

Community Cats WG discussion on MarComm cat content

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UgMON4gCtUG5WmHMb6z2hC3Z6q3y7aKJ>

Key Points

- We miss a lot of opportunities to educate the public about community cats when messaging on lost cats or kittens does not include community cats.
- Messages should engage the public. Let them know how they can help, that they can play a role in helping cats. Provide at least one action item (contacting the shelter doesn't count but can be a first step). Avoid telling them to do nothing.
 - If you find kittens, plan TNR for parents so you don't have to do this all over again.
 - If you find kittens and are waiting until they are weaned to place for adoptions, work on socializing the kittens on site since this is a critical time for their social development and will make adoption easier.
 - See a cat who may be lost? help her find her way home or, if no family found, do TNR.
- Communicate what the shelter is doing instead of what they are not doing. (Instead of saying no intake of healthy cats, say offering services to help keep that cat in his home – TNR, caretaker support, etc.)
- Avoid using overly simplistic messaging for issues with a lot of complexity. This only reinforces the challenges we are currently dealing with.
- Print materials should be heavy on the visual.
 - People often don't take the time to read a lot of text or they may have low literacy skills. Use images/graphics to get the message across.
 - Translations are easier with less text.
- Employ positive and/or fun images when possible/appropriate.
- Use open-ended queries to promote discussion and build understanding and buy-in.
- Manage expectations about what the shelter can do and what is going to happen to the cat.
- Be careful about language and how communications are portraying community cats:
 - Saying community cats are all feral cats, who have had little or no contact with people, reinforces the idea that friendly cats do not belong with community cats, that those cats should be “rescued” – removed from their homes and placed in shelters.
 - Community cats are not the same as wildlife and should not be treated the same. Legally, they would lose protections under many cruelty statutes if reclassified as wildlife. Also, this is an easy way to rile up anti-cat conservationists unnecessarily.

Examples of materials with content we like:

- [Free-TNR-Flyer BARCS](#) – visual on what happens to the cat, add ongoing care of cat after return.
- NYC [Love Cats/Hate Cats](#) – positive/fun approach (text is out of date)
- [Can you help this cat?](#) – action-oriented brochure.
- HRA trap tags - fun, simple, clip-on badge flyer for cat traps, used previously when trapping at Washington Humane Society (to keep residents from thinking we were going to “kill the cats”)



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- HRA videos on “[DC’s Community Cats](#)” and the variety of caregivers across the city. Another video “[Sparrow](#)” focuses on one cat and her life in the neighborhood over time.
- Hawaiian Humane Society brochure - a lot of information in easily digestible bits, multiple ways for community to be part of solution, sets expectations. [Page 1](#) [Page 2](#)
- Alley Cat Rescue brochure - step by step of how to do TNR [Page 1](#) [Page 2](#)
- Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon - resources section of website offers comprehensive, quality information <http://www.feralcats.com/>. See their intagram for stories about the cats and caregivers who come to their clinic - <https://www.instagram.com/feralcatsor/>
- Lifeline in Atlanta - Uses a different approach to describing issues on community cats - [MYTHS ABOUT COMMUNITY CATS](#) page. It includes this description: **We do not want to take away someone’s cat, only to put the cat on a track that is set up for failure.** Concerns about the video in describing feral cats as separate from community cats and comparing community cats to wildlife.



- Nashville Humane Society - **CUTE and SIMPLE** TNR process graphic depicting TNR process -
- Humane Society of Charlotte NC gives a brief outline of **PROs of TNR work and HOW SHELTERS BENEFIT** but doesn't get into any more details about kittens, etc <https://humanesocietyofcharlotte.org/services/community-cats-program>
- Jacksonville FL Humane Society - great community cat resource guide, but have to open the .pdf to view online, It states "Community cats do not have traditional homes and may have several owners. They may be **social or unsocial.**" Has a great one page on **9 REASONS TO RETURN CATS TO THEIR HOMES** <https://www.jaxhumane.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Jacksonvilles-Guide-for-Community-Cats-7.pdf>
- Alley Cat Allies - gives sometimes **conflicting messages** about finding homes for friendly cats vs. leaving them in place https://www.alleycat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CatOutdoors_poster-2021-FINAL-web.pdf - good about how to help if you find a cat outside and suggests leaving a friendly one (in opposition to other ACA documents) This one states "It isn't necessary to bring a friendly community cat inside if she is thriving in her outdoor home. **But if you have the time and resources, you can choose to foster her, adopt her,** or find her a new family!"
- <https://www.alleycat.org/resources/feral-and-stray-cats-an-important-difference/> - Again, ACA focuses on giving great examples of the **differences in behavior** (in a trap, to a toy, to a person, etc) but then **calls all the "friendly" ones Strays and in need of adoption to indoor homes.**
- Alley Cat Advocates - only defines their role in TNR as with **UNOWNED CATS but doesn't define them as "feral or friendly"**
- "Trap-Neuter-Return is accepted within the humane movement as the most effective way to stabilize and reduce the unowned cat population. It is also the most humane method. The basic strategy of TNR is to **identify an unowned cat or colony of unowned cats,** humanely trap them, spay/neuter them, and return them to their environment. The entire process takes from one to three days on

Suggestions for additional content:


- What is the life of a community cat like? - help the public understand about how cats live in the community, about the neighbors who care for them, and how life is better after they have been sterilized/vaccinated, how the health can be much better and additional medical care may be provided by shelter
- How people can help cats that look like they need help - what to look for with cats that are not thriving, should I start feeding?
- How to be a good caregiver - how to feed them (how much food, when, where), providing shelter, etc.
- **ADD MORE SUGGESTIONS HERE PLEASE**
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TEN + TOPICS WE WANT TO COVER with social media shareables	Message/copy
How TNR is good for cats and the community	Healthy cats make great neighbors (are good neighbors)
What is a community cat	
How to know what kind of help a cat needs (find owner, TNR, support existing caregiver, etc)	
How to be a good caregiver	It's not just food that they need: cats need somewhere to shelter and medical attention as needed
Why to leave cats in the neighborhood, inc, some cats are happy outside	We're your neighbors, too, and we've been here for thousands of years. You can help me live my best life.
If you find kittens...how to help	I ❤️ my Mom. Don't take me away
If you find kittens...s/n the parents	Don't forget my mom. TNR works.
Cats and wildlife	
The life of a community cat	Before I was fixed, and after Cute side by side comparison? See below
How to deal with conflicts with cats	It's cuter to neuter, fixing cats

	reduces annoying behaviors.
What eartip signifies and sample photos	An eartip means someone cares about me. I am fixed and I live here.
Spay/Neuter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Behavior Issues without S/N - males marking in house, females in heat , fighting with outside cats, - goes to why people often “put cats out” - What spay/neuter really means (in layman language) People really don’t know. Not able to have more kittens, pregnant cat spay not equal to “abortion”, etc 	
Appropriate shelters/food stations - homemade and purchased and seasonal style variations	
What about “Who to Call” beyond kitten assistance. There are volunteer groups as well as shelters/clinics. What to “Google”, words to use, etc	

Before/After TNR/SNR :
Before Image (needs testicles!):



 Pinterest
Scruffy Cat Square Stickers | Cat post, Cartoon clip art, Cat clipart
Images may be subject to copyright. [Learn More](#)

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Mop

After Image (needs eartip, no rose but something like this):

