

Fort Worth Animal Care and Control

Statement on Stray and Feral Cats; Trap, Neuter, Release; and Return to Field Programs

In 2012, the City of Fort Worth passed a Trap Neuter and Release (TNR) Ordinance as a mechanism to stabilize and/or reduce existing free roaming cat populations in Fort Worth. In lieu of continuing an ineffective approach to addressing challenges posed by free roaming cats, Fort Worth Animal Care and Control (FWACC) believes TNR is the best model for putting controls in place to manage free roaming cat populations. TNR is a humane mechanism for reducing and managing free roaming cat populations and the problems they create. Still, there are legitimate concerns within the community regarding TNR. These concerns either speak to unwanted consequences of free roaming cats or to specific TNR eligibility criteria.

The 2012 ordinance authorized the trapping, neutering (or spaying), vaccinating, ear-tipping and returning of any homeless, wild or untamed cat. The ordinance further exempted cats in the program from at-large, licensing, maximum pets, and impoundment regulations of the City. Finally, the ordinance instructed the Director of Code Compliance to develop and administer a Trap, Neuter, and Return (TNR) Program designed to reduce the number of free roaming cats which are euthanized, to establish standards for the management of free roaming cats, and to minimize and abate of nuisances caused by free roaming cats.

In 2015, FWACC updated the Feral Cat Policy exempting cats from the 72 hour minimum hold to reduce stress and disease exposure at the shelter, and hasten the return of cats back to their owners or environments. Our new procedures apply to all cats, feral or tame, whether their “home” is a colony, neighborhood or specific house. It recognizes that unowned cats within the City of Fort Worth include two general types of cats: 1) cats with previous owners unable to care for them, and 2) free roaming cats.

Relinquished Cats

Cats presented to the shelter by owners who are no longer able to care for them are adopted, transferred to one of our partner organizations, placed in a barn cat program or humanely euthanized.

Free Roaming Cats

Free roaming cats are 1) owned cats that have roamed beyond the premises of their owners, 2) feral cats or kittens, 3) abandoned cats, or 4) neighborhood cats which are neither owned nor wild but cared for by one or more neighbors. Free roaming cats are a part of the existing fauna of North Texas. Similar to other small wildlife, the Fort Worth Animal Shelter will only accept feral and stray cats that are injured or otherwise suffering where the presenting

citizen is requesting humane euthanasia. FWACC will refer other feral and stray cat issues to private individuals and groups which provide Trap Neuter and Release (TNR) and Return to Field (RTF) services.

FWACC encourages the efforts of private citizens and non-profit groups to engage in TNR and RTF. Nationwide, and locally, approximately 2% of cats that enter a shelter are reclaimedⁱ. Owners often wait for cats to come back home; whereas dog owners more often immediately look for their dogs and check local shelters. Therefore, FWACC believes, like others, that caught owned cats have the greatest chance of returning to their owners through privately operated RTF programs. Similarly, neighborhood cats also are best returned to their previous environment neutered, vaccinated, microchipped, eartipped and treated for parasites through these programs.

ⁱ HSUS's Position on Cats