

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

**Between the City of Dodgeville and the Iowa County Humane Society
Regarding Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) and Management of Community/Feral Cats**

Effective Date: 01/01/2026

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is entered into between the **City of Dodgeville** (“City”) and the **Iowa County Humane Society** (“ICHS”), a Wisconsin nonprofit animal shelter, to define roles and authorization regarding the humane management of community and feral cats, including cats brought to the shelter by residents.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this MOU is to allow ICHS to humanely trap, receive, spay/neuter, vaccinate, ear-tip, and **return** healthy community and feral cats to the location where they were found or captured — **including stray cats brought to ICHS by community members** that ICHS determines to be feral or unadoptable.

The City acknowledges that returning such cats to their place of origin as part of a TNR program **does not constitute a violation** of the City’s ordinances regarding animals running at large, abandonment, or improper release.

2. Definitions

For purposes of this MOU:

- **Community Cat:** Any outdoor, free-roaming, unowned cat, including feral, semi-feral, and stray cats.
 - **Feral Cat:** A cat that is unsocialized to humans, fearful in a shelter environment, or behaviorally unsuitable for adoption placement.
 - **Stray Cat:** A cat brought to ICHS by a member of the public without proof of ownership.
 - **TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return):** The practice of humanely trapping or receiving a community cat, sterilizing, vaccinating, ear-tipping, and returning the cat to its original location.
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3. City of Dodgeville Authorization

The City of Dodgeville hereby:

1. **Authorizes ICHS** to implement TNR for cats within City limits, including:
 - Cats humanely trapped by ICHS
 - Cats trapped by residents and brought to ICHS for the purpose of TNR
 - Stray cats delivered to ICHS that are determined by ICHS to be feral or unadoptable
 2. **Authorizes the return** of sterilized, vaccinated, ear-tipped cats to the specific outdoor location where they were found or picked up.
 3. Affirms that such return **does not violate** the City's ordinances related to:
 - Animals at large
 - Abandonment
 - Releasing animals
 - Harboring animals outdoors
 4. Acknowledges that TNR is a humane and effective management method supported by national standards (ASPCA, UW Shelter Medicine, Humane World for Animals).
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4. Responsibilities of ICHS

ICHS agrees to:

1. Accept stray cats brought in by community members **if capacity and staffing allow**.
 2. Evaluate each cat's behavior to determine if it is:
 - Suitable for adoption, **or**
 - Feral/unsocialized and appropriate for TNR.
 3. Provide sterilization, vaccination, and left ear-tipping for cats placed into the TNR program.
 4. Return healthy feral/unsocialized cats to the location where they were found, regardless of whether they were:
 - Brought in as strays
 - Trapped by ICHS
 - Trapped by community members for the purpose of TNR
 5. Maintain records for each cat processed through the TNR program.
 6. Decline to shelter or hold feral cats for adoption, as doing so is detrimental to their welfare and not consistent with best practices.
 7. Notify the City of any major public health concerns (suspected rabies, severe aggression, or other threats).
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5. Responsibilities of the City of Dodgeville

The City agrees to:

1. Recognize TNR as an approved, humane method of managing free-roaming cat populations.
 2. Permit ICHS to return TNR cats to their original outdoor locations.
 3. Ensure that City staff understand that **ear-tipped cats are part of an authorized TNR program** and not stray animals requiring impoundment.
 4. Provide clarification to residents that TNR is a City-supported program.
 5. Refer residents' feral cat concerns to ICHS when appropriate.
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6. Ownership and Liability

1. Cats processed through TNR **are not considered owned by ICHS**.
 2. ICHS is not responsible for long-term care, placement, or containment of community cats.
 3. The City agrees to hold ICHS harmless from liability arising from the natural behavior or location of community cats after they are returned outdoors.
 4. The act of returning a cat under this MOU is **not abandonment** and does not transfer ownership to ICHS.
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7. Stray Hold

The City acknowledges that:

1. Cats deemed feral or unsafe for adoption **may be exempt from traditional stray hold requirements**, as they are not suitable for adoption and are processed through TNR.
 2. This exemption is consistent with Wisconsin sheltering best practices and public safety considerations.
 3. Stray hold procedures will still be used for approachable, adoptable cats.
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8. Term and Termination

This MOU remains in effect until modified or terminated by either party with **30 days written notice**.

9. Signatures

City of Dodgeville

By: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Iowa County Humane Society

By: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____
