

# Helping Homeless Cats

By The Humane Society of the United States  
May 3, 2009 - 8:16:23 AM



(HealthNewsDigest.com)-If you're feeding cats outdoors--whether tame or feral (not tame)--you're not alone. Experts say the welfare and management of these unneutered and unspayed cats is an issue in almost every community.

Problems associated with these cats include:

- a growing population
- frequent and loud noise from fighting and mating behavior
- strong foul odors from unneutered male cats spraying to mark their territory
- visible suffering from dying kittens and injured adults.

In addition to nuisance calls about these problems, shelters in a community with large homeless cat populations usually experience higher animal control costs due to trapping efforts and/or costs associated with caring for and euthanizing homeless cats. Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) is an effective method for improving the lives of feral cats and reducing their numbers.

The cats targeted for TNR are feral cats. Feral cats are the offspring of lost or abandoned pet cats or other feral cats who are not spayed or neutered. They do not easily adapt or may never adapt to living indoors as pets in close contact with people.

At a minimum, feral cats who are part of a TNR program are spayed or neutered so they can no longer reproduce. In addition, they are vaccinated against rabies, surgically ear-tipped on one ear and returned to their territory. Ear-tipping is the universally recognized sign of a cat who has been TNRed.

Dedicated caretakers feed and provide shelter for these cats, monitor them for sickness and trap new cats who appear. If the captured cats are feral, they are TNRed; if the captured cats are lost or abandoned pet cats, they are reunited with their families or adopted into new homes. If they are kittens young enough to be socialized, they are also adopted.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) believes that cat overpopulation is a community-generated problem and that every community has a responsibility to work toward an effective long-term solution.

TNR of feral cats is part of that solution. In addition, pet cats must be spayed or neutered before they can reproduce at 5 months of age, kept indoors or safely confined to their property, provided with safety collars and ID and searched for immediately if they go missing.

To learn more about managing cat overpopulation, visit [www.humanesociety.org/feralcats](http://www.humanesociety.org/feralcats).

Animal shelters in a community with a large, unneutered feral cat population may experience higher animal control costs.

[www.HealthNewsDigest.com](http://www.HealthNewsDigest.com)