

Potter League For Animals Position on Trap, Neuter and Release (TNR) of Community (Feral) Cats

The Potter League advocates and supports Community (Feral) Cat TNR Programs that are performed humanely and adhere to best practices.

I. What is it?

Community (feral) cats, are considered to be descendant from domesticated cats that no longer live with humans. These cats are often members colonies that reside in one area. These cats have not been socialized with humans in the formative time of their development and are not adoptable. It is estimated that there are over 50,000 community cats living in Rhode Island and an estimated 58 million in the United States. Community Cat Trap, Neuter and Release (TNR) Programs are designed to be a humane approach to community cat colony control. These cats are trapped, spayed/neutered (altered) and released back to their colonies to live out their lives in an environment in which they are familiar and comfortable.

II. Pros

- *The cat population in neighborhood colonies will grow at a slower rate and eventually decrease*
- *Stabilization of the population growth of community cats helps to reduce the number of those cats entering shelters*
- *Altered community cats are generally healthier, have a longer life expectancy than their unaltered counterparts and studies have noted that in some cases exhibit a more friendly disposition*
- *Altered community cats are less likely to travel out of their colonies because the need to find a mate is eliminated*
- *Other mating behaviors such as yowling, spraying and fighting are either reduced or completely stopped in altered community cats*
- *Controlling the community cat population will have a positive impact on bird and small mammal populations in areas where these colonies reside*
- *Vaccinating community cats will help protect people from contracting zoonotic diseases that can easily spread to humans and can be especially dangerous in the young and immunocompromised*

III. Cons

- *Altering community cats is expensive and must be sustained over many years to be effective*
- *Community cat colonies are merely home base and these cats are free to roam, hunt and seek other mates making it extremely difficult to completely control colony populations*
- *Trapping and altering the approximately 50,000 community cats in Rhode Island is a daunting and extremely challenging task but required to effect widespread change in the future of community cat population*
- *It does not immediately address the concerns of individuals who do not want cats in a specific area*

IV. Conclusion

Although difficult and time consuming, altering community cats is an effective and humane method to help stabilize colony population. If the necessary resources can be acquired for this undertaking, it can result in a program that helps control community cat populations while helping to maintain a humane relationship with the local community cat colonies, and protect small mammals and birds living in those common areas.

References:

- 1) Marcia Pobzeznik, 'Over 1,000 feral cats have been trapped, treated, returned in Tiverton', NewportRI, Middletown, RI, GateHouse Media, 2017, <https://www.newportri.com/ed83f57d-4c9b-51b3-ba14-769c8295c0d8.html>, (accessed 3 June 2019).
- 2) "Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)." Alley Cat Allies, www.alleycat.org/our-work/trap-neuter-return/.
- 3) Alley Cat Allies, www.alleycat.org/our-work/trap-neuter-return/
- 4) Lohr, Cheryl A., et al "Costs and Benefits of Trap- Neuter- Release and Euthanasia for Removal of Urban Cats in Oahu, Hawaii." Conservation Biology, vol. 27, no.2012, pp.64-73. Doi;10.1111/j.1523-1739,2012,01935,x.
- 5) Operation CatNip in Florida (http://vmc.vetmed.ulf.edu/Operation_Catnip.aspx)