



Volusia County
FLORIDA

Volusia County Animal Services

Trap/Neuter/Return with Return to Field Program



Frequently Asked Questions about TNR/RTF

In January 2015 Volusia County Animal Services, with County Council's approval, working in conjunction with Concerned Citizens for Animal Welfare, implemented a trap/neuter/return (TNR) with return-to-field (RTF) program as a solution to the ever growing number of free-roaming or feral cats that reside in Volusia County.



For years these cats have been trapped, transported to area humane societies, and euthanized. This method has been unsuccessful in reducing the numbers of cats. Scientific evidence indicates that removing feral cat populations only opens up the habitat to an influx of new cats, either from neighboring territories or born from survivors. Each time cats are removed, the population will rebound through a natural phenomenon known as the "vacuum effect," drawing the County into a costly, endless cycle of trapping and killing.

A combination of both TNR and RTF creates the greatest opportunity to maximize cat welfare, reduce nuisance concerns, and minimize reproduction. Bringing all the players in the County together to form a common strategy will accelerate the progress in lowering euthanasia and reducing the free-roaming cat population.



**To learn more and/or register
for this free program contact:**

www.ccfaw.org

386/405-1559

Email: ccfaw@ccfaw.org

~ What is the “Vacuum effect”? ~

This occurs when a colony of cats is completely removed from a location, but the food source and shelter remain. A vacuum is created and before long, other cats in the area move in to take advantage of the resources. If the cats are intact, the colony will grow right back to the level the available resources can support.

~ How can the cat overpopulation problem be solved? ~

Spaying or neutering feral or stray cats using trap/neuter/return combined with return to field will reduce their numbers. Spaying or neutering pet cats before they reproduce will reduce their numbers and help stop pet overpopulation.

~ Is There a Difference Between a Stray Cat and a Feral Cat? ~

Yes. A feral cat is primarily wild-raised or has adapted to feral life, while we define a stray cat as someone's pet who has become lost or has been abandoned. Stray cats are usually tame and comfortable around people. They will frequently rub against legs and exhibit behaviors such as purring and meowing. In contrast, feral cats are notably quiet and keep their distance. Stray cats will also often try to make a home near humans—in car garages, front porches or backyards. Most are completely reliant on humans as a food source and are not yet able to cope with life on the streets.

~ What is Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR)? ~

Trap/Neuter/Return is the humane, effective approach for feral cats. Feral cats are humanely trapped, spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and eartipped (the universal symbol of a neutered and vaccinated cat), and then returned to their outdoor home. Socialized cats and kittens are adopted into homes. The colony's population stabilizes—no more kittens!

Trap/Neuter/Return improves their lives and their relations with the community: the behaviors and stresses associated with mating stop.

~ What is a “cat colony”? ~

A cat colony is one or more free-roaming cats that live in close proximity to each other. Colonies are often formed around shelter and a food source.

~ How Does TNR Help Feral Cats? ~

Through TNR, feral cats can live out their lives without adding to the homeless cat population. By stabilizing the population, cats will naturally have more space, shelter and food, and fewer risks of disease. After being spayed or neutered, cats living in colonies tend to gain weight and live healthier lives. By neutering male cats, you also reduce the risk of injury and infection, since intact males have a natural instinct to fight with other cats. Spaying also means female cats do not go into heat. That means they attract fewer tom cats to the area, reducing fighting.

~ How Does TNR Benefit the Community? ~

TNR helps the community by stabilizing the population of the feral colony and, over time, reducing it. At the same time, nuisance behaviors such as spraying, excessive noisemaking and fighting are largely eliminated, and no more kittens are born. Yet, the benefit of natural rodent control is continued.

~ What is Volusia County Animal Services' role in the TNR program? ~

The Volusia County mobile spay/neuter bus "Pet Vet Cruiser" designates three days/month for spay/neuter surgeries, rabies and distemper vaccinations, ear tipping and pain medications at no cost for registered colony caregivers. Appointments are made by contacting CCFAW at 386/405-1559 or emailing ccfaw@ccfaw.org. VCAS will also provide the use of our cat traps when needed.

~ How can I join the TNR Program? ~

Volusia County Animal Services has partnered with the non-profit group "Concerned Citizens for Animal Welfare" (CCFAW) to coordinate the TNR program. The first step to join this program is to register as a colony care giver by contacting CCFAW at 386/405-1559 or by email: ccfaw@ccfaw.org. They will provide you with instruction and information regarding this program.

~ Why do I need to register in order to participate in this program? ~

Concerned Citizens for Animal Welfare is the lead non-profit agency who has partnered with Volusia County Animal Services to work toward the common goal of reducing the cat over-population problem in Volusia County. Upon registering with CCFAW you will be provided instruction regarding utilizing the county's free TNR spay/neuter program. They will set your appointment date/time and be available for questions regarding any issues you might encounter with the trapping process. They will provide Volusia County Animal Services with a list of those who have registered with them. This information will be used on the surgery date to verify they have qualified to participate in this program and have been provided the necessary information regarding the program and also as a way for animal control officers to contact them if an ear-tipped cat is picked up in the area of their registered colony.

~ What is Ear-Tipping and Why Is It Important? ~

Ear-tipping is a widely accepted means of marking a feral cat that has been spayed or neutered. It also often identifies them as being part of a colony with a caretaker. Ear-tipping is the humane surgical removal of the top quarter-inch of the ear. The procedure is performed by a licensed veterinarian, typically during the spay/neuter surgery. Ear-tipping is completely safe and rarely requires special aftercare. Ear-tipping is especially important as it prevents an already spayed or neutered cat the stress of re-trapping and, more important, an unnecessary surgery.

~ What is Return to Field? ~

A free-roaming (feral) cat is trapped by a private citizen or a Volusia County Animal Control Officer. Although the cat is perfectly healthy, it is feral and unadoptable. Even if the cat was friendly, the shelter may have no space or foster home to hold it. The traditional practice in these circumstances is to euthanize the cat after any mandatory holding period. With a Return to Field program, instead of being taken to a shelter to be euthanized, the cat is transported by the Animal Control Officer, while still in the trap, to the Pet Vet Cruiser, where it is spayed or neutered, vaccinated and ear-tipped. Concerned Citizens for Animal Welfare is contacted and the cat is picked up by a care-giver. After a period of recovery the cat is transported back to the general area of capture and released.

~ What are the benefits to Return to Field? ~

An immediate and often dramatic reduction of the number of cats transported to the humane societies for euthanasia is the most direct benefit of Return to Field. This reduction will save tax-payer dollars by decreasing the County's monthly humane society bill as well as saving cat lives.

~ Are all cats that are trapped or captured returned to the general area of capture? ~

Only unidentified, healthy stray cats in good body condition and old enough to fend for itself will be spayed/neutered and returned to the general area of capture. Volusia County Animal Control Officers will transport the sick, malnourished, injured or declawed cats to the humane society. The health status of the cats is taken as direct evidence they have access to sufficient food and shelter to maintain condition, provided they are returned promptly to the same location where they were found.

