



Salt Lake County Animal Services Trap-Neuter-Return F.A.Q. Sheet



What is a feral cat?

A feral cat is a free roaming, homeless, wild, or untamed cat. These cats are the descendants of lost or abandoned pets in our communities and over time they have become less socialized and more feral (wild). These cats often live in communities or colonies in a given area and tend to stay in the same general vicinity throughout their lives. Cats tend to be territorial and will generally chase unfamiliar feral cats out of the area so once a colony is established the 'membership' changes very little.

Feral cats are often fed by compassionate citizens that over time begin to recognize the cats their area. While these citizens or 'caregivers' don't actually own the cats they do care deeply about these animals and their welfare.

What is the traditional method for dealing with feral cats?

The traditional method for dealing with feral cats has been to trap them and take them to a local shelter where they are euthanized. Very few of these cats want any human contact and most are considered unadoptable. Salt Lake County Animal Services handles between 4,500 and 5,000 cats each year and between 25-30% of those cats are considered feral. The number of feral cats entering the shelter has not declined over these past years, so clearly trapping and killing the cats year after year has not been an effective or permanent solution. **What is Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)?**

TNR is a humane alternative to controlling feral cat populations. As the name suggests, the program is focused on trapping, neutering and returning the cats to the areas where they were picked up. Communities that have implemented the program have seen reductions in the number of feral cats over time - something that the old method of 'catch and kill' has never accomplished.

How does the Salt Lake County Animal Services Program Work?

Our TNR staff review animal intake reports to identify neighborhoods with citizens that are actively trapping cats. We visit those neighborhoods to speak to citizens and distribute information about TNR and resources available in their area. When we locate a caregiver, we provide information regarding the program - including the need to obtain a Feral Cat Colony Permit. To obtain a permit, the caregiver simply needs to provide a description of the cats that belong to the colony and pay a \$5 fee. The permit must be renewed annually with updated information about the cats in the colony. The permit application can be found on our website under 'TNR Program' on the left menu.

Once the permit is approved, we will provide a cat trap to the caregiver so that the cats can be trapped and brought in to be sterilized, examined, and vaccinated. The cat is then returned to the colony.

In order to identify the cat as one that has been sterilized as part of a TNR program, a small piece of one of the cat's ears is removed while the cat is under anesthesia. This process of 'ear-tipping' is the universal symbol of a fixed feral cat and it is an easy way to identify from a distance that a cat has already been sterilized.

How can I keep feral cats out of my yard?

There are many humane deterrents that are available to make areas inhospitable to cats. Information can be found on our website (www.slcoanimalservices.org) or our TNR specialists may be able to offer solutions or suggestions. Some deterrents are as simple as adding citrus peel to flower beds while others are more advanced like motion sensitive water sprayers which are available for purchase at the County Shelter at 511 West 3900 South. Call 801-559-1100 for more details.