

A Review of the Trap-Neuter-Return Program



Municipal Policy Committee
June 18, 2013

Today

- Today's Agenda:
 - Background – The Problem
 - Current Practice
 - Proposed Option - Trap-Neuter-Return
 - Discussion Points
 - Cat Welfare
 - Public Health
 - Wildlife Concerns
 - Proposed Comprehensive Management Plan

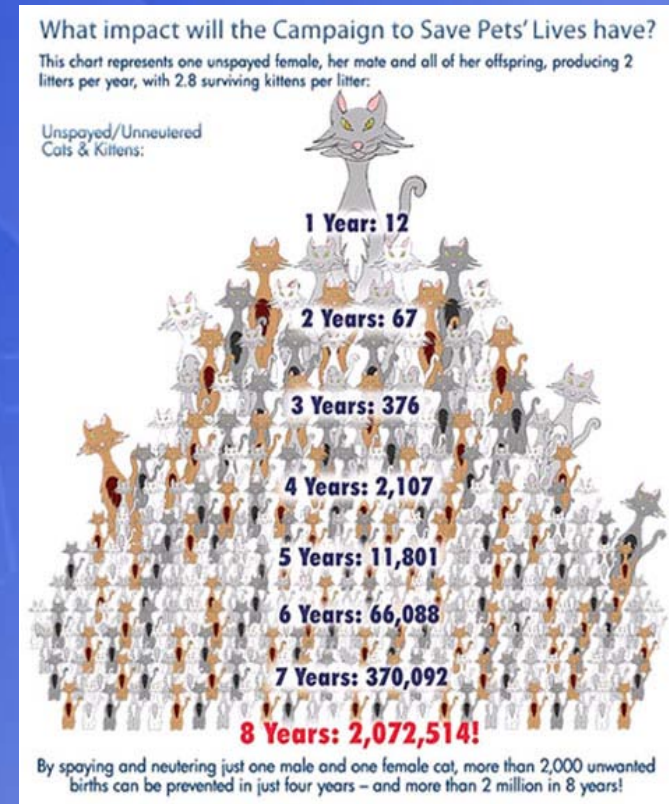
Background – The Problem

- **The Problem: Cat Overpopulation**

- Estimated number of owned cats in United States: 74-82 million
- Estimated COA cat population: 89,115

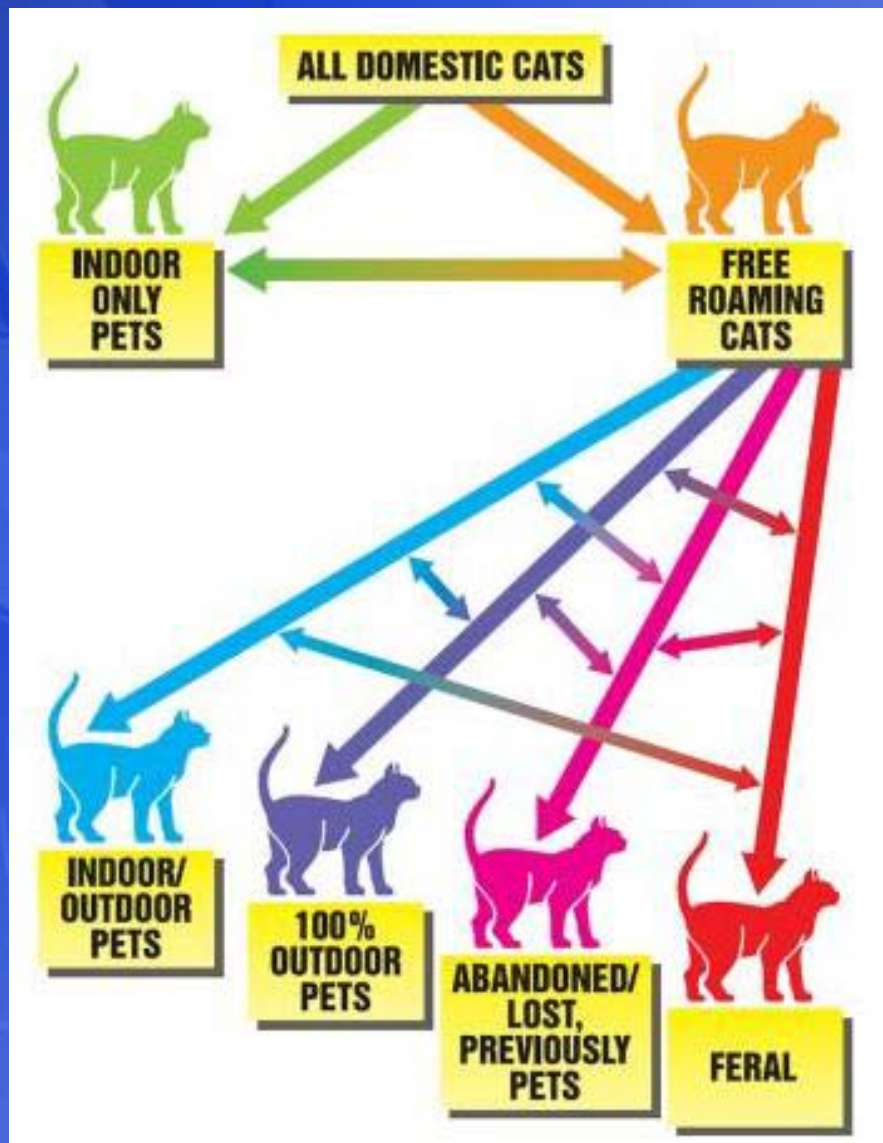
- **What is the source of cats?**

- Existing Feral cats: Typically not sterilized & reproduce freely
- Abandoned/Lost house cats
- Abandoned kittens
- House cats: Not sterilized & go outside



Background - Free Roaming Cat Dynamics

- **Ownership status**
 - Owned
 - Un-owned
- **Lifestyle**
 - Indoor only
 - Free-roaming outdoor
 - Free-roaming un-owned
- **Socialization status**
 - Friendly
 - Un-socialized
- **Continuum**
 - Move from one lifestyle to another



Background - Feral Cat Roots

- Lost or Abandoned domestic cats, or their descendants
- Little to no contact with humans
- Contact with humans started too late
- Not socialized to humans
- Are not fit for living indoors as pets
- Can be socialized if kittens are under 8 weeks
- Females spend most of their time pregnant and starving
- **Fighting and disease spread is most commonly a result of mating and intact males protecting their territory**

Background – Community Cats

“Community cat” is an umbrella definition that includes any un-owned cat

Ferals

- Do Not Vocalize
- Do Not Approach Humans
- Typically Nocturnal
- Appear Well Groomed
- Do Not eat Until Humans Leave

Strays

- May Approach People and Food
- May Vocalize
- Appear At All Hours



Both strays and feral cats will be healthy and appear well groomed when in a managed colony

Background – The Problem

ARLINGTON ANIMAL SERVICES STATS

FAAS Friends of Arlington Animal Services

	Intake		Adopt		Rescue		Ret to Owner		Euthanasia		LIVE RELEASE RATES		
	Dog	Cat	Dog	Cat	Dog	Cat	Dog	Cat	Dog	Cat	Dog	Cat	TOTAL
2011													
May	476	498	138	58	71	82	80	7	171	340	62.8%	30.2%	46.0%
2011 Totals	5551	4451	1810	612	1017	732	918	73	1876	3000	66.6%	32.1%	51.4%
2012													
January	506	333	205	53	107	56	116	7	61	195	87.5%	37.3%	68.0%
February	451	367	270	66	45	32	60	1	72	263	83.9%	27.3%	58.6%
March	547	399	229	56	99	126	110	7	107	220	80.4%	46.2%	65.7%
April	505	530	199	51	110	160	108	8	88	234	82.6%	48.3%	66.4%
May	491	772	261	97	49	125	101	7	95	486	81.2%	32.0%	52.4%
2012 YTD	2500	2401	1164	323	410	499	495	30	423	1398	83.0%	37.9%	61.6%
June	523	633	237	196	67	67	95	4	114	392	77.8%	40.5%	56.8%
July	476	567	250	110	68	99	67	9	80	362	82.8%	37.6%	57.7%
August	480	538	261	136	78	63	63	9	83	352	82.9%	37.1%	58.4%
September	435	363	128	45	84	63	79	3	118	234	71.1%	32.2%	53.3%
October	494	539	245	96	88	90	99	6	80	302	84.4%	38.9%	62.0%
November	415	390	192	118	67	66	87	4	73	242	82.6%	43.7%	62.9%
December	462	249	237	97	67	75	92	6	69	163	85.2%	52.2%	71.2%
2012 Totals	5785	5680	2714	1121	929	1022	1077	71	1040	3445	81.9%	39.1%	60.7%
Increase/Decrease	234	1229	904	509	-88	290	159	-2	-836	445	15.34%	7.02%	9.32%
2013													
January	491	352	254	55	62	57	103	7	50	181	89.3%	39.7%	70.0%
February	386	303	221	70	39	58	72	2	62	182	84.3%	41.7%	65.4%
March	490	313	211	69	52	76	94	9	48	170	88.1%	47.5%	70.1%
April	434	446	231	69	35	104	110	2	57	230	86.8%	43.2%	65.8%
May	440	540	209	79	50	169	90	7	74	231	82.5%	52.5%	66.4%
2013 Totals	2241	1954	1126	342	238	464	469	27	291	994	86.3%	45.6%	67.5%
YTD Increase/Dec	-259	-447	-38	19	-172	-35	-26	-3	-132	-404	3.27%	7.73%	5.88%

Current Option

- Current Practice: Trap & Kill (TK)
 - Limited Effectiveness
 - Standard cat population “control” for decades
 - Little impact on exponential population growth curve
 - Costly
 - Uncooperative pet owners & colony caretakers
 - Staff resource intensive
 - Creates VACUUM EFFECT
 - Leads to compassion fatigue:
 - ❖ High employee turnover in shelters
 - ❖ Taints public image

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

- Proposed Option: Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

- What is this option?

“A non-lethal program where community cats are humanely trapped, vaccinated, sterilized & released back to their outdoor homes where caretakers feed and monitor them. This method controls the free ranging population of cats immediately, and in time reduces the population.

- Nuisance behaviors are reduced & many times eliminated thru TNR
 - Trapped by volunteers using humane traps & taken to a medical professional for sterilization, rabies vaccination, and “ear tip” for identification (according to international protocol)
 - Tamed kittens adopted
 - Tame cats adopted when possible
 - Ill or injured beyond recovery are euthanized

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

- **Proposed Option: Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)**
 - What outcomes can be expected with this solution?
 - Colony size decreases over time
 - Caretaker feeds and vaccinates cats and monitors health
 - Roam less so fewer deaths due to cars
 - Rodent population decreased
 - Annoying nuisance behaviors reduced (spraying & vocalizing)
 - More humane as far fewer cats born/euthanized
 - More efficient over time
 - ❖ TK: \$170-\$225/cat
Brunt of cost from field services and sheltering animals for minimum period before euthanizing. Reoccurring cost because of cats returning/breeding continually (vacuum effect)
 - ❖ TNR: \$45-90\$/cat
Brunt of cost avoided because volunteers provide in-kind time and funding to trap & provide veterinary services. Costs subside over time (fewer and fewer fertile cats)

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

- **Proposed Option: Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)**

- Other cities' cost experiences

- ***Jacksonville, Florida***

Net savings: 2007-2010

- \$160,000
- 13,000 avoided euthanasia

Decrease in feline nuisance complaints

31% decrease in feline shelter admissions:

- FY06-07 13,455
- FY09-10 10,302

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

- Proposed Option: Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)
 - Other cities cost effectiveness
 - ***Salt Lake City, Utah***
 - SLC Feral Fix Program (launched in 2008)
 - 2008-2010: SLC improved its save rate by 40.4%
 - Net savings- \$65,000
 - In 2010, SLC realized a 21.8% decrease in shelter cat intake from 2009
 - No increase in feline nuisance complaints

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

- Proposed Option: Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)
 - Other cities cost effectiveness
 - ***Maricopa County, Arizona***
 - Average of 11,000 cats per year, 3 million people
 - 2001 began feral cat TNR with partnership organizations
 - Comprehensive spay/neuter and adoption
 - Cat intake down 30% as of 2006
 - Cat euthanasia down 25% as of 2006

Discussion Points

- **Cat Welfare**

- Managed colonies:

- Provides human contact

- Prevents unwanted kittens (and mortality)

- Decreases the numbers of homeless cats

- Increases the health of feral cat colonies and makes their lives less harsh

- Reduces malnutrition

- Colonies stay monitored for health concerns

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Discussion Points

- **Public health**

- Providing rabies vaccination for all TNR cats helps prevent spread of rabies to people and our pets.
- Sterilized Cats are healthier and happier, meaning less risk of exposure to people and pets in general.
- Feral cats rarely attack humans unless provoked, they are typically elusive to humans as part of their instinctual survival behavior
- A Stanford study found virtually no risk to human health or safety from feral cats
- Similarly, research at the University of Florida found that feral cats and owned cats share similar health status, confirming that the cats do not pose a risk to public health or to other cats.

Discussion Points

- **Public health**

- A Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program requires the cats are vaccinated against rabies providing a barrier between humans and wildlife in the community.
- The Centers For Disease Control (2001) indicates that wild animals accounted for 93% of reported rabies cases and domestic animals accounted for 6.8% (270 Cats).
- Since 1975, there have been no reported cases of a cat transmitting rabies to a human in this country (CSDC).
- Trap and remove leaves a constantly multiplying UNVACCINATED population as we can never remove all the cats
- TNR results in more free-roaming cats being vaccinated against rabies
- Attorneys for Texas A&M University stated that even one vaccine against rabies meant that we were trying to protect people and much more defensible than not vaccinating at all

Discussion Points

- **Wildlife Concerns**

- Controversy about numbers of animals killed by cats
 - Limitations in study designs
 - Overgeneralization of existing data
 - Non-productive: goal is fewer cats = less predation
 - Many species involved
 - Variable ability and interest of cats in hunting
- Justification for removal solely because cats are non-native
 - Protection of native wildlife is primary goal
 - Assumes will return to normal if cats are removed
 - Other pressures:
 - ❖ Environment modified by human habitation
 - ❖ Chemical toxins
 - ❖ Direct exploitation: Hunting/Capturing birds for pets

Discussion Points

- Wildlife Concerns (Philosophical Objection)
 - Cats are domestic species
 - Cats should not be allowed to hunt native wild species
 - People should not value cats over wildlife
 - Cats should be controlled/confined
 - Cats have been deliberately or accidentally introduced by humans

Proposed Comprehensive Management Plan

- **Partnerships**

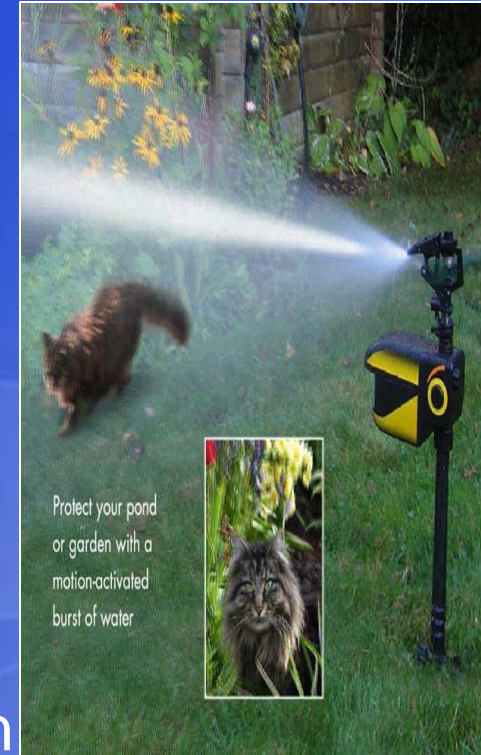
- The City of Arlington proposes to partner with the Arlington Feral Cat Coalition, Friends of Arlington Animal Services and Alley Cat Allies.
- These organizations have agreed to coordinate:
 - Development of TNR model protocol
 - Program coordination
 - Veterinary services
 - Grant/donation funding acquisition
 - Administrative support
 - Volunteer coordination/recruitment
 - Colony/caretaker oversight
 - Community support/education



Proposed Comprehensive Management Plan

- **Proposed Plan**

- Cats are humanely trapped
- Cats are spayed/neutered
- Cats are ear-tipped
- Cats are vaccinated
- Cats are returned to the original habitat/colonies
- Non-lethal deterrents recommended
- Cats receive routine daily feeding/watering
- Cats are provided veterinary care when required



Closing Remarks: Quick Summary

- Why TNR is more effective than traditional approaches?
 - Provides Long-term solution
 - Reduces financial burden
 - Reduce nuisance complaints
 - Pro-actively alleviate potential public health issues
 - Reduces shelter admissions and euthanasia rates
 - Provides access to grant funding and community participation
 - Decreases nuisance complaints
 - Promotes community awareness and education
- Animal Services Center Advisory Board recommends adopting TNR program
- Both HSUS and ASPCA endorse TNR program
- Trap-Neuter-Return contact: Friends of Arlington Animal Services @ 817-210-2571

Next Steps

- Obtain feedback from Committee and Council



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Discussion