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Best Friends Animal Society is a national animal welfare organization with offices and partnerships across the country. We are pioneers in the development, implementation, and operation of community cat programs. Through our innovative public-private partnerships with local municipalities, Best Friends has operated more large-scale, community cat programs than any other organization in the country. The successes we've seen, in our own programs and others, echo the findings of research studies demonstrating the many advantages of targeted trap-neuter-vaccine-return (TNVR) programs over the outdated "catch-and-kill" model.

TNVR offers many benefits—not only to the cats, but to communities and their animal shelters. A number of peer-reviewed research studies have shown that targeted TNVR can reduce community cat populations,¹⁻⁸ reduce shelter intake and euthanasia,⁹⁻¹³ and decrease nuisance complaints.^{10,14-17} TNVR enjoys broad public support¹⁸ and, done with sufficient intensity, can be more cost-effective than lethal removal efforts.^{16,19-22} These programs offer animal shelters an attractive alternative to euthanizing the large number of cats admitted as "strays"—often more than 75% of their feline intake.^{12,23}

There is no "one-size-fits-all" community cat program, and a number of factors must be considered (e.g., the cat's condition, a shelter's capacity for care, etc.) when determining the best outcome for each cat. That said, there are many reasons for a shelter—especially a high-intake municipal facility—to route most of the cats admitted as strays to their TNVR program, regardless of temperament. Doing so reduces the euthanasia of healthy cats, thereby reducing the stress on shelter staff. In addition, more lost pets are likely to be reunited with their families and community cats reunited with their caregivers. And by making TNVR a significant share of overall outcomes, a shelter is able to allocate the resources necessary to care for those animals truly in need of admission.

Numerous studies have shown that cats included in TNVR programs are generally in good overall health; indeed, large-scale programs frequently report that fewer than 0.5% of cats admitted are euthanized for serious health concerns.^{9,13,24,25} These findings provide compelling evidence that the vast majority of community cats have sufficient resources available to them and are doing well. Indeed, surveys indicate that 10–26% of U.S. residents feed cats they believe to be strays.^{10,26-28} Further evidence of their generally good health and welfare is provided by studies showing that these cats have life expectancies of 5–10 years or more,^{2,5,29,30} and that sterilized cats generally enjoy longer lives than intact cats.^{13,20,31,32}

Shelters operating these programs are more likely to reunite lost cats with their owners. Whereas only about 2–5% of cats admitted to shelters are reunited when their owners contact the shelter,^{9,33,34} roughly 90% of lost cats return home on their own or are reunited when owners search their immediate neighborhoods.^{35,36} By returning cats to the location where they were first found rather than housing them at the shelter for the mandatory holding period (typically three days), TNVR programs reunite many lost pets with their families.

As these studies demonstrate, TNVR programs offer numerous benefits—to community cats, communities, and shelters. It's hardly surprising, then, that these programs are becoming increasingly common across the country, in communities large and small, urban and rural.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter J. Wolf".

Peter J. Wolf
Senior Strategist, Shelter and Community Research
Best Friends Animal Society

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