



THE CATS IN YOUR COMMUNITY (AKA FREE-ROAMING CATS)

CHARLESTON COUNTY FREE-ROAMING CAT ORDINANCE

Sec. 3-16. Free-roaming cat program.

- (1) Free-roaming cats shall be allowed in Charleston County as long as all of the following requirements are met:
 - (a) Cat must be spayed or neutered.
 - (b) Cat must be microchipped.
 - (c) Cat must be vaccinated for rabies, feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and panleukopenia.
 - (d) Cat must be ear tipped.
- (2) The Charleston Animal Society ("CAS") shall be the designated shelter and will work with the Humane Net Collaboration to develop rules and regulations for the program. CAS shall create and develop rules and regulations for the program. These rules and regulations shall be reviewed by county council and, if approved, adopted by resolution of county council prior to implementation of the program.
- (3) The county may review the program two years after its inception to assess its functionality and success.



EXPLANATION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF FREE-ROAMING CATS

Owned Cats

Cats are the most popular pet in the United States according to the American Veterinary Medical Association's 2012 U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook (AVMA 2012). Approximately 30% of households own cats, and overall owned cat numbers have been increasing as the number of households in the U.S. rises. The majority (approximately 85%) of owned cats have been spayed or neutered, but they may have had one or more litters—intended or accidental—before being sterilized. In underserved communities, rates of sterilization in owned cats tend to be much lower, with cost and transportation being the biggest barriers. Accessible spay/neuter services for cat owners are critical for the overall welfare and management of cats. Approximately 65% to 70% of owned cats are kept indoors at least at night, and this trend has been on the rise, up from approximately 20% in the 1970s (APPA 2012).



Un-Owned Cats

Unsterilized community cats (un-owned or semi owned) contribute about 80% of the kittens born each year and are the most significant source of cat overpopulation (Levy & Crawford, 2004).

Estimates vary greatly for the number of community cats in the United States, ranging all the way from 10 to 90 million (Lloyd & DeVore, 2010). The limited evidence available indicates that the actual number may be in the 30–40 million range (Rowan, 2013). The real problem is that only about 2% of them are spayed or neutered (Wallace & Levy, 2006) and continue to reproduce generations of outdoor cats. For this reason, large-scale and targeted reproductive control of community cats is critical to reduce cat populations in your community. Community cat population numbers are greatly affected by the community in which they live. Human demographics, types of land usage, climate, presence of predators, and availability of resources all affect the cat population and determine how many cats can be supported in a given area. Population estimates vary greatly and provide only a loose number that

Animal Resource Center

www.charlestonanimalsociety.org/GetPetHelp



can be further refined as program work takes place. Experts differ on recommended calculations, with a range of formulas from human population divided by six (Levy & Crawford, 2004), to human population divided by 15 (PetSmart Charities, 2013). For a mid-range estimate of the number of community cats in your area, divide your human population by 10. This estimate is exactly that—an estimate. Cold weather areas with freezing temperatures or locales with robust predator populations that limit survival, may have fewer cats than estimated, while rural areas with lots of barns and farms may have more than estimated. Warm climates tend to support larger populations of cats. Densely populated areas with shelter and adequate food sources for outdoor cats may have very large concentrations or relatively few cats depending on the neighborhood's demographics.

Return to Field

Some shelters care for feral colonies on their own property, either by themselves or in collaboration with local TNR groups. Others with high euthanasia rates for cats are embracing “Return to Field” programs as a way to reduce euthanasia while focusing energy and resources on spaying and neutering. In the Return to Field program, healthy, un-owned cats are sterilized, ear tipped, vaccinated, and put back where they were found. The rationale is that if the shelter has no resources, a healthy cat knows how to survive and should not be euthanized to prevent possible future suffering. Using resources for sterilization has a larger impact than focusing resources on intake and euthanasia.

COMMON QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What is the difference between a stray cat and a feral cat?

Stray cats are socialized to people and can be adopted into homes, but feral cats are not socialized to people and are happy living outdoors. Collectively, we call all of the cats who live all or a portion of their lives outdoors in our community “free-roaming cats”.

A stray cat:

- Is a cat who has been socialized to people at some point in her life, but has left or lost her indoor home, as well as most human contact and dependence.
- Can become feral as her contact with humans dwindles.
- Can under the right circumstances become a pet cat once again. Stray cats that are re-introduced to a home after living outdoors may require a period of time to re-acclimate; they may be frightened and wary after spending time outside away from people.



A feral cat:

- Is a cat who has either never had any contact with humans or her contact with humans has diminished over time. She is not socialized to people and survives on her own outdoors. Most feral cats are not likely to ever become lap cats or enjoy living indoors.
- Can have kittens who can be socialized at an early age and adopted into homes.

Where do feral cats come from?

Feral cats are not a new phenomenon. Outdoor cats are part of our rich history in this country and worldwide. Cats have been living among us here in the U.S. for hundreds of years. Feral cats are domestic cats. Feral cats thrive in every type of environment, urban, suburban and rural. Some feral cats are offspring of house cats. Yet, not until the last two decades has there been accessible and affordable spay and neuter services for cats. And, until recent years,



early-age (kitten) spay / neuter was not practiced (kittens go into heat between 4 and 6 months and traditional conventional-wisdom was to spay a cat at 6 month of age.)

Domestic cats came into existence about 10,000 years ago, when humans began farming. According to scientists, cats are one of the only animals who domesticated themselves—choosing to live near humans to feed on the rodents attracted by stored grain. Evolutionary research shows that the natural habitat of cats is outdoors in close proximity to humans—and that is how they have lived ever since. In fact, it wasn't until the 1940s—and the invention of cat litter—that "indoors only" for cats was even a concept.

What is Trap-Vaccinate-Alter-Return (TVAR)?

Trap-Vaccinate-Alter-Return is the humane, effective approach for free-roaming cats. Free-roaming cats are humanely trapped, spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and eartipped (the universal symbol of an altered and vaccinated cat), and then returned to their outdoor home. Socialized cats and kittens may be adopted into homes. The colony's population stabilizes—no more kittens! TVAR improves their lives and their relations with the community: the behaviors and stresses associated with mating stop.

What is an 'eartip'?

We use the word "eartip" to describe when a small portion of the tip of a cat's left ear is surgically removed during spay/neuter surgery, to denote that the cat has been altered and vaccinated. Eartipping is done while the cat is anesthetized and is not painful for the cat. Eartipping is the most effective way to identify altered cats from a distance, to make sure they are not trapped or undergo surgery a second time.



Isn't it unsafe for cats to live outside?

A 2006 study published in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* found that of 103,643 stray and feral cats examined in spay/neuter clinics in six states from 1993 to 2004, less than 1% of those cats needed to be euthanized due to debilitating conditions, trauma, or infectious diseases.

In addition, the lifespan of feral cats compares favorably with the lifespan of pet cats. A long-term study (published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* in 2003) of a TVAR program noted that 83% of the cats present at the end of the observation period had been there for more than six years—meaning that the cats' lifespans were comparable to the mean lifespan of 7.1 years for pet cats.

Feral cat caregivers can take steps to make feral cats more comfortable, like neutering them, feeding them, and providing shelter. These steps promote the cats' well-being, improve their relationships with neighbors, and assist the people who live nearby to understand and co-exist with the cats. But most feral cats don't require intervention beyond TVAR.

For stray and pet cats living outdoors, there are many potential threats to their safety that should be considered. Some of these dangers include traffic; other free-roaming cats; wildlife such as predatory birds, coyote, and even alligators; disease; a loose neighborhood dog; poison; animal abusers; and others. It is important to understand these threats to your pet's safety at all times, as this is part of being a pet guardian. For house cats that wish to spend time outdoors, there are safe alternatives, such as catteries. Here are a few links to plans and photos for building or purchasing a safe cattery for installing on/near your home. They can be as fancy or plain jane as you prefer – the important thing is safety.

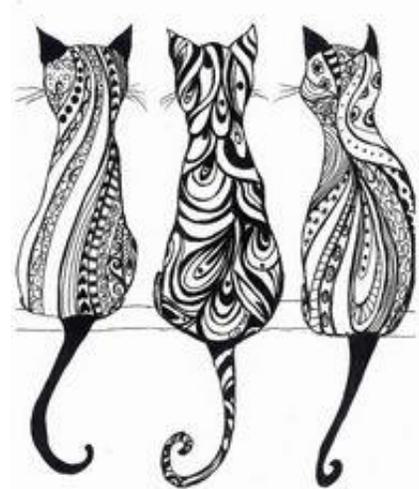




Catteries and Cattios
Cat Terrace Window Cages
Cat Condos
Catio Spaces

Why can't truly feral cats be socialized and then adopted into homes?

A feral cat is a cat who has either never had any contact with people or whose contact with people has diminished over time. They are not socialized to people and cannot be touched, except sometimes by a regular caregiver. The ideal window for socializing feral kittens is 12 weeks of age or younger—beyond 12 weeks, feral cats may never socialize completely or at all. As a result, we do not recommend attempting to socialize feral cats older than 12 weeks—it is dangerous and stressful for both you and the cat. Feral cats live healthy lives in their outdoors homes and the best thing you can do to help them is Trap-Vaccinate-Alter-Return. Outdoor cats that are friendly and socialized to people are called stray cats, and they can be re-homed.



Why doesn't removing free-roaming cats from an area work?

Animal control's traditional approach for free-roaming cats—catching and killing—is endless and cruel, and it does not keep an area free of cats. Cats choose to reside in a location for two reasons: there is a food source (intended or not) and shelter. Because of a phenomenon called the vacuum effect, when cats are removed from a location, survivors of the catch and kill effort and new cats who have moved in, breed to capacity. Cats have been living outside alongside people for 10,000 years—a fact that cannot be changed.

I don't want cats in my yard. How can I deter cats and peacefully live with them in my neighborhood?

Thank you for searching out peaceful solutions to living with cats!

It's important to understand outdoor cat behaviors and what draws cats to certain areas. We have simple solutions to divert outdoor cats away from places they are not wanted! Learn how to carry out these tips in [How to Live with Cats in Your Neighborhood](#).

I need to relocate a cat/colony. Should I do this? How do I do this?

Relocating feral cats is not the “happy ending” many people may think it is. The truth is, it's a complicated, risky, and time-consuming plan that rips frightened cats from their home—with no guarantee they will stay in the new location. In high-tension situations, calls to “just move the cats” are extremely common. It can be tempting to offer the opposition an option they will easily accept, like relocation. But remember that you are always working towards a solution that is in the best interest of the cats—and relocation is not. Because of the negative impacts on the cats, relocation should be your last option, something to be considered only after you have exhausted all other possibilities and you truly believe that the cats' lives are in imminent danger if they remain where they are.

A far better course of action is to resolve the problems that are causing the cats to be forced out of their home. Learn how to reach a compromise that allows the cats to remain in their original colony location by:

- Using peer mediation techniques
- Negotiating with decision makers
- Offering bargaining chips to reach a compromise
- Handling threats to cats



If you are considering relocating cats because their caregivers are no longer able to provide care, try recruiting new caregivers first.

I think someone poisoned/injured my cat(s). What can I do?

Physical threats—or worse, actual violence or cruelty—toward any member of your cat colony present a serious and frightening situation for you and for the cats. However, it is important to stay focused and calm—that will help you better protect the cats.

Intentionally hurting a cat is animal cruelty, and it is illegal in every state and the District of Columbia. Direct threats to cats should be taken seriously.

If someone has physically harmed your cats:

When a cat you care for is harmed or killed, it can be very difficult to know what to do. There are steps you can take to protect the cats remaining in the colony and bring justice for the cat who is injured or who you have lost.

- First, if the cat is injured, trap them and transport to the veterinarian immediately.
- Next, call the police and begin gathering as much evidence as possible. Make sure you take pictures and document as much evidence as you can find—write all of your observations in a journal and include dates and times. We know how difficult this will be if the cat was killed, but you must document how you found her with photographs. If at all possible, get a necropsy (an autopsy for animals) performed on the cat in order to find out the cause of death. Most states have a state laboratory that performs post-mortem tests on animals. Costs vary, but may be worthwhile if evidence aids in prosecution of the case.

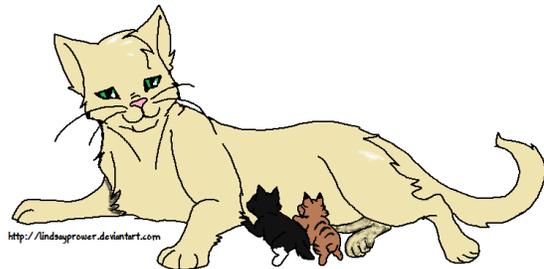
At this point you may want to involve a lawyer. In order to protect the remaining cats you may consider installing a video camera on your property in order to have documentation of activity at all times of the day. This would not only aid with evidence in future cases, but could also serve as a deterrent for anyone coming onto the property with ill intentions.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A LITTER OF KITTENS

The best place for kittens younger than eight weeks old is with their mother, whenever possible.

If you see a litter of kittens that looks to be abandoned or orphaned, please refer to the following guide for what to do:

- If you **find kittens who are alone**, determine if the mother has abandoned them or if she is just off looking for food. The only way to find this out is to wait. Often times, she will return within a few hours. Observe from a distance or a hidden spot to be sure she is not returning before moving the kittens. Use common sense and be patient.
- **If the mother cat doesn't come back after 8 hours**, and you think she has abandoned the kittens or they are in danger, you can choose one of several options. Raise them yourself; bring them to Charleston Animal Society for fostering; foster them for Charleston Animal Society; or assist in trapping them so they can be vaccinated, spayed/neutered, and returned to their life outside. We can help you



Animal Resource Center

www.charlestonanimalsociety.org/GetPetHelp



determine if the kittens require [neonatal kitten care](#) (one- to four-weeks-old), if the kittens are young enough to be socialized, fostered or adopted (six- to 16-weeks-old), or if they are at the age to be trapped, neutered, and returned (four months or older).

- **If the mother cat does return for her kittens**, you have multiple options to consider:
 - **If the mother is feral and the kittens are too young to be separated from her**, the best thing for the family is to leave them where they are for now as long as the location is safe. (Use your judgment and common sense—if you think the location is safe enough for the mother to survive, leave the kittens with her. Remember, the mother is best able to care for her kittens. You can assist in providing food, water, and [shelter](#). Monitor the family daily and make the environment as safe for them as you can. If you have decided you don't have the time or the resources to foster, socialize, and adopt out the kittens, then you can trap, neuter, and return the whole family when the kittens are 8-weeks-old or two pounds. If you can foster, socialize, and adopt out the kittens, the ideal window is when the kitten are between six weeks and 12 weeks old. The best thing for the mother cat is to be trapped, spayed, and returned to her outdoor home.
 - **If the kittens are too young to be separated, and you believe it is safer for the whole family to come indoors**—you can trap the mom, trap or scoop up the kittens depending on their age, and bring the whole family inside to a quiet, small room like a bathroom, where they can live until the kittens are weaned and it is safe to get them all neutered. Learn more about how to care for an outdoor cat family indoors in the sidebar at left. From there you can decide what is best for the kittens and either return mom outside if she is feral or find her an adoptive home if she is fully socialized. **IMPORTANT:** It can be very traumatizing for a truly feral cat to be brought indoors with her kittens, not to mention potentially dangerous. [Learn how to tell the difference between socialized \(stray\) cats and feral cats.](#)
 - **If the mother is feral and the kittens are old enough to be separated from her**, you have a decision to make: commit to foster, socialize, and adopt out the kittens, or trap, neuter, and return the kittens when they are 8 weeks or two pounds.
- **If you trap a cat and discover at the clinic that she is a nursing mother**, get her spayed immediately and return her to the area where you trapped her as soon as she is clear-eyed that evening, with approval from the veterinarian. Many times, you only learn this after she is at the clinic—make sure the clinic knows your plans for returning nursing mothers as soon as possible; they may have an anesthesia protocol that will enable her to wake up from surgery more quickly. It may seem counterintuitive to separate her from her kittens, but it's difficult to trap her again—this may be your only real chance to spay her and prevent further litters. Try to find the kittens (following the mother after you return her) so that you can trap and neuter them when they are old enough. *Note: Nursing mother cats continue to produce milk after being spayed, and can continue to nurse their kittens.*
- **If you discover at the clinic that you have brought in a pregnant cat**, have her spayed by an experienced veterinarian who has performed this surgery before. It may be necessary to allow an extra day for recovery and extended observation. For many people, this is a difficult aspect of trapping and returning, but as with nursing mothers or any cat in a trap, it may be difficult to trap her again—this is your opportunity to protect her from the health risks and ongoing stresses of mating and pregnancy.

MANAGING FREE-ROAMING CAT POPULATIONS: WHAT DOESN'T WORK

Many conventional strategies have been used over the years to attempt to manage community cats. You might have tried them or have contemplated trying them, but here is why they don't work. Trap and Remove or Relocate Trap and remove may at first glance seem to be the logical approach to solving community cat problems. However, unless it is consistently performed with very high levels of resources and manpower and addresses over 50% of a targeted population, it doesn't offset the root of the problem: ongoing reproduction of un-trapped cats (Andersen and Martin, et



al, 2004). The resources (money, manpower, etc.) required to capture this many cats simply do not exist, either in the budgets and capacity of government agencies or in terms of public support. Haphazard lethal control efforts only result in a temporary reduction in the cats' numbers, essentially putting a band-aid on the problem and further distance from real solutions. Moreover, while some advocates of this approach claim that the cats just need to be removed and placed elsewhere, there is no "elsewhere." Relocating cats is a complex task that is usually unsuccessful and creates more problems than it resolves. The vast majority end up "relocated" to shelters that have no other recourse but to perform euthanasia. Euthanasia in shelters is typically performed to end the lives of ill, dangerous, or suffering animals in a humane manner. When euthanasia is performed on healthy but unsocialized cats, it can be characterized as unnecessary, calling into question whether their deaths are actually humane.



Opposition from many in the community who oppose killing cats and insufficient resources to achieve the level of removal/euthanasia necessary to actually achieve results can often prove to be insurmountable barriers to lethal control programs. Communities that use trap and euthanize strategies typically do not realize reductions in the number of cat complaints, and cat intake at local shelters stays constant or continues to rise. Therefore, the only result of trap and remove/euthanize programs is turnover— new feline faces in the community, but not fewer. Feeding Bans The logic behind banning the feeding of outdoor cats is that if no one feeds them, they will go away. However, this doesn't work because cats are strongly bonded to their home territories and will not easily or quickly leave familiar surroundings to search for new food sources. Instead, they tend to move closer to homes and businesses as they grow hungrier, leading to more nuisance complaint calls, greater public concern for the cats' welfare, and underground feeding by residents. People who feed cats will ignore the ban, even at great personal risk, and enforcement is extremely difficult, resource intensive, and unpopular. Licensing Laws, Leash Laws, and Pet Limits Laws intended to regulate pet cats and their owners don't work to reduce community cat populations, because community cats do not have "owners" in the traditional sense. "Bans on feeding feral cats do nothing to manage their numbers. Bans force feral cats to forage through trashcans and kill wildlife, such as birds, squirrels, and rabbits. Establishing feeding stations ensures a healthier colony and allows a human being to interact with the colony and provide care for any cat that is under stress or who needs medical attention. Feeding stations also bring feral cats to a central location and help establish a trust, making trapping [for sterilization] an easier task." —Wayne H. Thomas, Councilman, Hampstead, MD "As a nation, we have over 50 years witnessing the ineffectiveness of trap and kill programs and their inability to reduce community cat numbers. It's time we try the only method documented to work— TNR." —Miguel Abi-hassan, Executive Director, Halifax Humane Society, Daytona Beach, FL

Instead, they're cared for by volunteer resident caretakers who happen upon them. These caretakers should not be penalized for their goodwill; they are essentially supplementing the community's cat management protocols with their time and resources. Rather, laws should be designed to incentivize people in the community to care for these cats and to protect those who do so. Caretakers don't choose how many cats there are, so pet limits are of little use. Because these cats are not owned, caretakers don't control the cats' movements, so leash laws are equally ineffective. Requiring community cats to be licensed by caretakers is a bad idea from an enforcement and compliance standpoint, and forcing caretakers to register colony locations often causes people concerned for the cats' welfare to go underground and off the municipal radar screen. Additionally, cat licensing projects rarely pay for themselves and further drain already limited resources. Policies that impose penalties on caretakers are barriers to sound community cat management. However, proactive, non-lethal control programs can enlist the support of caretakers by gaining their trust, and they can in turn provide data on the cats people care for. Relocation and Sanctuaries Some individuals or organizations may call for un-owned cats to be relocated or placed in sanctuaries. While this may seem like a humane alternative to lethal control, it is unrealistic due to the sheer numbers of cats in communities. Relocation is time-consuming and usually unsuccessful. Cats are strongly bonded to their home areas and may try to return to their outdoor homes. In addition, if the food and shelter that initially attracted the cats cannot be removed, other unsterilized cats will move in to take advantage of the available resources. Some shelters and rescues have implemented successful barn cat programs, where unsocialized cats can be relocated to barns and

Animal Resource Center

www.charlestonanimalsociety.org/GetPetHelp



farms to provide rodent control. But these programs require management and are by their nature limited. They can't address the large number of un-owned cats in the community. Sanctuaries might be available in some areas, but those that provide quality care for animals quickly fill to capacity and are too expensive to maintain for large numbers of un-owned cats. Cat populations vastly out-scale availability at sanctuaries, making them an unrealistic option in most cases. Many unfortunate examples exist of sanctuaries that grew too large and resulted in neglect and cruelty. Moreover, these organizations cause an additional burden on communities, requiring law enforcement intervention and resulting in a large group of cats again needing to be removed and relocated. If you are able to secure a spot in a sanctuary, always visit it in person before sending the cat there, to ensure that all animals receive proper and humane care.

MANAGING FREE-ROAMING CAT POPULATIONS: WHAT DOES WORK

Properly managed sterilization-vaccination programs do not create cat overpopulation—the cats are already there. The choice is between making progress or continuing to experience an unmanaged problem. Well-designed and implemented community cat programs are in line with public opinion and can mobilize an army of compassionate, dedicated people who care about the cats, wildlife, and their communities. To be most effective, these programs must be adopted by more communities and supported by more animal care and control agencies and municipal officials. The HSUS strongly recommends effective community cat management programs (including TNR and other sterilization programs), legislation that allows for and supports nonlethal population control, and coalition-based approaches that involve community leaders, citizens, and stakeholders. Solving community cat problems requires



many strategies, including: TVAR Trap Vaccinate-Alter-Return and its variants are non-lethal strategies intended to reduce the numbers of community cats, improve the health and safety of cats, and reduce impacts on wildlife. At minimum, TVAR'd community cats are spayed or neutered so they can no longer reproduce, vaccinated against rabies, marked to identify them as sterilized (the universally recognized sign of a sterilized cat is an ear-tip, a surgical removal of the top quarter inch of the of the cat's ear, typically the left), and returned to their home territory.

Community-wide TVAR programs are effective because they:

- Vaccinate cats against rabies (and other diseases, depending on available resources), decreasing public health and safety risks
- Create an immediate reduction in population when kittens young enough to be socialized and friendly stray cats are removed
- Lead to long-term management, reduction, and eventual elimination of outdoor cat populations
- Potentially save or better allocate municipal funds associated with trapping, holding, euthanizing, and disposing of community cats because trapping is typically done by volunteers
- Further save funds by reducing the flood of kittens into shelters each spring and fall kitten season
- Decrease nuisance complaints by eliminating or dramatically reducing noise from cat fighting and mating and odor from unneutered male cats spraying urine to mark their territory

Animal Resource Center

www.charlestonanimalsociety.org/GetPetHelp



- Attract volunteers, gain caretaker cooperation, and create goodwill for shelters and animal control agencies (if the cats were going to be harmed, there would be few volunteers willing to participate)
- Bring in sources of private funding from nonprofits and individuals willing to pay for the cats' spay/neuter surgeries and care
- Allow private nonprofit organizations that help community cats and volunteers to mediate conflicts between the cats and residents of surrounding communities
- Maintain the health of colony cats (cats living together in a given territory) and allow caretakers to trap new cats who join the colony for TNR or adoption

CONCERNS & RESPONSES

Concern: Community cats transmit diseases

Many animals, both wild and domestic, can pass diseases to people. Rabies is a disease of significant concern, and focusing on prevention is the best medicine. Vaccination against rabies should be a standard protocol for TNR practitioners. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2013), over the last 100 years, rabies in the United States has changed dramatically. The number of rabies-related human deaths in the United States has declined from more than 100 annually at the turn of the century to one or two per year in the 1990s (CDC, 2013). In the United States, human fatalities associated with rabies occur in people who fail to seek medical assistance, usually because they were unaware of their exposure. Modern day prophylaxis has proven nearly 100% successful (CDC, 2013). The CDC also reports that the number of reported cases of rabies is decreasing in both wild and domestic animals. In 2010, wild animals accounted for 92% of reported cases of rabies (CDC, 2013). The World Health Organization hasn't recommended removing dogs to control rabies since 1983 because vaccine programs have been more successful (WHO, 1984). Although the majority of rabies cases occur in wildlife, domestic animals are the source of the majority of human cases that require post exposure treatment because people are more likely to handle unknown dogs and cats than wildlife. Most rabies cases in cats occur in areas with large raccoon populations, like the Northeast. Vaccinating community cats against rabies as part of a TNR program should be supported as a preventative measure against the potential spread of the disease. Some public health officials have concerns about revaccinating community cats when vaccines expire. Because the lifespan of community cats is typically much shorter than that of pet cats, a vaccine with three-year immunity may provide protection for the life of many community cats. It's clearly better than no vaccine at all. Well managed programs should attempt to re-trap cats for further vaccinations. These programs also have the benefit of potentially reducing cat roaming. They can manage feeding so that fewer people come into contact with the cats. In this way, while the risk of rabies transmission from cats may not be entirely eliminated, it can be significantly reduced. Sterilized cats are typically healthier overall (Scott et al., 2002) and have greater immunity against a host of other diseases and parasites (Fischer, et al., 2007). Sterilized cats are also less likely to transmit feline diseases that are largely spread through mating behavior and mating-related fighting (Finkler, et al., 2011). People who feed community cats should use feeding strategies that do not attract wildlife (e.g. not leaving food out overnight), as should people who feed their pet cats outdoors. Not all states have mandatory rabies vaccination laws for cats, so it is important to determine whether your state does (or should). You should offer low-cost vaccination options for low-income cat owners. Refer to the appendix for additional public health information and documents about rabies and other diseases.





Concern: Cats will continue to be a nuisance to residents

With TNR, nuisance behaviors can be drastically reduced or eliminated. Neutered cats typically don't yowl late at night or fight over mates (Finkler et al., 2011), so noise is greatly reduced. The odor from male urine spray is mostly eliminated because testosterone is no longer present, and spraying to mark territory may stop entirely. Altered cats, no longer in search of mates, may roam much less frequently (Scott et al., 2002) and become less visible. Because they can no longer reproduce, over time there will be fewer cats, which in itself will result in fewer nuisance behaviors, complaint calls, and a reduced impact on wildlife. To prevent community cats from entering areas where they're unwanted, such as yards or gardens, residents can try blocking access to shelter areas and securing garbage containers. If these solutions don't work, many humane cat-deterrent products are available in stores and online. Check the appendix for a list of simple solutions to common complaints. Remember that many cat nuisance cases are the result of neighbor disputes. Facilitating dialogue and mutually agreed-upon resolutions in those cases is often a much more effective outcome than removing the cat(s) in question.

Concern: Welfare of cats

The idea that community cats are at great risk for suffering and untimely death if not admitted to a shelter is a long-standing one. However, a growing body of evidence suggests that this is not the case. Data from clinics that sterilized more than 100,000 cats nationwide revealed that they are generally fit and healthy, with less than one percent requiring euthanasia to end suffering (Wallace & Levy, 2006). Common feline diseases, such as feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) or feline leukemia virus (FeLV), occur at the same rate as in the pet cat population (Lee et al., 2002).

Concern: Welfare of wildlife

There are no easy answers to the issue of cat predation on wildlife. What to do about it has been a concern for more than 100 years. However, neither cats nor wild animals are well served by a polarized, divisive, and expensive "cats vs. wildlife" controversy. Practical solutions include humanely reducing cat populations using TNR and managing cats (individuals and colonies) so they do not impinge on designated wildlife areas and at-risk wildlife populations. Not all cat colony situations are the same. For example, cats may need to be removed when they congregate in or near a sensitive wildlife habitat, whereas they could be effectively managed behind a shopping center in a suburban town. When predation by community cats is an issue, respectful dialogue and productive collaboration between cat and wildlife advocates is essential. There are several examples of such dialogue (e.g. in Portland, Oregon, and New Jersey) that communities might seek to follow. It is not always easy to arrive at a solution that protects all interests to the greatest extent. Effective TNR programs seek to reduce the population of community cats, eventually bringing it to zero. Although TNR might not work as quickly as some would like, there are numerous successful examples of population reduction. Wildlife and cat advocates can also help protect wildlife by joining forces in non-controversial collaborative projects such as informing cat owners about keeping owned cats indoors, seeking support and funds for installing cat proof fences around sensitive natural areas, humanely relocating cat colonies that pose unacceptable risks to wildlife, and, of course, continuing community cooperation to improve the efficiency and economy of TNR programs.

TRAP-VACCINATE-ALTER-RETURN (TVAR) SUPPORT

For Charleston County, call consolidated dispatch at 843-743-7200. Animal control in most municipalities in Charleston will assist with trapping cats upon request. However, they do not trap large colonies and are restricted in the times of day and days of the week they can trap.

Citizens can rent traps from Charleston Animal Society for up to weeks with a \$75 deposit. This deposit is held in the event the trap is not returned so that Charleston Animal Society can replace it. Traps are subject to availability and only two can be rented at a time.

**we can
help**

Animal Resource Center
www.charlestonanimalsociety.org/GetPetHelp



Trapped cats can be turned over to Charleston Animal Society under their Free Roaming Cat program and be vaccinated and spayed/neutered. These cats can be picked back up by the trapper the following day. Cats not picked back up will be released by Charleston Animal Society if it is determined they are healthy and would not do well in the adoption program.

For assistance with mass trapping colonies of cats you can request assistance from Charleston Animal Society. Requests can be made by calling Aldwin Roman, Director of Anti-Cruelty and Outreach at 843-329-1545 or by email at aroman@charlestonanimalsociety.org. Requests are taken on a case by case basis and subject to staff and equipment availability. All trapped cats will be spayed/neutered, vaccinated, microchipped, ear tipped and returned to the location they were trapped.

First and foremost, we recommend that all pet owners consult with their veterinarian. The information contained herein is meant to be a resource. It is not exhaustive, nor does it indicate an endorsement or recommendation from Charleston Animal Society. Please use your own due diligence in researching these sources and making the best choice for your pet(s).

We'd like to give thanks and credit to the following organizations, whose published resources were utilized in addition to staff research for this compilation:

Nevada Humane Society www.nevadahumanesociety.org
Best Friends Animal Society www.bestfriends.org
Alley Cat Allies www.alleycat.org
HSUS www.humanesociety.org

If you still need assistance after reviewing the information on our website, please either email or call our Animal Resource Center at help@charlestonanimalsociety.org or (843) 329-1554.

**Animal Resource Center
www.charlestonanimalsociety.org/GetPetHelp**