



Creamy and Ollie, South Street Seaport

Neighborhood Cats: Mass Trapping Program



Compiled by ASPCA® and PetSmart Charities® and distributed to the field, September 2007. Visit the ASPCA® National Outreach website for animal welfare professionals: www.ASPCApro.org.

Neighborhood Cats: Mass Trapping Program



Creamy and Ollie, South Street Seaport

Neighborhood Cats acts as an educational resource in New York City (NYC) through on-site workshops in Trap-Neuter-Return. Having been involved with the high-profile trapping and neutering of feral cats on Rikers Island, they advocate trapping and altering an entire colony in order to achieve the highest impact on the population.

Stats

- Neighborhood Cats has trained 400 feral cat caretakers on how to do TNR.
- Neighborhood Cats began offering its online TNR class starting in March 2003, and 250 people have taken the online class to date.
- Neighborhood Cats has been instrumental in changing NYC policies regarding ferals. Today, if a feral cat that has been ear-tipped is brought into NYC Animal Control, the cat is not euthanized and is returned to the spot where it was picked up.

How Cool is That?

At ASPCA® National Outreach we're especially impressed by:

- On-site classes to teach feral caretakers in NYC
- On-line classes to transfer knowledge faster to a larger audience
- Targeting an entire population of feral cats in order to have the greatest impact

Adopt or Adapt

If you are an experienced trapper, consider using these methods to approach mass trapping in your area. If you are new to trapping and working with feral cats, consider signing up for an online course to begin to get your bearings in the world of TNR.

Neighborhood Cats: The Whole Story

Mass Trapping Program

Neighborhood Cats was formed in 1999 to promote trap-neuter-return ("TNR") as the most humane and effective means of solving New York City's severe feral cat overpopulation crisis. Based on their experience with feral cats on Riker's Island, they are strong advocates for sterilizing a whole colony at a time for greatest impact.

In March of 2002, the trapping and neutering of the approximately 250 feral cats living on Riker's Island, the largest jail in the country, was begun under the auspices of the NYC Department of Correction and as a joint effort with the ASPCA, the Humane Society of NY, the CACC and other local, recently-formed TNR groups.

[Who They Are and What They Do](#)

[Ingredients and Prep Work](#)

[Step by Step](#)

[Results](#)

[Some Words of Wisdom](#)



Ruth Sharp (r.) preparing for mass trapping

Who They Are and What They Do

Neighborhood Cats, New York, NY
Bryan Kortis, Executive Director

Neighborhood Cats' goal is to establish TNR as the preferred method of feral cat control and, ultimately, to substantially reduce the number of cats born and living on the city's streets.

Towards this end, they perform high profile TNR field projects which serve as models to the community and also provide hands-on assistance in other neighborhood-oriented projects. They hold workshops to teach feral cat caretakers how to properly manage their colonies, and provide caretakers with support services such as phone consultations, low-cost shelters and an e-mail network.

Ingredients and Prep Work

People

- Caretaker of the feral cat colony who could serve as an organizer for the different facets of mass trapping
- Someone to secure a holding facility for the cats
- Trappers
- People who can provide transportation to the veterinary clinic

Up-front Costs and Startup Funding

- Upfront costs will vary according to the number of cats being trapped, the cost of spay/neuter services and the cost or availability of traps and trap dividers. To minimize costs, see if there is a shelter or spay/neuter clinic that will loan you free traps.
- Traps cost ~ \$50 each with shipping
- A pair of trap dividers cost ~ \$30 with shipping.
- Spay/neuter costs will be on-going and vary per cat and per community.

Time Line

One month prior to mass trapping:

- Ensure consistent feeding patterns.
- Secure a holding space that you'll have access to for the four-six days of trapping.
- Secure a spay/neuter date and a veterinary clinic.
- Reserve or secure equipment.
- Arrange for emergency vet care.

Two-three days prior to surgery date, begin trapping.

Step by Step

1. Prepare for trapping.

- Establish a feeding pattern.
To facilitate the trapping, train the cats to eat at the same time and place. Count the cats in your colony (take notes, photos) for accurate spay/neuter scheduling. Assess the status of your colony – identify any cats that could be adopted, any cats that are sick – and begin to make arrangements.
- Secure a holding space that you can have access for between four and six days.
This space must be warm, dry and secure. Before placing cats in traps in the space, place plastic drop cloths on the ground, or on tables if you are able to use folding tables. With a large trapping project, it is easier to work with the traps when they are on tables than if they are on the ground.
- Schedule a spay/neuter date.
 - Your first bet is to approach animal welfare groups in your area to see if the groups have feral cat programs, in which S/N surgeries are done for free or at a reduced rate. If no group in your area has an existing tradition of doing spay/neuter for ferals for free, then try to establish a relationship with vets who may see the benefits of TNR and would be willing to cut you a deal on the surgeries. Also research available low cost spay/neuter certificate programs, but be sure to get a written estimate of all costs before making an appointment.
 - In addition to the surgery, ferals should be ear-tipped and given rabies shots.
 - Try to negotiate reduced rates for other services, such as flea, ear mite meds.
 - All cats that are brought into the vet must be brought in their traps and covered.
- Arrange transportation to and from the vet clinic.
- Reserve or secure equipment.

For more information about the kind of traps to use and the other supplies you'll need to trap the cats, see the Trapping Basics worksheet that accompanies this profile on our website.

- Arrange for emergency vet care.

2. Trap the cats.

For more information about the kind of traps to use and the other supplies you'll need to trap the cats, see the Trapping Basics worksheet that accompanies this profile on our website.

- Begin trapping at least two, preferably three, days before spay/neuter date.
- Check the traps and practice using them.

- Withhold food from the cats the entire day before the first day of trapping.
- Transport and then prepare the traps. Try to prepare the traps outside of the cats' sight if possible.
- Place the traps, bringing them all out into the territory at the same time. Once the traps are all in place and set, exit the territory.
- During the trapping:
 - Unless the territory is secure from strangers, the traps should never be left unattended and you should always be nearby and able to observe whether anyone is entering the territory.
 - Traps can be checked every half hour or so, but should not be left unchecked for more than a couple hours at most.

3. Take care of the cats while they are in their traps.

For more information about supplies you'll need and strategies to feed the cats and keep the traps clean while in your care, see the Care of Cats in Traps worksheet that accompanies this profile on our website.

Never let the cats out of their traps, except during surgery.

- Assemble your supplies for feeding the cats and keeping the traps clean.
- Prepare the holding space.
- Feed cats and clean the traps. When dealing with large numbers of cats, it can be helpful to work in an assembly-line manner.
- Bring the cats into the vet clinic on time. All cats should be brought into the vet in their traps.

4. Monitor the cats during recovery.

For more detailed information about monitoring cats after their surgery see the Care of Cats in Traps worksheet that accompanies this profile on our website.

Normally hold cats 48 hours, in their traps. Hold them longer if they are sick, pregnant, etc.

- Nursing mothers can be released after 24 hours, if necessary and if they are alert.
- Warning signs:
 - Cat remains unconscious after two hours post surgery.
 - You notice pools of blood. In this situation you should bring the cat back to the vet.

5. Release the cats in the locations where you trapped them.

Results

The Numbers

On Riker's Island, 250 feral cats were sterilized in a mass trapping. In the two years since, fewer than a dozen litters of kittens have been spotted and rescued on the island. Because of adoption and attrition, it is estimated there are now between 150 to 175 feral adults at the jail with 95 percent of them neutered. The most noticeable difference is the vastly diminished visibility of cats. Now, with lowered numbers and the tendency of neutered cats to roam much less, most of them are seen infrequently. Quality of life complaints from jail personnel are now almost non-existent.

Critical Factors

- Establish good community relations.
- Conducting a TNR project involves managing a feral cat colony over the long term. This means that a caretaker will be feeding feral cats on a regular basis for as long as the colony is in the area. As a result, the local community where the colony resides must be comfortable with the idea that feral cats – whom they may consider to be a nuisance – will be fed regularly and on the long term in their local geographical area. Thus, building good community relations is essential for any TNR project.
- Educate yourself on TNR so that you can speak proficiently with your neighbors. NC recommends its own website – <http://www.neighborhoodcats.org>, and Alley Cat Allies, <http://www.alleycat.org>, which is a national organization promoting TNR.
- Gather information about the colony and solicit help from the community. You should get to know the neighborhood and who is currently feeding the cats. You can post flyers announcing your program, attend community board meetings, or hold your own meetings. Repeat the mantra "no kittens, less noise, less smell, rodent control."

Thinking Outside the Box

To keep cats out of gardens and yards, NC recommends trying any of the following devices:

- motion-activated sprinklers;
- naturally based scent repellents;
- ultrasonic devices that emit high frequency sounds annoying to cats and not perceptible by people;
- placing barriers to digging in gardens;
- making outdoor litter boxes for the cats.

How They Feel About What They Did

Neighborhood Cats is understandably proud of their accomplishments and look to balance the work that they accomplish in NYC with their goal to continue training both on the ground and through online workshops.

Their Next Steps

NC staff is not sure how to deal with more demand from the NYC community for mass trapping assistance. NC wants to stay in touch with trapping initiatives that are occurring on the ground level. But NC's monthly training course is extremely popular, full to capacity virtually every month offered. In order to expand its services, NC will have to hire more staff.

The next goals for NC are primarily organizational in nature:

- First, Bryan would like to hire more staff to coordinate the volunteers who are active in TNR in the NYC area. He would like to see NC to establish some way that all the feral cat caretakers in NYC who have been trained by NC to become aware of each other, and to designate TNR experts throughout NYC, who can serve as TNR leaders for their local area. People just getting started with TNR could contact these local leaders for help with their individual trapping projects. (n.b., Indy Feral, a feral cat program in Indianapolis, has a Cat Captain Program; Bryan likes the concept behind their program.)
- Second, Bryan would like to have a database that contains contact information for all feral cat caretakers who are running TNR programs throughout the NYC region.
- Third, he wants to generate statistics that show the impact of TNR in NYC. NC has anecdotal evidence of the impact of TNR in NYC, but as Bryan says, big fundraisers want "hard stats."

Some Words of Wisdom

What Worked

One of the keys to Neighborhood Cat's success is that it has operated as a grassroots movement from its inception. Their goal is to get local people involved, so that local people are running TNR in their communities. Their successes:

- Insisting that if caretakers want help, they have to participate in running their own TNR program, and undertaking trapping themselves
- Educating the public and creating services to allow TNR to be a sustainable and viable initiative for the NYC region. This includes working with organizations like the Humane Society of NY and the ASPCA, which both offer free spay/neuter services for feral cats.
- Avoiding stance of "we're the experts, we'll do it all"

Be Prepared For

Anything and everything! Every time you do a trapping project, something unexpected will happen. When this happens, deal with it as best you can, and hopefully pass the information on to help others.

Tell Us What You Think

With the information we've provided, can you start a program like this one in your organization? [Click here](#) to send an e-mail to ASPCA® National Outreach with your feedback.

Neighborhood Cats: Thumbnail Sketch

2565 Broadway #555
New York, NY 10025

<http://www.neighborhoodcats.org>

Neighborhood Cats performs high profile TNR field projects which serve as models to the community and also provide hands-on assistance in other neighborhood-oriented projects. They teach feral cat caretakers how to properly manage their colonies and provide them with support services such as phone consultations, low-cost shelters and an e-mail network.

The organization is involved with the ongoing caretaking of six or seven colonies, to varying degrees of involvement. For example, for some colonies NC buys food, and other caretakers feed the cats. The staff may personally trap between 300 and 400 cats per year, taking on either high profile cases or high impact cases.



Staff

Neighborhood Cats is run by one full-time and three part-time staff:

- Full-Time Executive Director
- Part-time Fundraiser
- Part-time Public Outreach
- Part-time Trainer for the monthly workshops

Operating Budget

NC operates on a \$100,000 annual operating budget. Of this budget, 70 to 75% goes toward programs; the rest goes toward fundraising and administration

Business Type

501 (c)(3)