

## **On the Positive Side: You decide if the TNR method makes more sense**

**By Jake Sims for the Sun-News**

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A team comprised of individuals from several animal advocate groups, all members of the Coalition for Pets and People, is promoting the use of the trap, neuter and return method (TNR) as a more effective and humane way to handle community cat issues. After much review, discussion, statistical analysis and communication with TNR programs across the nation, the Coalition for Pets and People is supporting the effort to establish TNR as an alternative method to the existing trap and kill method. This effort is generating opposition from a few individuals who essentially feel cats should be eradicated— at least reading their arguments, one could conclude that is their goal. Basically, the opponents are saying our current trap and kill method of dealing with feral cats is fulfilling all the goals necessary to protect the community.

What are the goals of the trap and kill strategy? The first goal is to protect the health of humans from disease, especially rabies and other diseases transmittable between cats and humans. The second goal is to protect free-roaming cats from sickness, dangers of traffic, dogs and mean-spirited people.

The third goal is to reduce or eliminate the nuisances associated with cats coming into yards, making noise, marking territories and so on. Finally, to protect wildlife, particularly birds, from predators by substantially reducing or eliminating the cat population. Actually, those are also the goals of TNR and the development of managed efforts to achieve these goals. An important difference in the two strategies is TNR also stops the killing of healthy non-nuisance community cats.

How does trap, neuter and return measure up to achieve these goals?

1. All community cat colonies are to be part of a coordinated and managed program where all cats are spayed or neutered, receive vaccination against rabies, are microchipped and are monitored by caregivers. This provides improved public safety.
2. Due to the care they receive, the cats in the TNR program are healthier, safer and less inclined to roam extensively.
3. There is a dramatic reduction of unwanted litters of kittens to become ill and suffer or add to the existing numbers of cats contributing to the problems identified above.
4. Cat colony populations declines through attrition with reduction of births and the natural tendency of colony cats to protect their territories and resist newcomers.
5. Nuisance behavior such as howling, fighting and urine marking related to breeding declines.
6. Due to enhanced health and monitoring the risk of parasites, such as fleas and worms infecting household pets, is lessened.
7. There is a sharp reduction in killing healthy cats at the shelter.

How does the current trap and kill strategy compare?

1. In 2012, 3,754 cats were killed at the Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley last year, according to its 2012 annual report. Estimates of the total community or free roaming cat population depends on which organization's formula is used and could range from a low of 4,000 to a high of 60,000 for only Las Cruces, based on a formula developed by the American Veterinary Medical Association. Most likely a number around the 35,000 mark is closer. Since cat birth

reproduction rates are high, it seems unlikely that killing them is a solution. With an estimated minimal cost of \$215, according to the combined budgets reported for last year from the city and county animal control departments and ASCMV shelter operations.

This continues to rise for every cat that goes to the shelter, along with the failure of attaining real population control, trap and kill is a very expensive strategy.

2. There is no sterilization, medical or behavior remediation included in the currently employed trap and kill strategy.

You conclude, which is sense and which is nonsense?

Support common sense, go to [awaredac.com](http://awaredac.com) and sign the petition for TNR.

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