

Pacific Animal Foundation

W W W . P a c i f i c A n i m a l . o r g

So, Why Should We Help Feral Cats . . . ?

By Lana Simon

Well, if you have even one ounce of compassion in your body you already know the answer! You can stop reading this article now if you want. And . . . THANK YOU . . . for your kind-heartedness. You make the world a better place.

There are some, however, who need to know the pragmatic reasons for investing any dollars or time in assisting feral cat work and we can supply those answers right here!

The proven and successful practice of TRAP/NEUTER/RETURN ("TNR") means a 'win win' situation for any community that embraces TNR. How? you ask. There are very valid reasons why we should, as a community, support TNR and those caregivers who comb the back alleys and industrial areas, and help in residential neighbourhoods when feral cats and kittens have been noticed.

Almost every municipality in BC has an 'animal control category' in its municipal budget, a line item that the municipality earmarks for enforcing bylaws governing animals in the community such as stray dogs (and sometimes but not always, cats), enforcing 'on leash' parks and trails, investigating barking dog complaints, issuing dog licences, and picking up dead animals from the municipal streets. Some municipalities have also budgeted for 'animal welfare' and have a municipal shelter but many have not. 'Animal control' and 'animal welfare' have two separate and distinct agendas.

If your municipality operates a shelter and accepts stray and surrendered cats, then taxpayers of a municipality are funding that facility. If the number of cats and kittens increases each year, that municipal animal budget may also require an increase to cover the costs of spaying/neutering, vaccines, litter, medical care, euthanasia and disposal costs, kennel staff, and building maintenance.

TNR significantly and beneficially impacts the number of feral kittens and cats being surrendered to shelters by REDUCING (humanely) the numbers being born on the street and surrendered to municipal shelters. Lower intake for the shelter = lower costs for the municipal budget.

The **business case results** for a community practicing TNR:

1. Fewer numbers of feral kittens born on the street;
2. Fewer numbers of feral kittens being surrendered to municipal pounds and shelters;
3. Less overcrowding at shelters, reducing disease and spay/neuter & vaccine costs;
4. Less killing of cats because of no kennel space ('genuine euthanasia is a medical decision and is always done in an individual animal's best interest'. Killing for space is NOT euthanasia*.);
5. Less lethal drug and disposal costs because no killing for overcrowding or because the cat is feral;
6. More shelter staff time and resources for existing cats, dogs, and other animals - ie. Dog walking, grooming, adoptions, fundraising events;
7. Fewer complaint calls for municipal shelter staff.

The **compassionate case results** for a community practicing TNR:



Kittens from a feral mom – off the street to be adopted and now not adding to the overpopulation.

1. Feral cats living in a community receiving assistance from feral cat advocates who trap the cats, have them spayed or neutered, vaccinated, dewormed, defleaed, and tattooed. They are returned to their habitat location but are now healthier and not endlessly reproducing.
2. Residents often working together to make shelters and create feeding schedules in the neighbourhood.
3. Greater community and volunteer support. Killing feral cats is 'control' and TNR is 'welfare'. Community and volunteer support is much more likely if compassion is displayed.

As more concrete evidence is presented that the grassroots feral cat rescue groups are indeed having a positive effect in **humanely** reducing the feral cat numbers to the benefit of communities, the large animal organizations in the USA and Canada are recognizing and acknowledging the practice of TNR.

Did you know that: Organic farmers list feral cats under their rodent control methods when registering with the United States Dept. of Agriculture.*

*(Source – from Alley Cat Allies)

It is a proven fact that cats are unmatched when it comes to controlling rat infestations. The "greening" of any city must include . . . using [feral] cats as a protocol and removing "pest control" poisons from our streets and businesses. . . It is time city hall acknowledges that the feral cat is a benefit and wonderful natural resource that protects the health of our communities and the environment at large."**

** (Source – City Ferals promotes environmentally friendly felines by Lisa Warren – Best Friends Magazine – Sept/Oct 2010)

Municipalities should earmark a portion of their animal control budget for TNR and partner with local TNR groups. It's a positive step that is long overdue.