

## Community Cat Management

*(Updated 06/2024)*

The ASV supports strategies for the humane management of community cat populations, including trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR), return to field (RTF) or, as a last resort, community cat relocation (CCR) programs.<sup>1</sup> Comprehensive community cat management also includes advocating for cat welfare, supporting the bond between caregivers and cats, communicating with the public, and engaging existing community members, programs, and assets. The ASV supports legislative changes that encourage TNVR and RTF.

Community cat programs provide effective alternatives to shelter intake. These programs prevent euthanasia of otherwise healthy cats, and reduce suffering and mortality of kittens born outside.<sup>2</sup> Targeted TNVR helps control overpopulation of cats in particular areas, and RTF programs facilitate reunification of outdoor cats with their caretakers.<sup>3-5</sup>

Programs are encouraged to have clear missions and program objectives as well as well-defined target populations and communities served. At minimum, community cat programs should offer:

- Affordable, accessible high-quality spay-neuter
- Core vaccination (FVRCP)
- Rabies vaccination where endemic (regardless of age)
- Identification (ear tipping and tattoo)<sup>6</sup>
- Humane euthanasia to alleviate irredeemable suffering

Operational considerations should include:

- Targeted services based on program objectives (e.g., geographic, areas of high shelter intake, individual welfare concerns, sensitive wildlife populations)
- Scope and duration aligned with program objectives (e.g. population reduction)<sup>7</sup>
- Strategic use of financial and veterinary resources (e.g., not testing for FeLV/FIV<sup>8</sup>)
- Plans for management of cats on pathways other than immediate return-to-field (e.g., kittens within the critical socialization period, unsocialized nursing queens, and cats with health concerns)
- Euthanasia criteria
- Regular assessment of relevant metrics and program outcomes

Written policies should be established proactively to guide decision-making around these considerations.

Practices must be established to maintain good welfare for cats requiring temporary holding for treatment and recovery. Feral animals must not be housed in the shelter except for the brief period of time related to the delivery of veterinary care.<sup>1</sup>

## References

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8. Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Veterinary Task Force to Advance Spay-Neuter, Griffin B, Bushby PA, et al. The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' 2016 Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2016;249:165–188.

## Glossary

- Feral Cat – unsocialized “wild” domestic cats living outside without human contact; fearful and avoidant of human interaction much like other wildlife species
- Return to Field (RTF) and Shelter Neuter Return (SNR) – outcome process of sterilizing unowned cats and returning them to their home situation after shelter intake
- Community Cat – all outdoor dwelling cats regardless of socialization status; community cats may be owned, unowned, free-roaming, or feral
- Trap-Neuter-Release or Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Release (TNR or TNVR) – process by which cats are proactively trapped in the community and sterilized, vaccinated, and returned to the site of origin