

MEET THE PLAYERS

Knowing the stakeholders in your community and working cooperatively with them leads to better outcomes and a more cohesive community cat management plan.

Most animal care and control agencies are operated by local governments, but some jurisdictions contract with nonprofit organizations to perform these important functions. Regardless, their primary role is to manage public health, safety, and disease concerns as well as complaints from community residents. These agencies are also expected to take care of and redeem lost pets, as well as re-home pets who no longer have homes. For people concerned with the welfare of outdoor cats or those who find them a nuisance, animal care and control agencies are often the first points

of contact. Animal care and control agencies and public health departments need to be prepared to respond effectively to these complaints and proactively address community cat populations when possible.

One of the biggest challenges is maintaining adequate resources (i.e. budget). Few local governments find themselves swimming in the extra money needed to adequately fund a complete animal sheltering operation, including programs addressing community cats. This underscores the importance of volunteers and nonprofit organizations in the community who are willing to devote their resources to helping manage community cats. We strongly encourage municipalities to develop comprehensive

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS' APPROVAL OF TNR



New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

nyc.gov/html/doh/html/environmental/animals-tnr

Lists local TNR groups on its website



New Jersey State Department of Health & Senior Services

state.nj.us/health/animalwelfare/stray

Lists TNR as an approach for managing feral cats



Baltimore City Health Department

neighborhoodcats.org/uploads/File/Resources/Ordinances/Baltimore_TNRRegs.pdf

Issues regulations for practicing TNR

volunteer programs and partnerships and agreements with other community organizations. It's also important that agencies evaluate their intake and outcomes regularly to ensure that current resource allocations are appropriate. For example, an agency with high euthanasia rates for cats may want to reconsider its intake policies and reallocate those resources spent housing cats for euthanasia on proactive cat management.

“The Vet PH SPIG encourages communities to discuss trap, neuter, vaccinate and return (TNVR) as a management practice to control community cats, and to adopt this practice where possible.”

—American Public Health Association—
Veterinary Public Health Special
Interest Group Policy

Read about municipalities where animal care and control provides services to reduce community cat populations:

Pittsburgh, PA (pittsburghpa.gov/animalcontrol/spay_neuter.htm)

Elk Grove, CA (elkgrovecity.org/animals/feral-cats.asp)

Dallas, TX (dallasanimalservices.org/trap_neuter_return.html)

Sacramento County, CA (animalcare.saccounty.net/spayneuter/pages/feralcatsandkittens.aspx)

San Jose, CA (sanjoseca.gov/index.aspx?nid=2382)

Camden County, NJ (ccasnj.org/spay_neuter_clinic/feral_cats.html)

Private Animal Shelters and Humane Societies

Around three billion public and private dollars are spent each year operating animal shelters across the country (Rowan, 2012). The primary role of most private animal shelters is the housing and adoption of homeless cats and dogs, but shelters are often the receptacle for injured or sick wildlife and cats and dogs who might be considered unadoptable by some. Many community cats fall into this category.

These organizations play an important role in the community, often serving as a point of contact, and are widely recognized by the public for enforcing local and state humane laws and ordinances. They are often involved at a policy level, lobbying for animal protection laws and programs.

Approximately 6–8 million cats and dogs enter U.S. animal shelters annually, with approximately half being euthanized (HSUS, 2013). That number

“After we implemented a shelter, neuter, return (Return to Field) program in 2010, it changed the way we do business and it has improved our ability to do more to help all animals. It convinced us that more was possible. Last year alone, there were 3,000 fewer cats and kittens in our shelter. As a result, the capacity and savings that we have enjoyed have allowed us to do more to help the cats in our care and it has even benefitted the dogs because those resources don't have to be spent on more cats.”

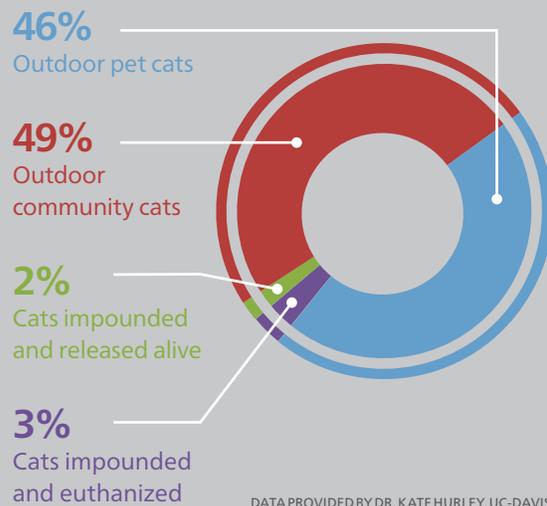
—Jon Cicirelli, Director, Animal Care
and Services, San Jose, CA

includes about 70 percent of cats who enter shelters (ASPCA, 2013). These cat-related intake and euthanasia activities cost more than a billion dollars annually (Rowan, 2012), while affecting only a tiny fraction of the total number of cats in a given community and doing nothing to manage overall cat populations. This haphazard approach has little impact on welfare, environmental, or public health issues. It stresses shelters, overwhelming their resources and far exceeding capacity, and it gives false expectations to citizens coming to these agencies for help resolving problems.

The pie chart from the state of California shows the estimated percentages of outdoor community cats (red) and owned cats (blue) who go outside, compared with the number of cats handled by the California sheltering system who are either euthanized or adopted out (green and purple combined) (CA Dept of Public Health, 2013). Clearly, the tiny sliver of cats handled by the California sheltering system pales in comparison to the total cat population, demonstrating that these hard-working agencies are still making little long-term impact. (Koret, 2013).

SHELTER AND COMMUNITY CAT DYNAMICS

CALIFORNIA 2010



RETURN TO FIELD

Some shelters care for feral colonies on their own property, either by themselves or in collaboration with local TNR groups. Others with high euthanasia rates for cats are embracing “Return to Field” programs as a way to reduce euthanasia while focusing energy and resources on spaying and neutering.

In the Return to Field program, healthy, un-owned cats are sterilized, eartipped, vaccinated, and put back where they were found. The rationale is that if the shelter has no resources, a healthy cat knows how to survive and should not be euthanized to prevent possible future suffering. Using resources for sterilization has a larger impact than focusing resources on intake and euthanasia.



Animal Rescue Groups

These privately run organizations—usually, but not always, with nonprofit tax status—typically do not have a facility and are foster-based. Rescue groups are primarily focused on finding homes for animals in the community. Often, rescue groups and shelters have cooperative relationships in which shelters transfer animals to the care of rescue groups whose foster homes and volunteers help to stretch resources and increase opportunities for homeless animals. There are many rescue groups that specialize in cat rescue, including those that participate in TNR activities.

TNR Groups

Thousands of nonprofit organizations exist around the country for the primary purpose of assisting community cats. These organizations are often funded by private donations and

operate on small budgets, but they work hard—often as unpaid volunteers—to trap, neuter, and return cats living outdoors. They may also be involved in local politics, lobbying for improved animal-related ordinances and funding. Some TNR groups also consider themselves rescue groups, and vice versa.

Wildlife Agencies and Conservation Groups—Public and Private

The federal government has not adopted or taken a specific position on TNR. Federal wildlife agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, oppose the management of TNR colonies in or near wildlife conservation areas, and individuals in federal agencies have adopted a variety of positions with regard to TNR programs. State wildlife agencies, such as departments of natural resources or fish and wildlife agencies, are



funded through a variety of state and federal sources, such as taxes placed on all firearms and ammunition sold. These state agencies have traditionally focused on the management of game (i.e. hunted) species, but increasingly are becoming involved in broader conservation agendas that include non-game and threatened and endangered species. They typically do not regulate or get involved with TNR programs outside of protected wildlife areas.

Private wildlife groups, such as the National Audubon Society or the World Wildlife Federation, are funded by donations and private grants and operate primarily to protect wildlife from harm and habitat degradation. These groups are often actively involved in lobbying for public policy changes that affect vulnerable wildlife species. Concern regarding outdoor cat predation on wildlife has become a hot topic in the conservation community, but all stakeholders (both cat and wildlife advocates) share the same end goal of reducing outdoor cat populations. See the Concerns about Wildlife section on page 22 for more details.

Veterinarians

Many veterinarians support the concept of TNR and may offer various forms of assistance, but they are also business owners who have a bottom line to meet. While many would like to offer discounted services or to expand their offerings for community cats, they still need to make a living.

The involvement of local veterinarians is a key component of any sterilization program. Communities and organizations need to understand the unique challenges of the veterinary community and to consult local veterinarians when drafting

“I am very proud to be a part of the profession that puts the “N” in TNR. Nationwide, increasing numbers of veterinary professionals are participating in this life-saving strategy. More and more veterinary practices treat free-roaming cats and the number of high-quality, high-volume spay/neuter clinics continues to grow. This is all in recognition of the fact that discontinuing the breeding cycle and then returning the cats to their original environment is the only scientifically proven effective and humane approach to stabilizing, and ultimately decreasing, free-roaming cat populations, as well as protecting potentially affected wildlife. The veterinary profession should be applauded for being such an integral part of the solution to a problem that has plagued our country for decades.”

—Susan Krebsbach, DVM, Humane Society
Veterinary Medical Association
Veterinary Advisor, Oregon, WI

program plans. Sterilization capacity will be determined by how many surgeries your local veterinary partners can handle above and beyond their everyday business. Even if your agency hires a staff veterinarian, you should continue to work with other local veterinarians. They can be strong partners for your program, filling in when extra capacity is needed, helping with injured and ill cats, and providing other kinds of medical support.



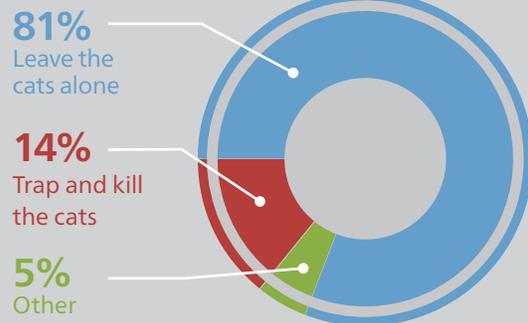
The Public

Most people care about cats and want to see them treated humanely. Communities that embrace effective cat management programs will be rewarded with goodwill from their residents. Many communities are learning about what officials in San Jose, California experienced: that a public who readily understands and supports decisions made in the best interest of the cats turns out to be the best at reducing conflicts between cats and humans and cats and other animals.

Some residents might complain about cats in their backyard or cats adversely affecting their property. Many of these complaints can be resolved with information about humane deterrents and civil dialogue with neighbors, which agencies can help facilitate. Animal control officers can be an integral part of this approach, or if there are no resources to support this, other successful models include enlisting the aid of a local nonprofit to help mediate cat-related conflicts.

Large-scale sterilization programs depend on volunteer support. A significant portion of the public (approximately 10% to 12%) already feeds community cats (Levy & Crawford, 2004) and might be willing to help, especially when low-cost, high-quality sterilization programs are available. Non-lethal management programs will be readily supported by the majority in your community, while lethal control will not receive the same support and may actively be opposed by concerned residents. Policies designed to support and enable TNR activities are critical; those that place barriers to public engagement in TNR activities or threaten caretakers with penalties for their goodwill and volunteerism need to be amended or removed. Agencies that do not recognize the need to adopt non-lethal solutions often become the focal point of community criticism over high levels of cat euthanasia in the shelter.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO ABOUT UN-OWNED CATS IN THE STREET?



An overwhelming majority of Americans believe that leaving a community cat outside to live out his life is more humane than having him caught and euthanized, according to a nationally representative survey conducted for Alley Cat Allies by Harris Interactive in April and May 2007.

U.S. PUBLIC OPINION ON HUMANE TREATMENT OF STRAY CATS
LAW AND POLICY BRIEF, ALLEY CAT ALLIES

SEVEN IN 10 PET OWNERS



say they believe animal shelters should be allowed to euthanize animals only when they are too sick to be treated or too aggressive to be adopted.

Only a quarter of the people who took part in a recent *AP-Petside.com* poll said animal shelters should sometimes be allowed to euthanize animals as a population control measure (ap-gfcpoll.com/featured/ap-petside-com-latest-poll-findings, conducted Oct. 13–17, 2011).