

## Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) for Community Cats: The Basics

We've all seen cats sunning themselves on the grass, playing in alleyways, or sleeping on a neighbor's porch. These are community cats, also called feral cats. They are unowned and unsocialized to people, and therefore unadoptable. They live full, healthy lives with their colonies in their outdoor homes. Community cats and people benefit from TNR, the humane, effective, mainstream approach to addressing cat populations. Anyone can do TNR—these basics will get you started.

### Trap-Neuter-Return

**TRAP:** Humanely trap all the cats in a colony.

**NEUTER:** Take the cats in their traps to a veterinarian or clinic to be spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and eartipped.

**RETURN:** After the cats have recovered from surgery, return them to their outdoor homes where they were trapped.

cats, kittens, friendly cats, and ill or injured cats. Establish a feeding schedule for the cats so they become accustomed to getting food at a consistent place and time every day. It's important to coordinate with a feral-friendly veterinarian or clinic for spay and neuter appointments and to set up a holding and recovery area for the cats in advance.

### STEP TWO: TRAPPING

Ensure you have the number of traps you need, and that they are labeled and working properly. Withhold food for 24 hours before you trap, but always provide water. Cats should be hungry enough to enter the traps, but shouldn't eat too much once inside them, since they'll be having surgery. Bait the traps with food like sardines or tuna in oil.



### STEP ONE: PREPARATION FOR TRAPPING

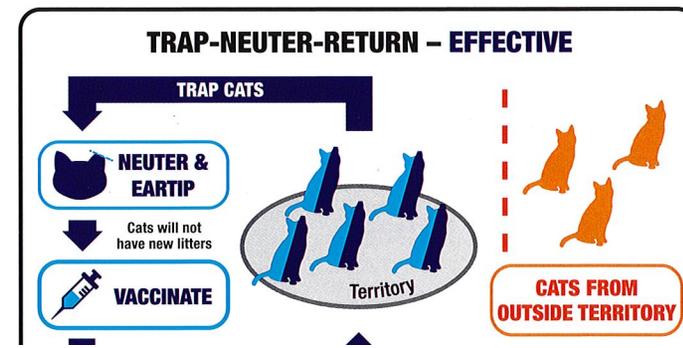
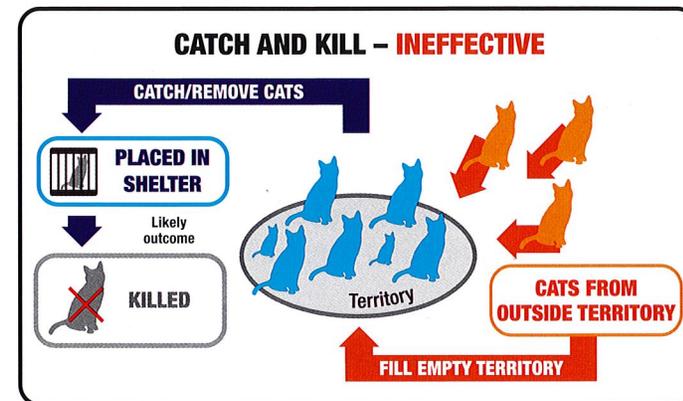
Before you begin trapping, make sure to connect with neighbors. Let them know what TNR is and how they can help. Determine how many cats you'll be trapping, and be prepared with a plan for different or unexpected scenarios like nursing mother

## JUST THE FACTS: The Vacuum Effect

### Removing cats from an area creates a vacuum.

The **Vacuum Effect** has been documented worldwide in many species. Animal control's traditional approach has been to catch and kill community cats. While this may temporarily reduce the number of community cats in a given area, it is ultimately counterproductive, as the population of cats rebounds. Due to the Vacuum Effect, untrapped cats continue to breed, and other cats move into the newly available territory.

## THE VACUUM EFFECT



### STEP TWO: TRAPPING (CONTINUED)

Place the traps on a flat surface where the cats spend time. Then move away, but always keep an eye on them. When one or more cats are trapped, carefully approach the traps, and cover them completely with a towel, blanket, or trap cover to help calm the cats. The cats will be frightened so reducing stress is extremely important.

When you've finished trapping, don't forget to count your traps before you leave to make sure they are all accounted for.

### AT THE VETERINARY CLINIC

Transport the cats to the feral-friendly veterinarian or clinic where they will be spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and eartipped. Confirm with the veterinarian what services you want, like microchipping, or don't want, like testing for FIV or FeLV. (Learn why at [alleycat.org/FeLV-FIV](http://alleycat.org/FeLV-FIV).) Make sure the clinic has your contact information and that they contact you before making any treatment decisions for the cat.

### STEP 3: POST-SURGERY

Let the cats recover overnight in the area you set up or at the veterinary clinic. Keep them covered in their traps to reduce stress. Monitor the cats to make sure they are recovering properly. If you suspect any complications or observe any vomiting, bleeding, or difficulty breathing, call your veterinarian immediately.

### STEP 4: RETURN

Return the cats to the exact location where you trapped them, so they can return to the outdoor home they know and reunite with their colony. Provide food and water, and resume their usual care routine.

### YOU DID IT!

Thank you for helping to improve the lives of community cats.

It's compassionate and committed people like you who make a huge difference in your communities.



For full instructions visit  
[alleycat.org/TNRGuide](http://alleycat.org/TNRGuide).

### Community cats are unowned cats who live outdoors.

Community cats, also called feral or outdoor cats, are not a new phenomenon. They choose to reside in an outdoor location where they have access to food and shelter. Even though community cats are the same species as house cats (*Felis catus*), they have not been socialized to people and are therefore unadoptable. Community cats can lead full, healthy lives in their outdoor homes.

### Time and again, communities find catch and kill doesn't work—it needs to stop.

Municipal animal control agencies have been catching and killing cats for decades in a misguided attempt to reduce the number of community cats in a given area. Catch and kill is counterproductive, as it has no permanent impact on the population of outdoor cats. This endless, cruel cycle is not supported by the public, wastes tax dollars, and fails to meet the needs of the cats and the community. The Vacuum Effect is just one reason catch and kill is so ineffective.

### Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) does work.

Communities are desperate for humane solutions. TNR is the only effective and humane approach to address community cat populations. It involves humanely trapping, spaying or neutering, vaccinating, and returning community cats to their outdoor homes. Afterward, there are no more litters of kittens—the population is stabilized. TNR stops the stress associated with pregnancy and mating behaviors, such as yowling or fighting. Not only is TNR the effective, humane approach for outdoor cats, but it improves their lives.

### You can make a difference and save lives.

Together, we can fight the ineffective catch and kill approach, support TNR, and ensure local policies address the needs of outdoor cats and our communities.

Learn more at [alleycat.org/VacuumEffect](http://alleycat.org/VacuumEffect).

Join our movement  
to protect cats.



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