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Cat = 20 kittens a year

BARC ANIMAL SHELTER AND ADOPTIONS

About Trap-Neuter-Return Program



We love our TNR / Community cats and are grateful for fosters, BARC employees and rescue groups who help us take care of them. Recently we received a very much needed donation from the estate of Mr. Richard Matelske, a cat feeding station for our parking lot kitties. Special thank you to Kelli Matelske and Nela Brown from Frisky Paws Rescue for organizing the feeding station.

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What is a community cat?

"Community cat" is an umbrella definition that includes any *un-owned* cat. These cats may be "feral" (un-socialized) or friendly, may have been born into the wild or may be lost or abandoned pet cats. Some community cats are routinely fed by one or more community members, while others survive without human intervention. Whatever a cat's individual circumstances, the term "community cat" reflects the reality that for these cats, "home" is within the community rather than in an individual household.

A colony can range from 3-25 cats. Their locations vary. Community cat colonies can be in alleyways, parks, or neighborhoods. Members consist of adult females, their young, and some adult males.

What is Trap Neuter Return?

A Trap, Neuter, and Return (TNR) program is a program approved by the Director of BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions in which community cats are humanely trapped, evaluated, vaccinated, sterilized, and marked by an identifying notch in the left ear, all administered by a veterinarian, and returned to the trap location. TNR is a proven method that is both humane and effective. The colony population size remains stable. When all cats are spayed, neutered, and returned to a colony, the population size will gradually decrease as offspring are no longer produced. Because of the gradual decrease, the vacuum effect will not occur.

- [TNR] is not only the most humane method of preventing cats from entering the shelter system; it's the most effective. - [Best Friends Animal Society](#)

- "The programs and services of the No Kill Equation include a feral cat Trap-Neuter-Return program..." - [Nathan Winograd, National No-Kill Leader](#)

Why is TNR Beneficial to Houston's Community?

For a long time, "catch and kill" was a widely accepted method of managing community cat colonies. The cats were trapped and removed from their established colony to be euthanized. While this method causes an instant decrease in the overall colony numbers, *it is not effective over time*. Colonies subject to "catch and kill" typically end up increasing in number back to their original size as a result of what is known as the vacuum effect.

What is the vacuum effect? Community cat colonies, like other populations of animals in the wild, have a certain population size at which they are most stable. When the population size of a colony is drastically reduced in a short amount of time, the colony reacts by trying to return to the stable size. The remaining members of the colony increase mating activities in an effort to create more offspring and stabilize the colony population size. A reduction in size also opens the door for newcomers to the colony - other cats in the area may move in. Because of the vacuum effect, "catch and kill" has no lasting impact on the size of a community cat colony.

Once the community cats within a colony are spayed and neutered, not only will the population size gradually decrease, but the cats will also be healthier and coexist more peacefully within a neighborhood. Female cats, prevented from having any more litters, will be healthier. Male cats will gradually lose the urge to roam and fight, and will be less prone to injury. Behaviors associated with unaltered cats, such as yowling and marking territory with urine, will disappear.

What is the alternative to TNR?

BARC operates a very robust adoption program that is focused on saving lives by placing cats and kittens into forever homes. However, the open admission shelter takes in thousands more felines into the shelter annually than it can adopt out.

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BARC integrated an aggressive TNR program to provide additional alternatives to humanely putting them to sleep. If more animals are responsibly released back into their original environments through the TNR program, less animals are euthanized.

TNR is a widely accepted and supported effort to save lives, not only in Houston but around the country. For example, [UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine](#) recently published an [article supporting the initiative](#). Additionally, shelters across the state including [San Antonio's Animal Care Services](#) and national organizations such as [Best Friends Animal Society](#) and the National No-Kill movement support the initiative.

Does putting community cats back into the community increase the risk for birds and wildlife to be harmed?

It has been argued that cats should be collected from the community, impounded and euthanized in shelters to protect wildlife and public health. However, euthanizing or removing all community cats from an area may lead to an increased population of other non-native species with an even more detrimental effect.

There are many more cats in the community currently than BARC can take in over a short period of time. The TNR program will decrease the number of cats that could potentially harm birds and wildlife over time (refer to more information about the benefits of TNR above).

How can I keep unwanted community cats off of my property?

Remove all potential food sources from the property: This would include pet food for the resident's animals, meat scraps in compost, fallen fruit from trees, barbecue grills, excess bird food from birdfeeders and garbage. Garbage bags are very attractive to animals, so trash should be kept in containers with a secure lid, and put out in the morning of pick up to reduce the temptation for the animals.

Limit availability of water: Limit access to water features, pools and ponds with fencing. Remove or repair sources of standing water.

Remove or secure potential shelter areas: Secure access under houses, sheds, decks, porches and buildings with wire fencing. Open spaces beneath structures should be tightly screened with 1/4- or 1/3-inch galvanized hardware mesh. The bottom edge of the wire should be buried at least 6 inches deep, extended outward for 12 inches, so it forms an L shape, and then covered with soil, or heavy stones. Trees should be trimmed so that the branches that overhang roofs are at least 5 feet from the house. Bushes and shrubs need to be thinned and trimmed so that there is 18 inches of open space above the ground to limit the cover for animals to hide under.

Other useful tactics to deter unwanted cats: Place chicken wire or plastic carpet runner, spikes up, under flower bed mulch to make scratching uncomfortable. Sprinkle coffee grounds or citrus peels or use citrus spray on gardens and shrubs. One very effective tool is a motion detection device combined with common water, available from various outlets. The cat breaks the beam of the device, and is immediately sprayed with a stream of water. This device works on raccoons, dogs, opossums and other animals, too.

What is a TNR Colony Manager?

The City of Houston promotes TNR for the management of our city's community cats, and citizens. Any citizen feeding community cats must be actively working towards getting all cats in the colony spayed and neutered (i.e. accomplishing the TNR of the colony), must be feeding in a way that does not attract raccoons or possums, and must have the permission of the property owner/manager to be

feeding the cats if the colony location is not on either their own property or on city property. As long as citizens are in accordance with these requirements, they are encouraged to feed and care for the community cats within their colony and can submit an application to become an official colony manager.

According to Houston City Ordinance section 6-22, "It shall be unlawful for any person intentionally to cause, suffer, or permit the maintenance of an attractive environment for the assembly of a congregation of unconfined and unlicensed stray cats or dogs by the placement of dog food or cat food," however colony managers who follow city TNR guidelines are permitted to feed community cats "subject to a trap, neuter, and return program approved by the Director."

Get Involved!

Become a colony manager!

Are you feeding community cats in your community? Have you been trapping them and getting them spayed and neutered? If so, you might be interested in becoming a colony manager.

We appreciate and value our colony managers. By Trapping, Neutering, and Returning community cats of your neighborhood, colony managers make an impact on stopping the cycle of community cat overpopulation in the City of Houston.

The City can help you and the cats in your colony by providing spay/neuter appointments for feral cats. Colony managers who follow the City's TNR guidelines will have the City's support. To be in accordance with City of Houston ordinance, all citizens feeding feral or stray cats must adhere to the following requirements:

Citizens must be actively working towards getting the entire colony of cats spayed, neutered, and ear notched.

Citizens must be feeding in a way that does not attract raccoons or possums. Cats must be fed at set times and food cannot be left out after the cats have finished eating.

Citizens must have the permission of the property owner or manager to be feeding unless they are feeding on either their own property or on city property.

If you are following the above guidelines and are interested in becoming a colony manager:

1. You must live inside the Houston city limits. The colony must also be located inside the Houston city limits.
2. Fill out the [Feral Cat Colony Manager Application](#) (.pdf). (Please return by mail to BARC Animal Shelter, 3200 Carr St, Houston, TX 77026 ;or email to barctnr@houstontx.gov)
3. Fill in the spreadsheet we will provide with information on all the cats in your colony. Update this spreadsheet and submit it again at regular intervals so we can keep track of all the cats in your colony.
4. Provide us with written, signed proof of permission from the property owner/manager where you are feeding, unless you are feeding on either your own property or on Houston city property.

Need to Borrow a Trap?

Traps are available and can be reserved by emailing barctnr@houstontx.gov. BARC has limited number of traps available and MUST be reserved ahead of time.

There is no cost to reserve a trap, but a credit card form must be completed and if the trap is not returned within 30 days a credit card will be charged

If you are looking to trap and have a preferred day you would like to bring a cat in for surgery you can schedule a surgery appointment for a feral cat by emailing barctrn@houstontx.gov.



BARC INFORMATION

3200 Carr Street,
Houston, TX 77026
Call 3-1-1 for more information

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