



# NYC Feral Cat Initiative

Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals® 

## What is the New York City Feral Cat Initiative?

The New York City Feral Cat Initiative (NYCFCI) is a program of the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals® — a coalition of more than 150 animal rescue groups and shelters working with Animal Care & Control of NYC (AC&C) to end the killing of healthy and treatable cats and dogs at AC&C shelters.

The NYCFCI's mission is to raise awareness about the thousands of feral and stray cats (which collectively we refer to as *community cats*) living outdoors throughout NYC's five boroughs, and to offer solutions to prevent the number of homeless cats from increasing and to successfully manage existing colonies.

Our goal is to humanely reduce the number of community cats in NYC and improve the plight of those cats currently living outdoors through the humane, non-lethal method of Trap-Neuter-return (TNR).

Towards this end, we provide advice to the general public and TNR caretakers by phone and e-mail; feline educational information via our website, e-newsletter, and printed materials; community outreach and education, including training workshops in bottle-feeding and taming feral kittens; free equipment loans; transport of traps to and from TNR sites and transport of cats to and from spay/neuter appointments; cat food and straw giveaways; and limited hands-on TNR assistance. We encourage people who feed and care about the cats to learn how to help them by completing a TNR Certification Workshop. In-person workshops are offered on a regular basis in all five boroughs by Neighborhood Cats, and an online certification course is offered by The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). To date, more than 4,000 individuals have taken these workshops!

## What Are Feral Cats and Where Do They Come From?

Tens of thousands of free-roaming cats live in the backyards, alleyways, and outdoor spaces of New York City. They are the offspring of lost or abandoned pet cats and, when unneutered, reproduce prolifically, creating more and more cats. The cats often appear as singles or in pairs, while others live in groups called colonies. Cats living on the street (community cats) fall into two main categories: *feral cats* and *stray cats*.

*Feral cats* have been living with little close human contact for some time, or were born outdoors, and are very wary of people. Ferals originate from domestic cats who have been lost or abandoned and have learned to survive outdoors. Most ferals — certainly adults — are extremely difficult to tame and are unlikely to ever behave like “house cats.” Many feral cats are seen after dusk or before dawn, when fewer people are around.

*Stray cats* are “house cats” who have been lost or abandoned. Having had contact in the past with people, they may meow at you, rub against your leg, and may allow petting, and are more likely than ferals to be out during the day. Usually strays can be successfully adopted back into a home. Although counterintuitive, strays can appear unkempt while ferals who are neutered and fed regularly often look (and are) very healthy.

The terms *free-roaming cats* and *community cats* encompass both ferals and strays..

## **The Solution to the Feral Cat Crisis: Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)**

The NYCFCI supports Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) as the only humane and proven effective method to control and eventually reduce the stray and feral cat overpopulation crisis. TNR means that the cats are trapped, spayed (females) or neutered (males), vaccinated against rabies, eartipped on the left ear for identification, and returned to their territory where they are provided food and shelter by their caretakers. Young kittens and friendly cats may be taken in for adoption. TNR performed consistently in a targeted neighborhood has the potential to reduce intake at the city's shelters and, consequently, reduce euthanasia rates.

TNR is much more effective and humane than traditional trap-and-kill or trap-and-remove tactics. Both trap-and-kill and trap-and-remove result in the "vacuum effect" — new, unaltered cats move into the emptied area and breed.

TNR, especially mass trapping, immediately stabilizes the colony and reduces tensions in the human community because no new litters are being born and the nuisance behaviors often associated with unaltered cats (spraying, fighting, crying) are dramatically reduced. Additionally, natural rodent control remains in place.

TNR is supported and endorsed by many animal welfare organizations, including but not limited to: The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), Alley Cat Allies, The Humane Society of New York, The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), The Toby Project, the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals, and Neighborhood Cats.

**For more information about TNR and the NYCFCI, please visit our website at [www.NYCFeralCat.org](http://www.NYCFeralCat.org) or call (212) 330-0033.**