

A Case Study of the Effectiveness of TNR on a Feral Cat Colony

QUESTION

Does a TNR trap/neuter/return program stabilize or reduce the feral cat population of an established colony fed and sheltered by a responsible caretaker in an urban neighborhood?

BACKGROUND

The environment for this study was a two-block-square radius centered on the colony. This area is a mixed density urban neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois at approximately 6300 S Cicero and adjacent to Midway airport. The neighborhood included:

- Single-family residences
- Multi-family apartments
- Alleys, backyards and garages in various stages of maintenance
- Small businesses on the ground floors of apartment buildings
- Midway International Airport with hangars, storage, open fields and runways
- One abandoned and boarded up multi-story residence



Figure 1: Cat 2 Prior to TNR

The area is an ideal habitat for feral cats. **The feral cat colony caretaker** lives in a single-family residence with a small, well-tended backyard and a well-kept garage accessible via an alley. Between the garage and backyard, a feeding station and several small shelters built from plastic storage containers are provided for the feral cats that compose the colony.



Figure 2: Map of Colony Location, Chicago, IL

RESEARCH

From July 2006 to April 2007, Trap and Remove was the method used to control the feral cat population. The removed cats were either adopted to private parties or surrendered to a shelter. The colony's numbers steadily increased from one cat to eleven cats despite removal of kittens and strays (see Figure 3: Trap and Remove Colony Statistics).

Date	Population	Status
Jul-06	4	Female Cat 1 arrived with three older Kittens B, C and D
Aug-06	6	Adult Cats 2 and 3 joined the colony
Sep-06	8	Two new kittens E and F are born
Oct-06	6	Kittens E and F are surrendered to a local shelter
Dec-06	10	Kittens G, H, I and J are born
Jan-07	11	Kitten K born
Feb-07	10	Kitten K is surrendered to a local shelter
Mar-07	9	Kitten D disappears
Apr-07	11	Kittens L and M are born

Figure 3: Trap and Remove Colony Statistics

EXPERIMENT

From April 28, 2007 to September 8, 2007, a Trap, Neuter and Return (TNR) method was implemented and maintained. Eleven feral cats were spayed and neutered and provided with basic medical care (See Figure 4: Trap, Neuter and Return Timeline).

Cat	Gender	S/N Date
Kitten C	M	Apr 28 2007
Kitten H	M	Apr 28 2007
Kitten G	M	Apr 28 2007
Cat 2	M	Apr 28 2007
Kitten I	M	Apr 29 2007
Kitten J	F	Apr 29 2007
Cat 3	F	Jun 9 2007
Cat 1	F	Jun 9 2007
Kitten B	M	Jun 9 2007
Kitten L	M	Sept 8 2007
Kitten M	M	Sept 8 2007

Figure 4: Trap, Neuter and Return Timeline

DESCRIPTION OF THE TNR PROGRAM

Volunteers of Triple R Pets, an animal disaster relief, not-for-profit organization humanely trapped the cats. Cats were transported to PAWS Chicago's Lurie Clinic, a low-cost spay/neuter facility where the cats were spayed/neutered and eartipped, and where they received antibiotics, pain medication, rabies and distemper vaccinations, a Cook County rabies tag, parasite control for worms, fleas, ticks and ear mites, and a microchip individually registering the cat to Triple R Pets. Each cat was registered in the Triple R Pets feral cat database, and, in November 2007, the entire colony was registered as a managed feral cat colony with Cook County under the Cook County Feral Cat Management Ordinance. The colony's caretaker continued to monitor the colony for new cats.

The costs for the TNR program as described above were covered by donations made to Triple R Pets by the caretaker and other donors. Volunteers for Triple R Pets donated all time, labor, transport, and miscellaneous costs. The PAWS Lurie Clinic provided the veterinarian services at low cost to Triple R Pets.

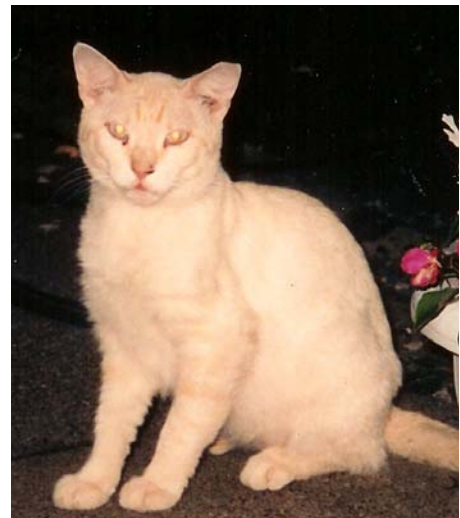


Figure 5: Cat 2 One Month After TNR Services

RESULTS

From June 2007, two months after implementation of the TNR program, to February 2009, the colony showed a steady decline from eleven feral cats to three feral cats (see Figure 6: Trap, Neuter and Return Colony Statistics). Only one stray, recently abandoned and very social, cat attempted to join the colony which allowed her to exist at the periphery of its territory. This cat was identified by the colony caretaker, and the cat was easily removed from the colony, spayed, and privately adopted.

A steady reduction in the colony population has been since from April, 2007 to February, 2009.

Date	Population	Status
April, 2007	11	Baseline when starting TNR Program
June, 2007	9	Kitten I (M neutered) and Kitten H (M neutered) missing
October, 2007	8	Cat 1 (spayed) is surrendered to a no-kill shelter
November, 2007	7	Kitten C (F spayed) missing
January, 2008	5	Kitten B and Kitten M missing
June, 2008	6	Cat 5, a stray, joins colony
September, 2008	5	Cat 4 (F spayed by private vet, adopted)
October, 2008	4	Kitten L (M neutered died)
December, 2008	3	Kitten J (F spayed) last seen
February, 2009	3	Three Cats Remain - Cat 2 (M neutered, age 3½ years), Cat 3 (F spayed, age 2 1/2 years); Kitten G (F Spayed, age 2 years)

Figure 6: Trap, Neuter and Return Colony Statistics

CONCLUSION

The Trap and Remove method fails to control the feral cat population of a single colony in an urban environment.

The Trap, Neuter and Return method stabilizes a feral cat colony’s population and ultimately reduces the number of cats in that colony (see Figure 7: Trap, Neuter and Return Colony Population Tracking). Other feral cats are not likely to join the colony; a stray, socialized and abandoned, cat may attempt to join the colony but can be easily removed from the colony by the caretaker.

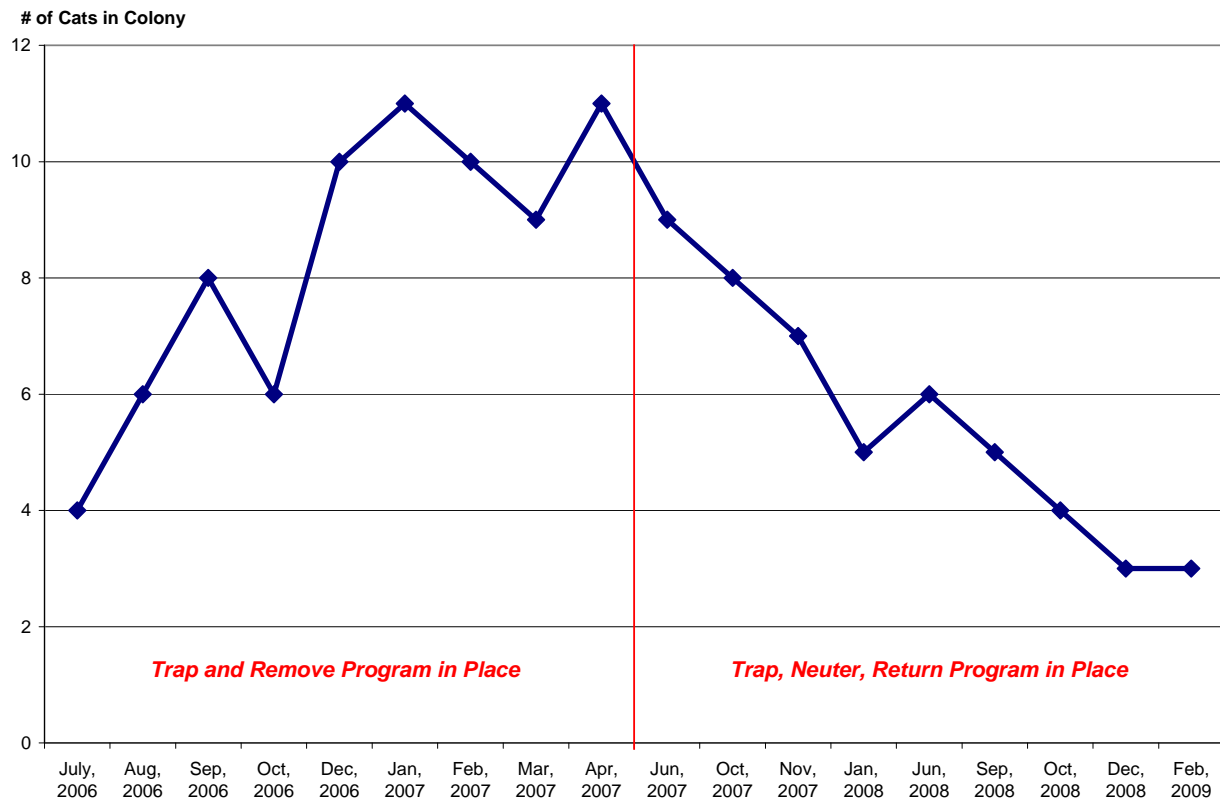


Figure 7: Trap, Neuter and Return Colony Population Tracking