Review of Feral Cat TNR Programs

03/07/2022



What is a Trap Neuter Return (TNR)

- Trap–Neuter–Return (TNR), also known as trap–neuter–release, is a controversial method that attempts to manage populations of feral domestic cats.
  - The process involves:
    1. Cats live-trapped
    2. Spayed or neutered (aka: desexed)
    3. Ear-tipped for identification
    4. Vaccinated (if possible)
    5. Released back into their colony where they were originally captured

Both Sides Can Provide Supporting Evidence

FOR

- Provides effective control
- Sterile cats don't prey on wildlife
- Humane / Non -Lethal
- Vaccinate eliminates public health concern
- Sterile cats are good citizens

AGAINST

- Long term, 71-94% of colony
- Studies show wildlife predation
- Inhumane / Injuries, short lives
- Not all diseases are vaccine preventable, boosters challenging
- Property rights

Overview of Positions by Organizations

- **American Bird Conservancy** - Does Not Support, Wildlife Concerns
- **American Society for Prevention and Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)** - Supports
- **American Veterinarian Medical Association -** Neutral
- **Audubon Society -** Does Not Support, Wildlife Concerns
- **Humane Society of the United States -** Supports
- **People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) - Limited Support –** Unless can be released away from roads, people, other animals

Current City of Joplin Ordinances

Current Ordinances do not specifically prohibit the practice of TNR although some would need to be modified.

- **18-01** Animal at large definition does not include cats
- **18-11** Prohibits trapping except for wild animals by property owners
- **18-92** Authorizes impoundment of stray cats considered stray or at large
- **18-95** Prohibits owners to allow cats to defecate on property of another person
- **18-96** Requires cats allowed outdoors to be sterilized
- **18-97** Outlaws the feeding of stray cats

Current City of Joplin Cat Program

- Cats are not actively sought, responded to on a complaint basis
- Traps are offered first come, first serve
- Traps are placed on private property of the complainant
- Traps are checked daily
- Traps not set in extreme weather
- Captured cats are taken to the Joplin Humane Society and held for 7 days, if not claimed become the property of the Humane Society

Current City Program Continued

- Many unclaimed cats that can be socialized are transferred to the KC Pet Project by the Joplin Humane Society and offered for adoption with high adoption rates
- Low number of cats kept in Joplin due to low adoption demand
- Calendar year 2021 there were 166 cats euthanized originating from Joplin, considered feral / stray

Cat Numbers Received by City of Joplin

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total Cats	1823	1477	1365	1426	1815	1596	1515
Stray Cats	1415	1216	1075	1103	1291	1037	1063
Give Up Cats	408	261	290	323	524	559	452

Comparison Cities

- Liberty, Missouri
- Neosho, Missouri
- Pittsburg, Kansas
- Springfield, Missouri
- St. Joseph, Missouri
- Webb City, Missouri
- Bentonville, Arkansas
- Branson, Missouri
- Carthage, Missouri
- Fort Smith, Arkansas (unable to contact)
- Jefferson City, Missouri
- Fayetteville, Arkansas

Jurisdictions Without Cat Ordinances

City of Pittsburg, Kansas

- No city ordinance that addresses cats
- Past TNR organization, not currently active

City of Branson, Missouri

- No ordinance to address cats other than the ability to quarantine in the event of bite and requires rabies vaccine

Jurisdictions With Trapping Programs, No Formal TNR

- **Liberty, MO**
  - Trap loan program with deposit
- **Neosho, MO**
  - Trapping by city on limited scale
- **Springfield, MO**
  - Private traps can be used with permit
  - TNR program operates in city, limited in size, city not affiliated with group

Trapping, No Formal TNR Continued

- **St. Joseph, Missouri**
  - Citizen trapping program, deposit program
- **Webb City, Missouri**
  - Trap loan program, private traps allowed
- **Bentonville, Arkansas**
  - Trap loan program, private traps allowed
  - TNR program being considered

Cities With TNR Ordinances

Carthage, Missouri

- Not Active

Fayetteville, Arkansas

- Not Active

Jefferson City, Missouri

- Active TNR Program

Example - Carthage, Missouri

- TNR Program not currently active
- City approves partner agency colony caretaker / sponsor
- Caretaker required to vaccinate, maintain records, ear tip, sterilize, feed, water, shelter, provide medical attention
- Sets goal of 80% of colony altered
- City maintains ability to remove cats if caretaker does not comply or fails to remove nuisance cats

Example - Fayetteville, Arkansas

- TNR Program not active
- Cats cannot run at large (exemption given for TNR colony)
- Citizens can trap nuisance cats on their property
- City can euthanize unclaimed animals after 5 days
- City approves sponsor not for profit agency
- Caretaker / sponsor must feed, vaccinate, adopt kittens, eartip, sterilize, provide annual reports

Example - Jefferson City, Missouri

- Jefferson City, Missouri
  - Active TNR program operated by a Not For Profit
  - Citizens with permit can trap feral cats
  - Residents not permitted to feed stray cats
  - City has ability to euthanize feral cats immediately
  - Community cat caretaker permit Issued to provide care 365 days per year
    - Feed, Medical, Shelter
  - Records must be maintained by sponsor including number of cats, death loss, number adopted

To implement TNR the following must be considered

- Where are traps set?
- Who is responsible for TNR program?
- Where and who neuters and spays?
- Who pays for expenses?
- Where will cats be released?
- Ability to address nuisance cats.
- Staff time to oversee program.
- Who is responsible for damage caused by feral cats?

Closing

- TNR typically managed by a permitted Not For Profit
- Only one surveyed jurisdiction reporting active program
- Research indicates 71% - 94% of colony must be sterilized for success
- Property rights / neighbor disputes should be considered
- Both sides of issue provide justification for their position
- For success, must be long term, committed, and community support
- Management and staff time (3 animal control officers, no designated supervisor)

Recommendation

- Based on the success of cat adoptions and current staffing levels the recommendation from the health department is to not adopt a TNR program at this time.

Closing

- Questions
- Further Guidance