

**On the Positive Side: Trap-neuter-return takes time, but it can work**

**by Frank Bryce**

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LAS CRUCES - The most recent issue of Animal Sheltering magazine produced by the Humane Society of the United States looks at the success of trap-neuter-return feral cat management programs efforts throughout the nation. A program in Newburyport, Mass., conducted by the Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society, was cited. It is a mirror effort of what is being slowly implemented in both Las Cruces and El Paso. The numbers, however, were much smaller by comparison than we face here in either community.

With the trap-remove-euthanize as the usual route taken for feral cat control, the population repopulated within two years. The decision was made to try other efforts, so a trap-neuter-return program was instituted supported by volunteers and local veterinarians. Working to provide trapping, altering cats, providing basic medical care and vaccinations, and then releasing back into their home areas with the establishment of 14 feeding stations, the colonies stabilized and the last waterfront cats passed away in a decade.

Although a decade sounds like long time, the effort to simply establish a trap-neuter-return program has taken almost a decade in Las Cruces. El Paso Animal Services Director Kurt Fenstermacher recently reported El Paso was tackling their cat issues with a similar program after four decades of unsuccessful trap and kill efforts.

Targeted trap-neuter-return has proven successful from a historical approach. The September/October 2016 issue by the Humane Society of the United States states: "Targeted TNR focuses on maximum saturation of an area, whether it's a city block, neighborhood or entire ZIP code. At the community level, you stay in a geographic area until you've altered as many of the colonies as possible." Hopefully, our communities will embrace and implement the trap-neuter-return with similar success.

In an expansion of resources provided by the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico, volunteers joined the third annual Furfest in Truth or Consequences to provide low cost microchipping.

Veterinarian Jane Fassinger gave low cost vaccinations and the Community Animal Action Team served as hosts and conducted the event, which is designed to provide and promote pet owner responsibility and resource awareness for the community.

The event was at Armijo Family Park on the last day of the county fair. We provided 41 microchips to a wide assortment of furry friends, cats and dogs. Deb Peters, president of the Community Animal Action Team, was pleased with the turn out and the 20-plus pet advocacy organizations and vendors who participated.

The vaccination and microchip lines resulted in a hour-long wait but the weather, the enthusiasm and the service was exceptional. We hope the results continue and we plan to be there again next year.

Frank Bryce is president of HSSNM. Interested guest authors can contact HSSNM at 575-523-8020.