

Shelter Crowd Control: Keeping Community Cats out of Shelters



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Overview

- What it takes to get broad-based community support for community cats
- The secrets of non-lethal management of community cats, including confinement, neutering, and adoption
- How to do high-quality surgery in a high-volume environment
- How to get the most out of limited resources without cutting corners on infectious diseases, vaccination, and medical decisions
- Evidence that proves TNR works
- How to get your local government on your side, including language that can be provided as sample municipal code

Felis domesticus

- Cats are the only species to domesticate themselves
- Have been living outdoors in the periphery of human society for 10,000 years



Controversies

- Environmental concerns
- Public health concerns
- Cat welfare concerns
- Traditional sheltering vs. No Kill sheltering vs. management in the field



Free-roaming community cats

- Stray cats
 - Homeless pet cats
 - Abandoned
 - Lost
 - Socialized/friendly
- Feral cats
 - Untamed/evasive
 - Born in the wild
 - Stray cats turned wild



Millions and millions of cats

- 82-88 million pet cats in the U.S.
(Chu JAVMA 2009)
 - 80-85% are sterilized
- 10-90 million free-roaming unowned cats in the U.S.
(Levy JAVMA 2003)
 - ~2% are sterilized
 - Number ~ human population ÷ 6
(Levy JAVMA 2004)
- Alachua County= 250,000 residents ÷ 6 = 41,667 cats



What is the source of cat population?

	<u>Pet Cats</u>	<u>Community cats</u>
	85 million	85 million
Female	50%	50%
Sterilization rate	85%	2%
Litters/year	1.4	1.4
Live births/litter	3	3
Kittens born/year	27 million	175 million
Kitten survival	75%	50%
Live at 3 months	20 million	88 million

Community cats = most important source of cat population

Public opinion polls

- 2007 telephone survey
(Chu 2007 ACA Law & Policy Brief)
 - What would you do about unowned cats in the street?
 - 81% would leave the cats alone
 - 14% would trap and kill the cats
 - What if you knew the cats only lived for 2 years?
 - 72% would still leave the cats alone
 - 21% would trap and kill the cats

Public support of community cats

- Feeding unowned community cats is a common activity
 - Alachua County FL: 12% of households fed 3.6 cats they did not own *(Centonze JAVMA 2002)*
 - Santa Clara County CA: 10% of households fed 3.4 cats each *(Johnson 1993 CFA)*
 - San Diego County CA: 9% of households fed 2.6 cats each *(Johnson 1995)*
 - Massachusetts: 8% of households fed 3.7 cats each *(Manning Anthrozoos 1992)*
 - Ohio: 26% of households fed free-roaming cats *(Lord JAVMA 2008)*
 - Victoria Aust: 22% of households fed cats *(Toukhatsati Anthrozoos 2001)*
- About 50% of community cat feeders do not own cats

Cat management strategies

- Must have adequate scale to manage the size of the unowned cat population
 - Safe for the environment
 - Affordable
 - Sustainable
 - Acceptable to the public





Historic cat control tactics

- Ignore them
- Lethal control
 - Destruction, poison, infection, hunting, trapping effective on uninhabited islands, not mainland
 - Culling via animal shelters controls short-term nuisances but does not control population



Adoption option

- Ideal outcome for cats is adoption
- Not enough available homes in some areas
- Truly feral cats are not suitable pets





Actual outcomes at animal shelters

- Truly feral cats often euthanized as unhealthy/untreatable using the “Asilomar Accords”
- Millions of healthy cats are euthanized in shelters every year
 - Not enough adopters
 - Following shelter-acquired illness
 - To prevent *potential* suffering from living in the community
- “Prophylactic” euthanasia costs taxpayers and animal welfare donors \$ millions
- Is euthanizing the vast majority of cats entering shelters compatible with the values of a humane society?

Sanctuary option

- Care for life
 - Limited capacity
 - Expensive
 - Many sanctuaries also operate neuter-return programs to increase capacity
- Many sanctuaries are overcrowded and under-resourced, leading to poor welfare





Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) option

- Goals
 - Non-lethal population reduction
 - Healthier and safer cats
 - Lower adverse impacts
 - Reduced public complaints
- Consider “retention” in the community where cats live similar to pet “retention” in a home



National Animal Control Association

"We've addressed it as more of a community response, and with that we've taken into consideration that the traditional methods that many communities use – that simply ended up with capture and euthanize – are not necessarily the ones communities are looking for today."

*--Mark Kumpf, NACA President
NACA News Nov/Dec 2008*



TNR core methods

- ▣ Live-trapping
- ▣ Spay/neuter
- ▣ Ear tipping
- ▣ Rabies vaccination
- ▣ Euthanasia of ill cats



Maximize number of animals sterilized

Operation Catnip

- ▣ Free clinic for community cats
- ▣ Spay/neuter
- ▣ FVRCP/FelV/rabies vaccines
- ▣ Topical parasite treatment
- ▣ Monthly clinics
 - ▣ 150-300 cats
 - ▣ 5-10 veterinarians
 - ▣ 20-30 veterinary students
 - ▣ 30+ other volunteers
- ▣ Program costs \$30/cat



HQHVSN

- "High-quality, high-volume spay/neuter (HQHVSN) programs are efficient surgical initiatives that meet or exceed veterinary medical standards of care in providing accessible, targeted sterilization of large numbers of dogs and cats in order to reduce their overpopulation and subsequent euthanasia."

--Veterinary Task Force to Advance High-Quality, High-Volume Spay/Neuter, 2008



HQHVSN minimum standards

- Procedures designed to protect individual patients and staff while attaining high levels of productivity
 - All patients receive appropriate and professional care, regardless of their situation
 - Safe anesthetic and surgical techniques
 - Surgical asepsis at all times
 - Analgesics for all patients
 - Medical records for all patients
 - Professionalism at all times

High-volume clinic

- Organized for maximum efficiency
 - High cat numbers
 - Minimize stress for cats
 - Minimize cost
- Fixed stations
 - Volunteers perform specific tasks
 - Cats rotate through stations for complete care



Safety first

- Safety for volunteers
 - Cats never handled awake
 - Inject in trap so no escapes
 - Wear gloves at all times
 - Human rabies vaccination required
- Safety for cats
 - Minimize stress
 - Constant monitoring
 - High medical standards
 - Only handle when asleep



Cat check-in

- 8-10 am morning of clinic
- Verify registration information
- Verify cat has not been fed
- Correct container: wire traps provided by program with deposit
- Label traps with cat ID number
- Encourage donations
- Arrange pick up time



Waiting area

- 150-300 cats checked in by 10 am
- First in – first out



Anesthesia

- "TKX"
 - Telazol-ketamine-xylazine
 - Small volume
 - Rapid onset
 - Partially reversible
- Inject through side of trap
- Buprenorphine at recovery



Cat identification

- Cat not removed from trap until asleep
- Tag placed on paw matches to tag on trap



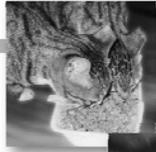
Transporters

- Move the cats from station to station
- Allows station volunteers to maximize efficiency



Pre-surgery

- Penicillin injection
- Eye lubricant
- Express bladders of females
- Trim 3/8" off left ear tip to identify sterilized cats
- Scan for microchip



Neuters

- Standard closed castration
- Cryptorchid males processed like spays
- Previous neuter surgery confirmed by checking for spines on penis
- Veterinary students perform neuters after completing surgery course



Confirming previous sterilization

- Males
 - Check for penile spines on intact or cryptorchid males
 - Both testicles must be removed
- Females
 - Scar, tattoo, LH testing, exploratory surgery



Spay boards



- Females tied to "spay boards" for preparation and transport



Spay preparation

- Midline or flank approach
- Hair clipped from surgical site
- Standard skin preparation



Spays

- Surgeon pace should be the limiting step of the clinic
- Surgeons should never wait for a cat
- Surgeons change gloves
- Assistants move cats, open packs
- All cats are spayed (pregnant, lactating)
- Veterinary students perform spays after clinical surgery rotation



Vaccines

- Rabies
- FVRCP
- Given according to AAFP injection sites



Medical records

- Medical record for each cat
- Complete rabies certificate



Post-surgery

- Topical parasite treatment
- SC fluids if indicated
- Yohimbine injection to reverse anesthesia
- Buprenorphine for analgesia



Instruments

- One pack used for each spay (\$30 each purchase price)
- Instruments scrubbed and autoclaved between each use
- Packs reassembled with instruments, gauze, drape
- Autoclave prior to next clinic



Recovery

- Cats returned to clean traps before waking
- Constant monitoring of recovery



Discharge

- Recovery instructions reviewed with caretakers
- Emergency contact information provided
- Cats remain in traps overnight
- Returned to colony the next morning if fully recovered
- Lactating cats may be returned earlier

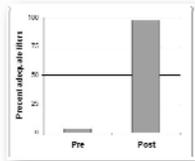




> 35,000 cats spayed and neutered since 1998

What about rabies?

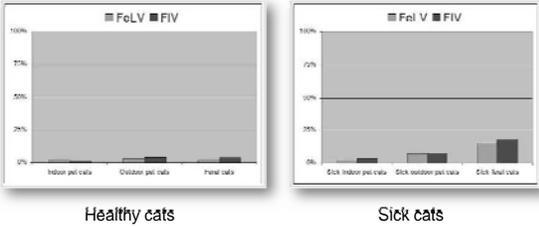
- Single rabies vaccination protected cats against challenge >4 years
(Soulebot et al, Cornell Vet, 1981)
- Intervet Continuum vaccine
 - Single dose at 12 weeks of age
 - 100% protection from challenge at 50 months
(USDA licensing trial)
- UF feral cat study
 - Single dose → good titer 2-3 months later
(Fisher et al, JAVMA 2007)



What about FeLV and FIV?

- Consider most common source of infections
 - FeLV: Infected mother cats to their kittens
 - FIV: Fighting among adult tom cats
 - Neutering reduces the most common source of infection
- Herd health
 - Feral cat infection rates similar to outdoor pet cats
 - Best use of limited resources
 - "Last year we had 35 positive cats and spent \$14,000 on testing alone."
 - Most large TNR programs do not test for retroviruses

FeLV/FIV: 18,038 pet and feral cats



Healthy cats

Sick cats

(Levy 2006 JAVMA)

	Model 1 No sterilization No testing	Model 2 Sterilize 1,000 Remove FeLV+	Model 3 Sterilize 2,000 No testing
Percent FeLV+	4%	4%	4%
Adults sterilized	0	1000	2000
Adults left intact	2000	1000	0
FeLV+ euthanized	0	40	0
Adults left FeLV+	80	40	80
Kittens born	6000	2880	0
FeLV+ kittens (75%)	180	86	0
Total FeLV+ cats	260	126	80

Mass sterilization controls both kitten births and spread of FeLV/FIV



Does TNR work?



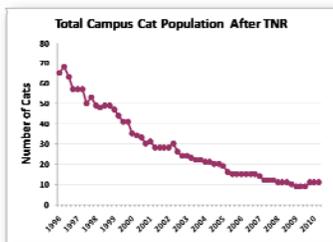
University of Central Florida

- 1,415 acres
- 38,000 students and staff
- Campus authorities considered free-living cats a nuisance and conducted trap/removal campaigns
- Students and employees fed the cats and interfered with removal campaigns
- TNR program started in 1991



University of Central Florida

- Population declined from 68 cats in 1996 to 11 cats in 2010



() envy J4V56A 2003)

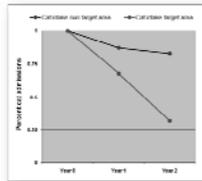
Ocean Reef, Florida

- Southern Florida resort community
- Repeated removal of homeless cats ineffective
- Ocean Reef Community Association built Feral Cat Center clinic and holding area
- 1995-2002: 1376 community cats admitted
- Population has declined from ~2,000 to ~500 cats



Alachua County, FL

- Maddie's Fund zip code project (Levy 2010)
 - Targeted TNR for community cats in a zip code that was a major source of cats for the county municipal shelter
 - 2226 cats (~55% of the cats residing in the targeted zip code)
 - TNR, adoption, and complaint mediation for 2 years
 - Measured effect on number of cats impounded from this zip code compared to other zip codes
 - 68% decrease in cat intake from the targeted zip code compared to 13% from other zip codes



2007: An experiment in life-saving

- Duval County = City of Jacksonville
 - Largest land-mass county in US
 - 857,000 people
 - ~143,000 community cats
- Jacksonville Animal Care and Control
 - Impounded 13,365 cats
 - Average population of 200-300 cats in the shelter
 - Adopted out 521 cats
 - URI rate >80%
 - Live release rate <10%

Jacksonville Animal Care & Control 2008

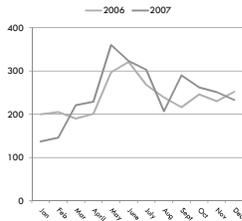
"The facility and staffing levels were grossly inadequate for the number of animals on hand at the time of the consultation, resulting in a breakdown in care that allowed substantial animal suffering, illness, and likely unnecessarily high levels of euthanasia and death."

-- Shelter assessment report

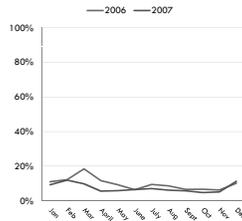


Outcomes for cats at JACC

Shelter Inventory: Cats



Feline Live Release





Timeline of the Jacksonville decision to accept a feral cat program

- Rick DuCharme, FCNMHP, asks if ear-tipped cats from the city shelter could be given to FCNMHP and returned as part of managed populations
- Ebenezer Gujjarlapudi, Director of the Environmental & Compliance Department for Jacksonville, contemplates the request and determines if it's good for some why not for all and offers FCNMHP all feral cats

“The Year of Big Solutions”

- Feral Freedom, August 2008
 - Partnership between a nonprofit TNR group and the county municipal shelter to reduce cat intake and euthanasia
 - Funding from Best Friends Animal Society
 - All feral cats that come into JACPS are turned over to FCNMHP for TNR
 - Targets nuisance cats in the community



How it works

- Citizens borrow traps from the municipal shelter
- Animal control officers pick up trapped cats from citizens or citizens bring them to the shelter
- FCNMHP picks up trapped cats twice daily for transfer to FCNMHP Spay/Neuter clinic for TNR



How it works

- Cats have surgery, ear tip, vaccinations, parasite treatment if needed
- Cats housed overnight for recovery



How it works

- Cats returned to trapping site the next day
- Educational material left at houses near trapping/release site



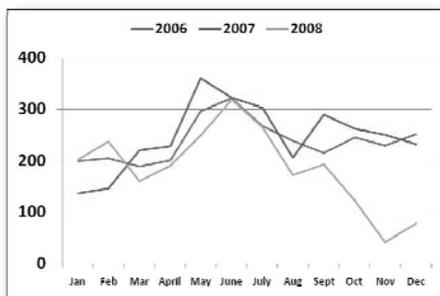
By the numbers

2008-2011

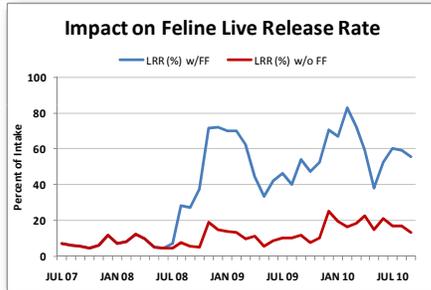
- 15,274 cats transferred
- 958 sent to rescue
- 174 euthanized
- 954 trapped more than once
- 59% decrease in adult feline euthanasia and 19% for kittens at JACPS



Shelter crowd control



Saving lives



2 years later . . . municipal code updated

- *"The City of Jacksonville recognizes the need for innovation in addressing the issues presented by feral, free-roaming and other community cats. To that end it recognizes that there are community care givers of cats, and acknowledges that properly managed community cats may be part of the solution to the continuing euthanasia of cats . . ."*

Community cats

- *"Community Cat means any free-roaming cat that may be cared for by one or more residents of the immediate area who is/are known or unknown; a community cat may or may not be feral."*
- *"Community cats shall be distinguished from other cats by being sterilized and ear tipped; qualified community cats are exempt from licensing, stray and at-large provisions of this ordinance and may be exempt from other provisions directed toward owned animals."*

Community cat management program

- Required
 - Sterilization
 - Vaccination against rabies
 - Ear tipping
- If a person is providing care, cats must be fed daily and cats must not be allowed to suffer
- Caregiver certification program may be implemented by the city

Other progressive code updates

- Litters of puppies and kittens less than 6 months old without a nursing mother have no required hold period
- No hold period for feral animals
- "Due to the low reclaim rate and high euthanasia rate for cats, all cats that do not have positive, traceable identification . . . may be sterilized immediately upon intake and placed in the adoption area as soon as 2 days after impound"* (but still have 6-day required hold)



