

RESEARCH DATA RE: FERAL CATS

Audrey Boag, author of *Feral Friends, A Guide to Living With Feral Cats*, gathered data over a ten year period from the major shelters in the Denver metropolitan area including nearby suburbs. The shelters keep better than average records on cat entries and exits. Since the advent of TNR programs in the early 1990's, there has been a **dramatic decline** in the shelter intake numbers for cats.

Animal People magazine which published the study, concluded: "Return to Owner and adoption are clearly **NOT responsible for the 40% drop in cats received** since significant trap/neuter/return projects started in the Denver area in 1991-1992. What is happening in Denver, plain and simple, is that **feral cats are no longer being born in great numbers** (owner surrenders down 40%), hence unwanted litters are no longer turning up in yards, sheds, basements, etc in great numbers, and hence free roaming adult cats are no longer turning up as often (24% fewer)."

Increasingly, governments are recognizing the value of TNR in reducing feral or stray cat populations.

A TNR program in Maricopa County, Arizona, called the "Maddie's Pet Rescue Project" was **so successful** the County Board of Supervisors issued a resolution stating: "Maricopa County Board of Supervisors does hereby endorse non-lethal trap-neuter-return, when accompanied by ongoing feral cat management, as the most effective, humane method of controlling feral cat populations in Maricopa County and in so doing better provides for the welfare of these animals while better serving our communities' public health and safety concerns."

In Hamilton, New Jersey, after 5 years of TNR the township health department statistics show an 80% decline in the number of euthanized cats. The statistics reveal fewer strays are brought to the shelter each year. Township spokesperson Rich McClellan attributed the **decreasing number of cats killed in shelters** to the work of TNR caregivers.

More and more state and local officials have also realized TNR not only works to reduce feral cat populations, **it saves money**.

One Pennsylvania study illustrates:

One TNR program saved the state \$6,600,000. There were 3,300 cats spayed/neutered under the program. Had those cats not been sterilized and the 2,200 females produced 100 kittens, there would have been an additional 220,000 cats roaming around. If the state had tried to eliminate these animals through a trap and eradicate program, it would have cost the state \$6,600,000 which would include \$30 per trap for several days, care and shelter for three days in the event the cats belonged to someone, and disposal.

State and local governments have seen the benefit of TNR, and many have decided to help fund it...

In 1993 New Hampshire passed a law providing money for a network of private veterinarians to perform low-cost spaying and neutering. Euthanasia has since dropped by 75%, according to Peter Marsh, director of STOP, Solutions to Overpopulation of Pets, the Concord, N.H., nonprofit group that helped create the law. A copy of that law, N.H. Sec. 437-A.8, is in our Resources section.

San Diego launched a countywide TNR program in 1992. The euthanasia rates for feral and domestic cats dropped by 40% in the first two years.

San Francisco's SFSPCA instituted TNR citywide, and the euthanasia rates for cats were reduced by over 70% percent in six years.

Other state and local governments not only assist in funding spay/neuter for feral or stray cats but also promote managed colonies.

In Indianapolis the city and Marion County decided to repeal the ban on feeding feral or stray cats. The city and county decided to try TNR instead. The City-county passed an ordinance establishing TNR to care, protect and break the breeding cycle of unowned cats. The vote passed 26-1. This ordinance makes it legal for the city-county's designated agency, IndyFeral, to trap feral cats, sterilize them and return them to their managed TNR colony where a caretaker provides care, food and shelter.

Dr. Marcie Short DVM, an IndyFeral volunteer vet who practices at Allisonville Animal Hospital, said of her support of the TNR ordinance, "From a vet viewpoint, I feel that other things that have been done, like trap and kill, trap and find homes, or trying to collect these ferals, hasn't been successful. We continue to have a huge feral cat population.

"With TNR we see improvement in the quality of life for the animals. Since I started volunteering [three years ago] the colonies of cats we have seen are consistently healthier with fewer upper respiratory problems for instance and better quality of life."

"Before this ordinance, the act of feeding feral cats was a finable infraction; however, feeding these cats is a proven way to start managing them."

"Now people ... can take care of them legally with this ordinance in place and don't have to stay under the radar. They are both going to be there ... the cats and people feeding them. That's going to happen whether the ordinance is in place or not."

Volunteer groups have proved TNR is effective. Now is the time for Officials to get involved.

Source: <http://www.animallawcoalition.com/feral-cats/article/201>