



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

**Spay/Neuter Clinic**  
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## **Controlling Feral Cat Populations**

**Trap, Test, Vaccinate, Alter and Release programs are the humane means for controlling feral cat populations.**

A feral cat overpopulation exists on the Peninsula. Feral cats are felines who, for the most part, are not socialized and avoid human contact. Feral cat colonies begin with free-roaming, unaltered and abandoned domestic cats; their colonies continue to draw new members as cats are left to fend for themselves, or in worse cases, dumped near known colonies.

PHS/SPCA pro-actively works toward humanely controlling these populations and serves as a resource for feral cat caregivers. Staff urge cats owners to keep cats indoors and provide info so that owners can enrich indoor cats' lives. Our humane officers use flyers and other tools to help local residents manage colonies humanely. We've partnered with the Homeless Cat Network, another local animal welfare organization, and host quarterly humane trapping workshops led by their volunteers.

For years, our organizational focus has been teaching and advocating TTVAR; that is, to trap, test, vaccinate, alter and release healthy feral cats back into their colony at its original location. Over time, this prevents colonies from growing and has shown to actually reduce numbers. Our clinic has altered thousands of feral cats at no cost or a greatly reduced cost to caregivers.

### **Implementing a Successful TTVAR Program**

Feral cats should be humanely trapped. After testing negative for feline leukemia and feline immunodeficiency virus (positive carriers are euthanized or isolated indoors for the rest of their lives), cats should be vaccinated for common feline diseases, including rabies (for cats four months of age and older) and spayed/neutered. After recovery, feral cats, identified as having been altered with an ear tip, are returned to the colony at its original location.

### **Establishing caregivers**

A caregiver and alternate caregiver must agree to take responsibility for the colony, recognizing the long-term commitment. Ideally, the landowner should take responsibility for the colony on his/her property. If more than one person is tending a colony, it is essential to coordinate efforts so that ongoing care will be available should one caregiver go on vacation, get sick or move from the area. In all cases, caregivers must be trained in humane trapping, recognition of symptoms of feline disease, principles of feral cat care and maintenance, and policies/guidelines regarding TTVAR control.

### **Trapping**

Withhold food eight to 10 hours prior to trapping; hungry cats are easier to trap. Don't leave a cat in an unprotected trap and never leave a cat where he/she might be threatened by other animals, people or weather. Once the cat is caught, immediately cover the trap with a towel or blanket to calm his/her fears. Do not trap in inclement weather; traumatized cats are very susceptible to heat stroke. Do not trap lactating mothers, and never tranquilize cats; they may move off before the

tranquilizer takes effect and can get into situations that may endanger their lives. Remember: persistence will pay off for hard-to-catch cats.

## **Colony maintenance**

Caregivers should audit colonies on a regular basis. Keep inventories and detailed records, including medical records and pertinent history regarding trapping, deaths and vaccinations. Cats who are losing fear of humans and kittens should be removed from the colony and evaluated for adoption. Any new cats attaching themselves permanently to the colony should be trapped and undergo the TTVAR procedure. Cats who become ill or injured should be trapped for treatment at a private veterinarian or euthanasia. Caregivers should determine a size “cap” for the colony, based on such factors as the nature of the surrounding environment and the availability of food and shelter. Under no circumstance should the colony be allowed to grow beyond the cap.

## **Food and shelter**

Caregivers should establish a daily feeding plan that includes holidays and weekends. Because cats are creatures of habit and because trapping is easier if the cats are fed at a regular place and time, PHS/SPCA discourages casual feeding. Food should be removed before nightfall in order to prevent attracting wildlife. Water should be provided in areas that lack a natural and safe supply. Discreet shelters should be provided at the colony. Like the feeding areas, these should be kept clean and tidy.

## **Other issues**

Under no circumstance should cats be trapped and released to other locations without the permission of both landowners. PHS/SPCA strongly discourages relocation of nonsocialized cats to other locations. In order to discourage abandonment of domestic cats, information regarding locations of colonies should not be released to the public.

For additional information or resources, please see [www.homelesscatnetwork.com](http://www.homelesscatnetwork.com).