

# Oklahoma City Animal Welfare



## What do I do about problem cats in my community?

### Community cats and TNR

OKC Animal Welfare recognizes that free-roaming cats are in our community. Currently, there are no ordinances that cover keeping a cat indoors. Our field services pick up stray cats that are ill, injured or involved in a cruelty case, or part of a bite, only. We believe the issues of outdoor cats require a community response. That is why the OKC Animal Shelter offers the Community Cat Program to do trap-neuter and return. The program identifies cats in the community that are in the need of spay/neuter, gets them sterilized, identified and prepares them to be returned to their community with the goal of preventing overpopulation and managing the outdoor cat problem. In time, the colony will die out and the situation resolved. In addition, tame cats may be adopted into permanent homes. TNR helps with too many cats, but also helps to stop undesirable behaviors such as loud mating, fighting and spraying.

TNR is the only long-term solution for controlling the overpopulation of feral cats. Attempted eradication of the cats, by starvation or by rounding up and killing, will simply backfire. Studies show that removing feral cats from an environment creates a “vacuum effect.” The area where the cats were removed will quickly fill with new cats taking advantage of whatever

meager food source is available (i.e., leftover food in dumpsters, small rodents and insects, etc.) These new and unsterilized cats will quickly reproduce to the capacity of the site and the cycle of breeding will continue.

Through TNR, cats are humanely trapped and sterilized. Feral, thus unadoptable, cats are placed back into the environment in which they were living. Volunteer caretakers then provide food, water, and clean, unobtrusive shelters for the cats, continuously monitoring their health.

Cats that have been sterilized are ear tipped — one centimeter is removed from the tip of the left ear to provide identification of cats that are members of colonies. Friendly adult cats and tamable kittens are placed in adoptive homes, whenever possible, which can result in as much as a 50 percent reduction in the colony.

Some people cite diseases, such as toxoplasmosis, as serious health concerns caused by feral cats and thus the reasoning behind their needed elimination. However, humans only contract toxoplasmosis when they ingest feline fecal matter, not through direct contact with cats. Ingesting undercooked meat products is actually a more common cause of this disease. All cats that are part of a TNR colony or a community cat program are vaccinated for rabies as part of the program.



OKC Animal Welfare, 2811 SE 29<sup>th</sup> Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73129  
Call 405.297.2255 to report animal welfare concerns  
[www.okc.gov/animalwelfare](http://www.okc.gov/animalwelfare)  
[awinfo@okc.gov](mailto:awinfo@okc.gov)

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Jurisdictions that have implemented feral cat programs have reported a substantial drop in all animal control-related problems, especially in the area of citizen complaints about feral cats. Most of the objectionable behavior such as yowling, fighting, soiling, and wandering is solved by sterilization.

Trap and kill methods are not only ineffective but also unpopular with the general public. It has been shown that most people prefer a humane and compassionate alternative, especially one that is successful and cost-effective. Your jurisdiction is fortunate to have caring individuals who are willing to help with such a plan.

### OKCAW Community Cat program

Available to any free-roaming cat that is feral (wild) or a stray that is not tame. They live in alleyways, parking lots, vacant lots, backyards and lots of other places. Prior to the community cat program, cats were euthanized when they were taken to the OKC Animal Shelter. Now they will instead be spayed/neutered, vaccinated, ear-tipped and returned to the area they came from in an effort to control the overpopulation of cats in the community.

### How the program works

- A citizen traps a cat, brings it to the shelter and signs a form giving permission to put the cat into the program. OKCAW will loan you a trap if needed when participating in this program.
- We will have the cat spayed/neutered, shots administered, and the ear clipped to show an ear-tip for identification.
- We will return the cat to the area it came from so it can continue to live as a community cat.
- You will see a decrease of cats and problems caused by cats in your area.

### The benefits

- It costs OKC taxpayers less to fix and return thousands of cats rather than euthanize them.
- The population will be controlled with no new litters of kittens.
- Annoying behaviors like yowling, fighting and marking territory will stop or decrease dramatically.
- The cats are vaccinated against diseases.

For more info about the OKC Community Cat program or our spay/neuter services, contact 297-3100 or [awinfo@okc.gov](mailto:awinfo@okc.gov).



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