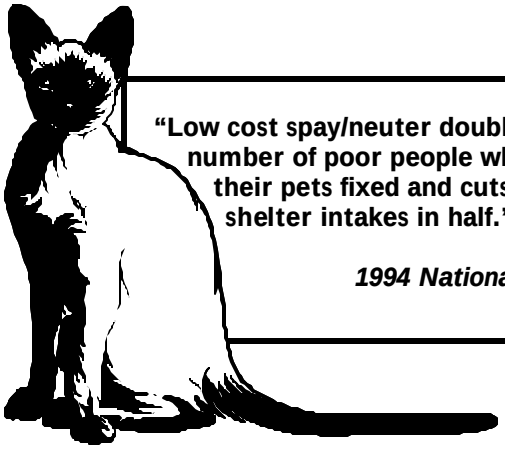
Advocacy

- Start a list of people who will make telephone calls, send letters, and attend hearings. An old-fashioned telephone tree works great, or you can use e-mail. Summarize the issues, and urge people to take action.
- When writing letters, be concise and to the point. If you have them, use sample letters as a guide, but don't be afraid to use your own words and your own experience. Use the U.S. mail or fax-legislators read e-mail less frequently.
- Try to attend any hearing on the issue you are interested in-a large turnout can make a big difference. When testifying, do not be repetitive of other speakers, but do state your position on the legislation and explain how it will affect you or your organization.
- Consider meeting with your local or state representatives (or their aides) to discuss your position on specific legislative issues.

Harmful Legislation

Legislation that looks harmless, or even helpful, can actually have negative consequences for animals.

- Pet limit laws, anti-feeding ordinances, feral cat "ownership" laws, cat colony registration, mandatory spay/neuter, cat licensing, cat confinement laws, and "nuisance" laws can—and have been—used to target cats and their caregivers.
- If you come across legislation that you think will affect cats but you're not sure, contact the Cat Fanciers Association Legislative office for more information.
- When deciding whether to support or oppose legislation, keep in mind that animal rights and cat advocacy groups sometimes support harmful legislation.



"Low cost spay/neuter doubles the number of poor people who get their pets fixed and cuts animal shelter intakes in half."

1994 National Study.

Millions of Cats?

The humane movement speaks for those who can't. That is why it is important that we chose our words carefully. Presenting the public with incorrect or exaggerated information undermines our credibility and worse, allows for own words to be used against us.

According to a popular animal welfare brochure, two unaltered cats can produce 420,000 more in just seven years. But if this were true, our streets would literally be teeming with cats. In actuality, environmental carrying capacity, mortality and other factors limit this type of exponential birthrate.

However, this claim has been seized upon by those advocating against feral cat colonies and their caregivers. Instead of exaggerating to make a point, our efforts to make spay/neuter an affordable and convenient alternative will be more beneficial to cats in the long run.