

Community Cats *and* Trap-Neuter-Return in Alexandria

Community cats are unowned, free-roaming cats who live outdoors. While they may not have a specific owner, many community cats are monitored and cared for by members of the community. Some community cats may be interested in interacting with humans, but others may be unsocialized to people, and so like wild animals, want no human contact.

Trap-Neuter-Return

What is Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)?

Trap-Neuter-Return is the practice of humanely trapping, sterilizing and vaccinating community cats, then returning them to the place they were found after recovery from the spay or neuter procedure. Cats who go through a TNR program are “ear-tipped,” which is when a small portion of the tip of the cat’s left ear is removed under anesthesia during the spay or neuter surgery. This painless procedure is a universally recognized sign that a cat has been through a TNR program and is spayed/ neutered and vaccinated, and therefore does not need intervention.

The AWLA believes that the best place for cats to live is indoors where they are protected from dangers such as cars, predatory animals and feline diseases, and stray or unowned free-roaming cats that are friendly and would do well in a home can be considered for adoption; however, unsocialized cats likely cannot acclimate to life inside. Therefore, TNR presents the most humane and compassionate approach to living with these cats in our community, while offering a way to reduce the outdoor cat population over time. After participation in the program, these cats are released back into the neighborhood in which they live, but they will no longer produce additional generations of outdoor cats.

What are the benefits of TNR for community cats and for the community?

The benefit of TNR for community cats is a safer and healthier life! Rather than spending their time engaging in mating, nursing kittens and attempting to find resources to feed litter after litter of kittens, their time is spent caring for themselves. Cats that are spayed/neutered no longer display many nuisance behaviors including yowling, fighting and spraying. This helps the cats become better neighbors to our community members. Rabies vaccinations given at the time of surgery provide additional health and safety benefits.

Because cats who have gone through a TNR program are sterilized, they no longer contribute to the community cat population. Through targeted and consistent TNR efforts, communities will see their neighborhood community cat population stabilize and over time, naturally decline. Plus, by participating in the AWLA’s TNR program, you can be a part of providing a safe and humane community for ALL animals in Alexandria!

How can I participate in the AWLA’s TNR program?

Thank you for your interest in helping the AWLA to provide a humane and compassionate solution for our community’s cats! Anyone interested in assisting with TNR of cats located within the City of Alexandria may participate in the AWLA’s TNR program. The AWLA is able to loan traps to program participants (for TNR purposes only) and will cover the costs of surgery and vaccinations for cats trapped in the City of Alexandria. Appointments must be made in advance. Please do not trap any cats before scheduling an appointment. For additional information, questions or to schedule an appointment, please contact us at community@alexandrianimals.org or 703-746-5508.

The AWLA also provides information and training on community cat trapping. Caretakers are responsible for trapping, delivery to and pick up from the vet clinic and post-surgical care, which is usually a two-day commitment. Caretakers are also responsible for releasing the cat in the location in which they were trapped once they have recovered from surgery.



Cats in Your Community

Will the AWLA accept community cats brought to the shelter?

Community cats that are unsocialized to people are not safe to house in a home or in a shelter and may injure themselves, others or even become destructive in their attempts to get outdoors. They are also unhappy inside and can become stressed and/or sick if confined indoors over a long period of time. Because these cats are not suited to life as indoor pets, animal shelters face euthanasia as the only option if they are taken into custody. Therefore, the AWLA will not accept unsocialized community cats into our adoption program. Instead, we offer resources to help members of our community participate in our TNR program.

The AWLA will accept stray cats found in the City of Alexandria that are social and can be handled. If you have found a stray cat who appears to be social, you may find additional information at AlexandriaAnimals.org/Found-an-Animal or contact us at 703-746-4774 or info@alexandriaanimals.org.

What if I see kittens in my neighborhood?

Kittens under 3 months of age can typically be socialized. However, young kittens that are still nursing should be kept with mom – she is their best caretaker! Once the kittens are old enough to eat on their own (around 6-7 weeks of age), they can be brought to the AWLA for socialization and adoption. If you see kittens in your neighborhood and are unsure of whether or not they still need to be with their mom, or if you think a kitten is unhealthy or in danger, please contact us at info@alexandriaanimals.org or 703-746-4774.

Of course, bringing the kittens to the AWLA only solves part of the problem: the cycle of litters will continue until the mother cat is spayed. If you would like to bring kittens from your neighborhood to the AWLA, we will ask if you are willing to partner with us to get any adult cats in the area spayed/neutered and vaccinated through the AWLA's TNR program.

Will the AWLA remove or relocate community cats?

The AWLA will not remove or relocate community cats. Because unsocialized community cats are not acclimated to life inside or to human contact, adoptive homes do not provide a suitable placement option for them. Removing cats from an area creates a vacuum that will be filled by other cats in the neighborhood who will begin breeding and contribute to growth of the community cat population. Additionally, there are not suitable locations to which to relocate cats within the City of Alexandria, and there is no guarantee a cat would stay in the new location if moved. Removing or relocating community cats is simply not a viable or effective solution.



What should I do if I see a cat who is sick or injured?

The AWLA will always respond to calls concerning sick or injured animals within the City of Alexandria. If you see a cat who appears to be sick or injured, you can reach the AWLA's Animal Services Officers through the Police Non-Emergency Hotline at 703-746-4444.

Animal Welfare League of Alexandria
4101 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304
AlexandriaAnimals.org | 703.736.4774
community@alexandriaanimals.org



Resources for Living with Community Cats

One of the most effective ways to decrease undesirable behaviors from community cats is to have the cats spayed or neutered through participation in a TNR program, which decreases hormones that contribute to unwanted behaviors such as yowling, fighting and spraying.

There are also many humane deterrents that can be used to keep cats out of your yard or garden:

- Motion-activated sprinklers like The Scarecrow made by Contech use harmless bursts of water to startle cats that have entered your yard.
- Ultrasonic motion-activated devices such as CatStop emit a high frequency burst of noise which will deter cats from the area.
- Plastic carpet runners with the spike side up works well to keep cats off flat surfaces such as lawn furniture.
- Chicken wire or Cat Scat, a plastic mesh mat with small plastic spikes can be placed in gardens just underneath the soil to deter cats from scratching and digging at plants.
- Scent repellents can be sprinkled in areas throughout the yard to deter cats from spending time there. Safe and effective repellents for cats include orange and lemon peels or juice, dried rue, cayenne pepper, coffee grounds, lavender oil, lemongrass oil, citronella oil, peppermint oil, eucalyptus oil, and mustard oil. Replenish these repellants regularly, particularly after a rainfall.

Also be sure to place a tight lid or lid lock on any trash cans so cats (and other local wildlife) aren't tempted to dive in looking for dinner.

There are other ways you can assist cats in your neighborhood, helping them stay healthy while limiting inconvenience for others in the area.

Caretaker tips for helping your community cats be good neighbors:

- Keep feeding stations clean. Remove all trash and leftover food promptly.
- Feed responsibly by feeding the cats at a regular time and place each day. Only feed an amount of food that can be finished by the cats within 30 minutes, and remove any uneaten food within 30 minutes. Large storage containers and bins make great feeding stations, but be sure to keep them clean.
- Be sure that all cats in your colony have been spayed/neutered! Keep an eye out for any newcomers that haven't been sterilized yet.
- Create litter areas, either by tilling an area of soil or by setting out a shallow container filled with sand. Scoop the area regularly, and at least once per month, remove and replace the sand.
- Provide winterized shelter to keep the cats dry and warm during winter months. (See some examples [HERE](#).)
- Keep accurate records on the cats you care for along with all of their medical records.
- Communicate with your neighbors about what you are doing to care for cats in your community. Be sure to listen to and address any concerns they have, and also let them know how they can help keep community cats safe and healthy.

