



COMMUNITY CAT MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

1. **Good cat colonies make good neighbors.** The goal is to create a harmonious relationship between community cats and the people and businesses around them. In well-managed colonies, cats are like the perfect roommate – quiet, seldom seen, and without annoying habits. The only way to achieve this is through trap-neuter-return (TNR) and responsible colony management.
2. **Why TNR?** Unsterilized colonies present a host of animal welfare concerns, including high kitten mortality, cats getting hit by cars, yowling, fighting, and spraying which are behaviors that accompany mating. Sterilization dramatically reduces many of these issues while ultimately reducing the cat population.
3. **Vacuum Effect:** If cats are removed from their outdoor home, it creates a territorial opening, or vacuum, that will not remain empty. Removing cats from an area might cause a temporary decrease in the cat population, but more cats will take their place – and it won't take long. Catching and killing cats is futile. It is an expensive, deadly cycle which yields no long-term benefits and creates tremendous ill-will with the community. TNR is the only way to stabilize cat populations humanely and effectively.
4. **The importance of Cat Colony Caretakers:** Well-meaning people will often dump food for feral cats in a commercial area or leave garbage lying about. They often set up cardboard boxes and plastic bins and the like. These feline shantytowns draw unnecessary attention to the cats and often trigger complaints. Business owners and customers associate the mess with the cats. Instead of haphazardly feeding, responsible caretakers set up permanent feeding stations in discreet locations without the cats' territory, keeping in mind that where the cats eat and find shelter is where they'll spend most of their time. Permanent weatherproof cat stations and shelters will not be an eyesore. Simply changing how and where the cats are fed can resolve complaints. Caretakers ideally feed during daylight hours and do not overfeed to avoid attracting wildlife and keep feeding stations clean. By feeding daily on a regular schedule, caretakers can monitor the health

of the cats and spot any newcomers who may need to be sterilized. This also allows us to identify and trap and tame cats or kittens that can be adopted out through our pet adoption center in downtown Oakdale.

5. **Feeding Bans Do Not Work.** It is essential for ASTRO to have permission to feed and care for the cat colony in order to monitor and maintain it. Even the strictest feeding bans have been scientifically proven to be ineffective. Feeding bans actually encourage cats to roam more in search of food, making them more visible. Feeding bans discourage the practice of TNR and actually punish the very people who are working to improve conditions for the cats and community. Feeding bans are also difficult to enforce while not addressing the real core problem which is the need to stabilize the colony through TNR. Please see the attached Position Statement from Alley Cat Guardians for more detail on this issue.
6. **Positive visible presence.** Anyone caring for feral cat colonies and practicing TNR should be open and transparent about their practices. Communication with all stakeholders is vital. Signage should be placed in the area stating “These feral cats are being fed and cared for by ASTRO Foundation.” Partnering with a responsible animal welfare organization is good for the community and public relations.

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