
Trap-Neuter-Return(TNR) Program for Feral Cats

Goals

- To reduce the feral cat population in Eau Claire County in a safe and humane manner using a Trap - Neuter - Return (TNR) program
- To relocate those cats in nuisance areas so that they may safely live out their lives without threat of death or injury
- To minimize the need for euthanasia of feral cats at ECCHA and decrease the risk of personal injury to the staff and volunteers by providing a safe alternative environment for the cats

How does it work?

The Eau Claire County TNR program is for true feral cats in Eau Claire County. A feral cat is not domesticated, or it has reverted to the wild state and has characteristics of wild animals. Any domestic friendly adult cat that can be picked up, approaches people, meows, and acts tame will not be considered for this program. Kittens under 12 weeks will not be considered either. All cats or kittens of this nature that are part of a feral colony and are unaltered will be evaluated, kept at the shelter, and treated as a surrendered cat with the potential to be adopted into a home. ECCHA does not advocate the keeping of outdoor *domestic* cats. Our goal is to limit the number of true feral cats by controlling the population with spaying and neutering, limiting the spread of disease through vaccinations, and educating the public about outdoor feral cats.

- Once a colony has been accepted into the program, cats are trapped by ECCHA staff and volunteers, municipal officials, feral cat caretakers, or those designated and trained by ECCHA, using humane box traps.
- Every cat is spayed/neutered prior to returning to the colony. ECCHA coordinates with local veterinarians to provide this. Every cat has their left ear tipped for easy identification as a vaccinated and altered colony member. Each cat is given a rabies vaccination and a distemper vaccination. No asymptomatic cat is tested or vaccinated for Feline Leukemia (FeLV) or Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) unless specifically requested by the landowner. Any landowner requesting that the colony be tested and or vaccinated for FeLV and FIV will make arrangements to do so through ECCHA and will be responsible for the costs of such tests and vaccinations.
- ECCHA holds the altered cats at our facility for a minimum of three days to ensure there are no complications from the surgery. Then the cats are returned to the colony which they originated from.

- Colonies on private land under private ownership remain the responsibility of the landowner or his/her designee. The caregivers are responsible for feeding the cats and providing appropriate shelter as necessary. Regular monitoring of the colonies is required to watch the health and number of the colony.
- Cats that are trapped and tame are deemed “stray” (rather than “feral”) and are processed through ECCHA. All reasonable attempts are made to locate the cat’s original home. If all attempts fail, tame cats will be placed up for adoption at ECCHA. Those cats that are deemed feral will be altered and returned to the colony upon agreement from the landowner or placed in a relocated colony managed by ECCHA.
- Relocation of cats is a last resort and will only be done under the following circumstances:
 - (1.) The feral cat arrives at the ECCHA from unknown origin and is not suitable for adoption due to behavioral concerns. This is not to include cats that have minor behavioral concerns (ie. not using the litter box) but are otherwise tame.
 - (2.) The feral cat is trapped in a location not suitable for return because of dangers related to that location (ie. traffic, complaints from neighbors, etc).
 - (3.) The feral cat was trapped on public property not sanctioned by the municipality as a suitable or acceptable location for return. Cats going to relocated colonies will be kept in a temporary shelter on the property where the colony is located for the period of not less than two weeks and not more than three weeks in order to acclimate them to their new location.

Definitions:

Eartipping: a technique of painlessly removing a quarter inch off the top of the feral cat’s left ear while the cat is anesthetized for sterilization; it is the universal symbol of and the only proven way to identify a feral cat that has been evaluated, vaccinated and sterilized

Feral Cat: a domestic cat that was lost or abandoned and has reverted to a wild state, or a cat that was born to a stray or feral mother and has had little or no human contact; adult feral cats are usually impossible to tame

Feral Cat Colony: a group of free-roaming cats living in a specific geographic area

Humane Box Trap: a metal wire box rigged so that when an animal steps into it, the door closes, preventing the animal from leaving; these traps do not cause any pain to the animal

Managed Feral Cat Colony: a group of feral cats living together in which all cats have been sterilized and vaccinated and are provided daily food and shelter by a

volunteer caregiver

Nuisance Location: any place where cats are found that is not safe for them, due to environmental concerns and/or clashes with humans or other animals

Stray Cat: a domestic cat that strayed from home and has become lost or abandoned but can usually be re-socialized

Trap - Neuter - Return (TNR): a non-lethal sterilization method to reduce the numbers of feral cats in the environment both immediately and long term; a comprehensive on-going program in which stray and feral cats already living outdoors in cities, towns and rural areas are humanely trapped, then evaluated, vaccinated and sterilized by veterinarians; kittens and tame cats are adopted out to suitable homes; healthy adult cats too feral for adoption are returned to their familiar habitat or to a protected area under the lifelong care of volunteers

Vacuum Effect: the phenomenon created by removing cats from an environment in which they have found food and shelter; new, unsterilized cats quickly move into the environment to take advantage of the resources and breed to the capacity of the area

How can you get assistance?

If you are a resident of Eau Claire County and are caring for a feral cat colony or have a problem with feral cats in your area, please contact us to find out how you can utilize our TNR program. Call our Humane Officer at (715) 839-4747 ext. 24 or email officer@eccha.org