

What is Trap-Neuter-Return?

Trap-neuter-return (TNR) humanely manages feral and free roaming cats, and prevents the breeding that increases feral cat populations.

With TNR, cats are caught with humane box traps, neutered, vaccinated and returned to their territory to live under the eye of a human caretaker who provides food, water and shelter as necessary. During TNR surgery, cats also have the tips of their left ears clipped (ear tipping), which identifies and safeguards them as part of a managed TNR program if ever re-trapped.

Spaying and neutering colonies not only reduces feral population growth but also the nuisance behaviors often associated with feral colonies—spraying and marking by males, fighting and noisy mating encounters.

Why not Trap-and-Remove? Stray and feral cats populate an area because there's food and shelter that supports them. If you trap-and-remove, other cats on the fringes of the area move in. This is called the vacuum effect. The new cats produce more kittens, which leads to renewed calls for trap-and-remove. The cycle is endless.

Why not adopt these cats to homes? TNR is not about rescuing and rehoming cats. It is about permanently reducing the number of feral cats in an area, lowering the intake and euthanasia rates in shelters and creating better, less hostile environments for cats.

Trying to domesticate a cat that has never lived indoors, and has been quite content and happy outdoors, would be no different than trying to make a raccoon or a squirrel a household companion. You might partially succeed with a great deal of time and patience, but the cat would no longer be permitted to live in a manner that best suits it. Many well-meaning people feel they are "saving" a feral cat by bringing it indoors, only to realize the cat is unhappy and spends a life hiding under the bed, living in constant fear.

What happens after TNR? TNR does not stop at the return after spay or neuter. Management of the colonies is key to the cats' well-being. Across the city, community members care for these cats by trapping newcomers for surgery and keeping a careful eye on the population.

You can be a part of this life-saving mission by joining us. We need volunteers to assist with trapping projects, transport pre- and post-surgery and assist in the clinic during recovery. For more information on joining our program, please give us a call at 415.522.3539

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