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Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

Doing What's Best for the Greatest Number of Cats

Tree House is part of a growing number of shelters who are promoting Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) as the most effective way to control the stray and feral population of cats.

What is Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)?

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) is a humane sterilization method used to reduce the number of feral cats. Stray and feral cats are humanely trapped and evaluated by a colony caregiver. Friendly strays and young kittens are good candidates for socialization and possible admission to a shelter. Once this evaluation has been made, the cats are brought to Tree House or another participating clinic to be sterilized, vaccinated and ear-tipped. Ear-tipping is an effective way to identify a sterilized feral cat in a managed colony. After the surgery, healthy adult feral cats will be returned to their familiar habitat under the supervision of the caregiver.

Why TNR?

For more than 40 years Tree House has been caring exclusively for sick, injured and abused stray cats - cats that often had no other chance at a good life - but despite our best efforts and those of other shelters and animal welfare agencies around the country, the number of stray and feral cats is still not steadily decreasing as it should. Many animal welfare agencies estimate the number of feral cats in this country to be in the tens of millions. Because feral cats breed at a much faster rate than we can socialize them, getting ahead of the overpopulation problem through adoption alone is not a realistic solution. Trying to socialize a feral cat is not always possible, and not usually in the best interest of the cat. Therefore, admission into the shelter environment may not result in a better quality of life for the cat. Truly feral cats have lived their entire lives without direct human contact, other than feeding and monitoring from afar by a human caregiver. Feral cats' survival instincts tell them to be wary of people and of confinement, so being caged in an effort to socialize them can often harm a cat's physical and mental health despite the best intentions of the rescuer. Of course, trap and kill is never an acceptable answer either. Feral cats have a right to live. Aside from this fundamental point, statistics have proven that it costs more to trap and euthanize cats than it does to trap and sterilize them.

Therefore, the best way to promote the well-being of feral cats is to help prevent the behaviors associated with mating and giving birth to endless litters of kittens. This cycle of reproduction is the most harmful element affecting homeless cats in our communities, and this is why after many years of hard work, shelters like Tree House are still overcrowded and cannot accommodate all of the animals who need our help.

What we can do

In order to find homes for the thousands of cats in Chicagoland alone, we must continue to find a way to decrease the number of births of all cats, especially strays and ferals. For many years, your donations have helped us provide low-cost spay and neuter surgeries for low-income pet guardians and for rescued strays and feral cats. In 2009, we were able to do something revolutionary by opening our low-cost spay/neuter clinic at our Bucktown Branch at 1629 N. Ashland Avenue. At the Clinic, we offer spay and neuter packages for \$30 for feral cats that include spay/neuter surgery, rabies and FVRCP vaccinations, parasite treatment, ear cleaning, and post-surgery pain medication. But unfortunately this price is less than it costs us to perform the surgery, so we need continual funding to make these surgeries available at such a low cost. Make a life-saving donation. Please sponsor one or more spay or neuter surgeries today.

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