

Saving TNR, Saving Community Cats

Today, Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) is in jeopardy. If you believe it's the solution to cat overpopulation in Hillsborough County, please understand the issues and act.

Summary

There are four approaches to dealing with cat overpopulation: (1) ignore the problem, (2) catch and kill, (3) catch and contain or (4) trap-neuter-release (TNR) (6). In November 2011 the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissions (BOCC) passed a resolution that TNR was the most humane method for dealing with cat overpopulation. In 2005, Animal Coalition of Tampa (ACT) and the Humane Society of Tampa Bay (HSTB) established the area's first low-cost spay-neuter-well care clinics. Access to these services and TNR are credited with making in-roads in the cat intake and euthanasia rate at Hillsborough County Animal Services.

Hillsborough County Animal Services			
Time Period	Cat Intake	Cats Euthanized	Percentage Euthanized
May 2011 – June 2012	10,569	8,494	80%
2005	19,936	18,591	93%

However, today, there is a movement among the veterinarian community to repeal the Hillsborough County BOCC resolution on TNR with no alternative humane solution offered.

Understanding the Connections

Pro-TNR. Cat Crusaders (www.tampacatcrusaders.org) (Jeanine Cohen and Gretchyn Melde, directors) and St. Francis Society Animal Rescue (www.stfrancisrescue.org) (Kathy Walvoord, president) are leading a coordinated effort among animal rescue supporters to reinforce the importance and need of TNR in Hillsborough County.

Anti-TNR. Hillsborough County Veterinary Medical Society (<http://hcvms.org>) (Dr. Christy Layton, president) and Hillsborough County Health Foundation (www.hahf.org) (Don Thompson, exec. dir.) are leading the anti-TNR effort for their respective organizations.

Positions/Arguments/Reasoning

Anti-TNR	Pro-TNR
<p>Public safety. TNR is not a "viable" alternative" to public health/safety with regard to disease transmission by feral cats to humans (i.e., toxoplasmosis, rabies, plague, etc.)</p>	<p>Rabies. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 49 human rabies cases have been reported in the U.S. since 1995. Of those, 10 were the result of dog bites that occurred outside the country. The remainder were traced either to wildlife or were of unknown origins. (11) Only two cases of rabies have been attributed to cats since 1960. (12) The earliest of the two cases involved a 19-year-old woman bitten by a cat in Guatemala. (13) The second was a 60-year-old man bitten by a stray cat in the U.S. (14) People have a much better chance of being killed by lightning than contracting rabies from trapping stray cats. (15)</p> <p>Toxoplasmosis. The CDC website states that although people can contract toxoplasmosis from cats, "people are more likely to get toxoplasmosis from gardening or eating raw meat than from having a pet cat." (17)</p>

Anti-TNR	Pro-TNR
Wildlife destruction. Feral cats cause wildlife destruction.	The facts. Humans are the number one threat to wildlife, according to leading biologists, climate scientists and environmental watchdogs. Humans are the number one cause of species loss, not cats.
Legal concerns: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hillsborough County’s own ordinance against animal abandonment (which is what happens during the “R” part of TNR, and Florida state statute 379.231 (which provides for a first degree misdemeanor) – Domestic cats are not “indigenous” or native to Florida, and relocating and releasing non-native species into the wild is a violation of Florida state statute 379.231 & FL administrative code 68A-4.005. Veterinarians participating in TNR exposes them to legal liability 	The whole story: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 41 communities have adopted a no-kill approach to cat surpluses, including Charleston, SC; Baltimore, MD; Atlantic City, NJ; San Jose CA; and Jacksonville, FL. Baltimore and Atlantic City are strong supporters of TNR. Additionally, a Brevard County attorney stated in writing that when TNR is done properly, it does not meet the burden of proof under Florida law as abandonment. Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) has stated that counties and municipalities have jurisdiction over domestic animals except on public lands controlled by the FWC. (10) Alley Cat Allies and Best Friends research has not found an instance of municipality liability for endorsement of TNR.
Solutions. They have none as of this date.	TNR IS the solution. TNR is not only the most humane, but the most cost-effective solution for the county. Ignore the problem is inhumane and only compounds the problem. Catch and kill is low-cost, but it drives up the county euthanasia rate when the goal has been to lower it since 2005. Catch and contain could be classified as hoarding and it’s costly

What Happens if TNR Resolution is Repealed

If the Hillsborough County Veterinary Medical Society and the Hillsborough Animal Health Foundation make cats public enemy number one, HCAS euthanasia intake and euthanasia rate goes up along with their expenses.

What You Can Do

- Write an email to all of the Hillsborough County Commissioners (<http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org>), letting them know you support TNR in our community. If you’re not sure what to say, visit the Cat Crusaders (<http://www.tampacatcrusaders.org>) or St. Francis Society Animal Rescue (<http://www.stfrancisrescue.org>) websites for a letter template and many other information resources.
- “Friend” and “Share” the Facebook page called “Saving TNR, Saving Community Cats” and “Comment” frequently.
- Share this document to educate others about this important issue.
- Sign the on-line petition at: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/771/522/272/saving-tnr-saving-community-cats/>, which also can be accessed from <http://www.tampacatcrusaders.org>.
- Stay tuned for an upcoming meeting to be announced on the Cat Crusaders and St. Francis Society websites mentioned above.

Reference

See <http://www.tampacatcrusaders.org> for list of references.

References

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