

**Middlesex County Public Health Department's Position on
Trap, Neuter & Release (TNR) Programs also known as Stray Cat Colonies**

Definitions

Feral Cats - cats that are descendants of strays living in the wild.

"Managed Colonies" - through a trap/neuter/release program (TNR) controlling colonies of stray cats at a specified location for an undetermined period of time.

Trap/Neuter/Release Program - Trapping stray cats. Evaluating and vaccinating those cats for disease by a Veterinarian. Euthanizing seriously sick cats. Spaying or neutering the cats, and releasing them to a colony of cats where they are fed and watched until they either die or leave the colony.

Facts –

1. Rabies is a real threat in feral cat colonies. Properly vaccinating cats in a colony is difficult because:
 - A. Cats are difficult to trap.
 - B. It is hard to monitor rabies booster vaccinations in cat colonies.
 - C. Generally, whole colonies cannot be vaccinated.
2. Rabies cases are more prevalent for cats than dogs (2002 – dogs: 99, cats: 299)
3. Rabies is lethal if not detected and treated immediately.
4. Outdoor cats are at risk of contact with rabid wild animals such as raccoons, skunks, foxes and bats.
5. Cats can also transmit other diseases such as plague, cat scratch disease, cryptosporidiosis, salmonellosis, campylobacteriosis, leptospirosis, toxoplasmosis, toxocariasis, ringworm, tapeworms, roundworms, hookworm and Q fever to humans. (www.cdc.gov/healthypets/animals/cats.htm) These diseases can be acquired from prey animals and transmitted to humans.
6. Feline veterinary care for roundworm, ringworm, fleas, ticks, ear mites, abscesses, respiratory infections, urinary tract and eye infections is difficult in cat colonies because of lack of funding and volunteers.

7. A TNR program in our jurisdiction was approved by the Township Council, against the Health Department's recommendations. Approximately six months later, this Council ordered the removal of the cat colony because the cat population did not decrease and numerous complaints were filed by local residents.

8. TNR is also opposed by the American Bird Conservancy, American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians, the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, the New York Coalition for Animal Rights, and the Florida Animal Control Association.

9. Managed cat colonies are not a humane solution for the cats because they still face a multitude of hazards including cars, poisoning, animal attacks and human abuse.

POSITION

Based on the above facts, the Middlesex County Public Health Department is opposed to the trap, neuter and release program (TNR) as a solution to the feral cat problem. The Department's primary role is to prevent disease rather than respond after it has happened. It is the Department's position that feral/stray cats be trapped, receive proper veterinary care, and, if healthy, be adopted out.

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