

## Case Study

### Alley Cat Allies “Truth” Campaign Exposes the Fate of Cats Caught by Animal Control

National Feral Cat Day (NFCD), first inaugurated by Alley Cat Allies in 2001, is held on October 16. The annual event marks the kickoff to educational programs and materials aimed at increasing awareness about feral cats.

In 2007, Alley Cat Allies became deeply involved in leading efforts to expose the tragic consequences of taking a stray cat to a pound or shelter. That year’s NFCD campaign lifted the veil of secrecy surrounding the animal control and sheltering system.

“The leading documented cause of death for cats in the U.S. is being killed in an animal shelter. But most Americans remain totally in the dark about it because nationwide, shelters are not required to report their kill rates,” said Becky Robinson, Alley Cat Allies’ president. “Talking about the true scope of the killing—the fact that 70 percent of cats taken to pounds and shelters by animal control are killed there—is a major taboo.

“People want to protect cats, but they can’t if they are not aware of the biggest threat to them,” Robinson said. “We knew we had to act.”

Alley Cat Allies launched a national advertising and poster campaign to expose the truth about the fate of cats in shelters:



“If you don’t believe in killing cats, you are already an advocate.”

“When you call animal control to report feral cats in your neighborhood, the cats are killed. There’s a better way. Go to [alleycat.org](http://alleycat.org) and learn the humane way to help stray and feral cats.”

“Take the Next Step. Join Alley Cat Allies to learn how you can help end the killing.”

The National Animal Control Association (NACA), representing animal control personnel in the U.S., was incensed by the truth-telling campaign. While in past years Alley Cat Allies had been invited to speak at NACA events and welcomed to advertise in their magazine, it threatened to ban Alley Cat Allies from anything sponsored by NACA unless the ad campaign was pulled. Alley Cat Allies refused, asserting that the campaign was factually accurate

and that NACA should not be offended by efforts to raise awareness about the current operating policies.

In 2008, NACA made a startling announcement: it was reversing its official position on feral cats, which had previously called for all “unowned” cats to be removed from the community. NACA’s executive director was quoted in the November/December 2008 issue of *NACA News*, the organization’s magazine, saying that the new policy is “designed to be more community minded...we’ve taken into consideration that the traditional methods that many communities use—that simply end up with capture and euthanize—are not necessarily the ones that communities are looking for today.” The issue also featured a number of articles that supported Trap-Neuter-Return.

“Alley Cat Allies has been advocating for change in animal control and shelter facilities policies for years. Publicly funded agencies have a responsibility to reflect the values of their constituents. As the only national organization calling attention to this issue, we believe our ad campaign, representing the public’s interests, factored into NACA’s decision,” said Robinson. “Their new position reflects the fact that communities and residents are no longer tolerating catch and kill. Trap-Neuter-Return is a community based program with broad, nationwide support.”