



Trap Neuter Return Maintain (TNRM)

How to Help Community Cats

TNRM is a comprehensive management strategy for humanely reducing populations of free roaming domestic felines.

- TNRM includes
- 1) assessment of colonies
 - 2) humane trapping
 - 3) maintenance with food, water, shelter & medical
 - 4) monitoring to assure newcomers are fixed

Who We Are

Network for Community Cats (NCC) brings together animal welfare organizations and individual volunteers committed to reducing the homeless cat population of the US Virgin Islands. Our members include:

- Blue Sky Relief Foundation
- Humane Society of St. Thomas
- Lucky Paws Foundation
- Off the Rocks Rescue
- Concerned community members

What We Do

- Help community cats by training caregivers on TNRM (Trap Neuter Return Maintain) and assist properties to properly manage their colonies
- Provide TNRM assistance, when possible, through our staff and/or volunteers.
- Reduce cat euthanasia in our local shelter
- Reduce the community cat population

What are Community Cats?

Community cats live outside. While they may be friendly to one or two special people who care for them, most people cannot pick them up or touch them. Therefore, they are not friendly enough to be adopted through an animal shelter and are euthanized.

Community cats are "home" where they are right now. There is nowhere better to send them and you cannot "relocate" them with other colonies as cats are territorial and they will not be accepted. TNRM is their best chance at a healthy and happy life. Removing them doesn't work since others will move into the vacant area. A 100% spayed and neutered colony will keep others away and in turn the colony will keep your area rodent free!

What is Trap Neuter Return (TNRM)?

Trap: Humanely and painlessly catch cats using special traps.

Neuter: Sterilize cats to prevent future kittens from being born.* (And more! See below)

Return: Return cats to their original outdoor home.

Maintain: Provide food, shelter and monitor colonies long term.

TNRM has been around for decades and is used internationally to control both dog and cat populations safely and humanely.

How does TNRM Help Cats & the Community?

- No new litters of kittens. Stabilizes population size and reduces numbers over time.
- Sterilized cats are evaluated by a veterinarian and only the healthy ones are released back.
- **Sterilized cats don't spray, howl, and fight**, so they become welcome neighbors.

This manual will help you learn how to:

- *Use a humane cat trap*
- *Trap*
- *Transport cats to the vet (when & where)*
- *Release cats back*
- *Keep cats & your community happy and healthy*

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Trapping Supplies Checklist

Trap-related supplies:

- Trap
- Trap cover (old lightweight towel, sheet,) that will cover trap completely
- Newspaper to line trap, lightweight cardboard or an old pillow case
- Flashlight (if trapping at night)

Bait supplies:

- Bait (tuna in oil, fried chicken, or other smelly food)
- Fork / Spoon to scoop out bait
- Can opener (or put bait in sealed container beforehand)
- Paper bowl or plate, if using (you can put bait directly on newspaper too)
- Wet wipes or paper towels for your hands
- Plastic bag for trash

Holding area supplies:

- Tarp, old shower curtain liner, or trash bags to protect the ground
- Newspaper to absorb moisture

Transport supplies:

- Tarp, old shower curtain liner, or trash bags to protect car
- Newspaper to absorb moisture

The Cat Trap

Humane cat traps have a front door which is propped open. The cat walks in to eat some tempting food, steps on a "trip plate," which makes the door shut behind them. Some traps have double doors which can both be open for more difficult to catch cats.



This picture shows a volunteer releasing a cat using the back door, which raises up completely.

Note the trap is **covered**. Always keep a trap covered (with a sheet or light weight towel) when there is a cat inside.

This calms the cat and makes everything less stressful for everybody.

DO NOT TRANSPORT a feral cat in anything other than a trap!

NEVER Transport a carrier or trap in the trunk of the car!



Photo courtesy of Alley Cat Allies

Preparing to Trap

- Start a TNR Colony Log, listing each cat you see at your location.

- Establish a regular feeding schedule for the cats.

- Feed in the area you plan to trap (quiet, sheltered, flat ground, out of public view).

- Prepare the holding area where cats will go once they're trapped and waiting to go to the vet. Cover the ground with a tarp or trash bags and a layer of newspaper. Holding area should be away from other animals.
Examples: garage, bathroom, porch etc.

- Prepare your car for cat transport. Cover seats with tarp, shower curtain liner, or trash bags and a layer of newspaper.

- Do not feed at least 12 hrs before trapping.

- Practice setting traps. If trap has a back door, double-check that it is locked. Secure it with a cable tie, if necessary.

- Check the weather: very rainy days or very windy days are less likely to be successful.

Trapping

Set the Stage

Feed the cats at the same time every day in the location you plan to trap. This location should be quiet and out of public view. The trap needs to be on flat ground to work.

Trapping

Trap the night or the morning before you plan to bring the cats to surgery. NEVER trap on a week-end if you did not confirm first that the Spay Day is available or during the week without knowing that you have an appointment!!

The best time to trap is when the cats gather to be fed. Trap only when you can supervise.

Never leave traps set and unattended.

1. Check that the trap's back door is locked. You may need to secure it with a cable tie, shoe lace or string. Cats can and do escape out the back door if it's not locked.
2. Put a trail of smelly food from the trap front door to the back of the trap. Setting food right on the newspaper is fine. Don't put a sharp can in the trap, but you can use a paper or styrofoam plate/low bowl if you like. Most of the food should go way in the back, behind the trip plate.
3. Set the trap. TEST IT. Cover the trap 1/2 way. Leave the area but keep watching the trap.
4. When you've caught a cat, keep trap covered. It is normal for the cat to move around in the trap. Carefully carry trap to your holding area. If you need to trap several cats, put out several traps. When the first trap trips, the other cats may run off, but they should return. Just remove the cats as they are trapped and put them in the safety of your holding area.

Don't open traps for any reason! Don't try to transfer the cat into something else! Don't keep looking under the trap cover at the cat -- you are only stressing them out!

Release the cat if the ear is notched!



FREE Community Spay Day

(This service is provided by the Humane Society of St. Thomas thanks to:
Kym's Angels Foundation, individual donors and Government assistance)

Location: Canines Cats & Critters located in Red Hook across from Food Center or Veterinary Centers of the VI located on Rhymer H'way right past the Humane Society of St. Thomas.

Surgery Days/Times: **Sat & Sun ONLY** - Call 340 775-0599 during business hours 10:00AM -4:00PM and **prior to setting traps** to confirm availability.

You may also call 340 513-1854 for an appointment or for any additional information

Drop off : 8:30AM (no later then 9:30AM)

Pick-up: Between 3:00 -4:00PM (check with staff when dropping off)

FREE through one of these programs (included spay or neuter, deworming, ear tip, and pain medication) the caretakers of these colonies are required to provide basic care to the colonies they manage long term: **food, water, medical care when needed and shelter.**

An ear tip is mandatory for all outdoor, free roaming cats. An ear tip is the surgical removal (while under anesthesia) of the top ¼ inch of the left ear. The ear tip enables the cat to be easily identified from afar as an already altered cat that does not need spay/neuter.

Cats brought to the clinic who are not tame must be in humane wire traps.. If you need traps you may rent them from HSSTT ahead of your appointment. (340 775-0599) for a refundable deposit. For the safety of the cats and staff, surgery for unsocialized cats cannot be performed on cats brought in anything except proper traps (no cat/dog carriers, hampers, etc).

Please have your trap covered with a lightweight towel or a sheet.
Make sure air can get through.

Please tell us at admission time if there are any known health problems for the cats you bring, OR if you know that a female cat had a litter of kittens .

*Appointments may also be made with **Veterinary Centers of the VI and/or Canines Cats & Critters during the week.**

However, to qualify for **FREE S/N services** you must pick up a S/N voucher from **HSSTT prior** to your appointment.

Owned animals - Spay/Neuter assistance is also available for cats and dogs for pet owners.

To pick up a voucher for assistance for your **pet** (cat or dog) or a community cat,
please contact: **340 775-0599**

Returning Cats

Cats are ready to be released once you pick them up. If still groggy let them stay in the trap till fully awake. Keep the trap covered. When they are fully awake release them as soon as possible. This is particularly important for mother cats with kittens.

When you release the cats, they will run out and seek a hiding spot. Knowing this, you should place the trap near a preferred hiding spot and so that they will not run into harm's way (traffic).

Choose a quiet moment when there isn't a lot of commotion around to release cats.

- Carry cat in the trap back to the location where you trapped him or her.
- Set trap on the ground.
- Point trap in the direction you want the cat to run. Give them a clear escape route.
- Remember the cat wants to run away from you, so stand behind the trap, not in front.

Cats will be hungry and thirsty. Make sure fresh water is available and be generous with the food. It is normal for cats to hide for a day or two after trapping. Continue to feed as normal.

Within a few days, everybody will be back to business as usual!



Caring for Cats

Food and Water

Cats, like all of us, need food and water **every day**. Properly fed colony cats will have access to dry food and 1/2 can each daily as well as access to clean water at all times.

For feeding information for your cat or community cats – Basics of Feline Nutrition this is an excellent source of information: catinfo.org

Shelter

Cats can do well if they are healthy, well-fed, and have access to shelter. A good shelter stays dry and is out of the wind and rain. Make sure the area is kept clean.

You can build great shelters using storage bins, ice chests, and other affordable items.

There are also many great ideas online!

Additional Resources

Very good general information about caring for community cats:
<http://www.alleycat.org/page.aspx?pid=293>

[Keeping Cats Out of Gardens and Yards \(neighborhoodcats.org\)](http://neighborhoodcats.org)

- [Rethinking the Animal Shelter's Role in Free-Roaming Cat Management](#)
- [Best Friends Community Cat Resources](#)
- [Best Friends Community Cat Programs Handbook](#)
- [Million Cat Challenge Pathway Planning for Cats](#)
- [Million Cat Challenge - The Cat Superhighway webinar](#)
- [Team Shelter USA - Community Cat Programs Handout](#)
- [Managing Community Cats: A Guide for Municipal Leaders](#)
- [How to Trap a Feral Cat for TNR](#)

Newcomers

Outdoor cats can survive years in a managed colony. When all the cats in the colony are spayed/neutered, and ear tipped, your colony will be under control. Watch for any new cats.

You should be able to identify a new cat as it will not be ear tipped and will not be documented on your TNRM Colony Log.

Frequently Asked Questions

What about Pregnant Cats ? Females with kittens?

If you have a cat that you think is pregnant, the cat will be spayed.

What this means is the cat will have surgery and the kittens will be aborted

If you have a mom cat out there with little babies already born, we need to make sure the kittens are old enough to eat on their own before we take mom away for surgery.

After mom has surgery, it will be uncomfortable and painful for her to nurse the kittens. Most kittens can start eating on their own around 5-6 weeks. This is also the time that they become more mobile. If the cats are out in the open, they are probably close to this age. If the kittens are big enough that they are running away from you and are difficult to catch, they are probably closer to 8 weeks. If you don't think the kittens are old enough, and you can continue to watch mom and babies, it is best to leave mom alone for a few more weeks. Note on a calendar when you've seen the kittens so you can keep track. Don't follow mom too closely. She will get spooked and move the kittens. Instead, watch from afar to see which area she is going to. You will see the kittens as they get older coming out into the open.

This will be the time that you will need to start trapping mom and also catching the kittens so that they can go into foster care for socialization.

When is a Kitten Old Enough for Spay/Neuter Surgery?

Kittens are ready for surgery when they are 2 pounds in weight (8-10 weeks of age). Rules of thumb: if they are faster than you they are about 6-7 weeks old.

Mom usually brings kittens to start eating food at about 7-8 weeks of age. So if you've been seeing kittens out and about, eating food, for a few weeks – they're old enough for surgery.

If you have caught feral kittens when they are quite young (the younger the better, best is about 4 weeks of age while their eyes are still blue), and raised them in your home so they love all people, including strangers – congratulations! They are now tame kitties and can be placed in loving homes after 8 weeks of age. We always recommend that kittens are adopted in pairs and if you can foster them in your home we can advertise and help you place them. The animal shelter is usually full and are always in need of foster homes as well so please do your best to help prevent new litters and take great care in making sure that the kittens you adopt out to friends or relatives are indeed spayed and neutered first.

What about Difficult to Catch Cats?

There are often cats that are difficult to catch, whether it's the smart one who avoids the trap or just the last one who manages to evade the trapping process. "Drop traps" can help in these situations, but they do require a little more experience and confidence with trapping.

If you get to this point, we will help guide you through this last trapping project.

What about the Unfriendly Cats?

Most true feral cats will keep their distance from humans. These cats are similar to wild animals. They can't be touched or picked up to pet. These cats do not enjoy human company and are not suitable for adoption. Some ferals may come close to you and even allow you to pet them while they are eating. Although these cats have developed a tolerance of their human caretaker enough to allow these actions, chances are that a new human could not do the same things to the cat. These semi-feral cats are accepting of their caretaker but that is where it stops. These cats will also not be suitable for adoption centers because once out of their environment, they will act much more like the true, wild, unsocialized cats.

Again, they are best left where they are. Once fixed, these cats will live a happy life and their behavior will no longer be a nuisance (males will stop spraying, yowling and fighting and females will no longer reproduce and increase the stray population)

Thank you for caring! Working together we can stop the vicious cycle of homelessness...

One stray at a time.





Blue Sky Relief (BSR) is committed to a comprehensive approach to create permanent change for the well-being of humans and animals in the Caribbean and beyond. One of the organization's main goals is to teach children compassion through humane education by introducing "Kindness Classes" into the US Virgin Islands schools' curriculum. Teaching compassion from an early age will positively impact our community's future. Working with the VI Police Department, BSR hopes to end animal abuse and neglect by helping draft new legislation to increase penalties for these crimes and ensure that animal cruelty investigators are present on all 3 islands. BSR actively supports all spay and neuter initiatives to prevent animal overpopulation. For more information please call: 615-604-2447 or visit www.blueskyrelief.org.



The Humane Society of St. (HSSTT) is the only open admission animal shelter on the island of St. Thomas. HSSTT's mission is to provide temporary shelter and care for owner surrendered pets and lost and abandoned strays, and to assist the community through education and S/N free services to end animal overpopulation. HSSTT relies primarily on private sector donations along with a small government contract to keep its doors open and provide needed stray control services for the community. Volunteers are a life support for the over 200 animals who require daily care. For more information please call: 340-775-0599 or visit hsstt.com.



Lucky Paws Foundation (LPF) is at the forefront of the No-Kill movement by focusing on S/N and the stray, abandoned, feral cat population (community cats). LPF is currently managing more than 75 cat colonies on the island of St. Thomas by providing TNR, food, water, and veterinary care to over 600 of its resident cats. LPF is also providing needed assistance for businesses and resorts to implement and manage cats on their premises, stop the cycle of homelessness and lower the shelter intake. Volunteers are always needed to assist with fostering, feeding, trapping and transport to and from veterinarian offices. For more information please call: 340-513-1854 or visit: luckypawssttvi.org



Off The Rocks Rescue (OTR) accepts cats and kittens from the public as well as from other Caribbean animal welfare non-profit organizations such as Animal Care Center of St. John and the Humane Society of St. Thomas. Once they are fully vetted, they are placed in foster and adopted in the Boston area. Travelers are always needed to assist with transport from St. Thomas to Boston. For more information please call: 340-643-4044 or visit: offtherocksrescue.org.