

STREET CAT SOCIETY



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STREET CAT SOCIETY

[Who We Are, What We Do]

Street Cat Society is dedicated to saving the lives of Bay County's homeless, abandoned, sick, and injured feral cats—and there are many! These cats are thought to be "wild," however, most of them began their lives as someone's pet and were then neglected, abandoned, abused, and left outside to fend for themselves. Worse, many of these cats were never spayed or neutered and have reproduced, creating large colonies of cats that are without food, water, and shelter—and are starving, suffering, and dying.

Our mission is to do more than just feed the cats living in these colonies. We make sure they are all spayed and neutered, given regular medical care, and safe, all-weather shelters. We also show them all the love and kindness in the world, and if possible, find loving, forever homes for any of the cats who want to be around people.





BAY COUNTY'S STREET CATS

[A Few Statistics]

First, what happens to cats that are living on Bay County's streets? How they got there is a sad story. Many street cats were former pets that were either let outside to "enjoy their freedom" and wandered away, or the owners moved and left them to fend for themselves. Others began their lives on the streets as kittens, born to a female cat who was not responsibly spayed—and because a male cat was not responsibly neutered.

These street cats generally find their way into one of the many feral cat colonies in Bay County. These colonies provide protection from predators and also give them a perceived "safe" home. While there is certainly safety in numbers, any cat living on the streets is in peril, and most of them are starving, injured, or sick and dying.

It's additionally problematic that community, feral, stray, and outdoor cats are not recognized or protected by Bay County's current laws—they basically have no real right to be alive and outside unless they are on a leash. Under current laws, these cats are breaking the law by "roaming free" and it is also illegal for anyone to feed or care for them.

Every Day at Animal Control

Bay County Animal Control is always very busy, especially since they take in, on average, over 20 cats a day.

Animal control cannot possibly keep all those cats and many are killed.

2021: A Grim Year

In 2021, Bay County Animal Control took in over 1,800 cats.

Animal Control could not find the owners or adopt out all those cats, so over 50% of them were killed.

Kittens

Bay County Animal Control takes in 40 kittens a day during "kitten season."

Animal Control cannot care for these tender, new lives or find homes for all of them, so almost all are killed.

Feral and Unsocialized Cats

All cats that Bay County Animal Control considers "wild" or feral are held for 48-hours, but since finding homes for unsocialized, unadoptable cats is impossible, they are killed.



The Vacuum Effect

"Nature Abhors a Vacuum"

The above expression refers to the phenomenon that when a space is emptied, nature will fill it. Once you understand this reality, you'll know why killing cats or removing them from a given location is doomed to fail due to the Vacuum Effect.

Quick Facts

- If cats are removed from their outdoor home, it creates a territorial opening—or vacuum—that will not remain empty.
- Removing cats from an area will cause a temporary decrease in the cat population, but more cats will quickly take their place.
- This phenomenon is known in conservation studies as the Vacuum Effect. The Vacuum Effect has been observed in many species, including feral cat colonies.
- Catching and removing (or killing) cats is a futile, expensive, deadly cycle which yields no long-term benefits.
- Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) is the only way to stabilize cat populations. It is the humane, effective approach to community cats and is sound public policy.

Laws and Policies

Municipalities and animal control agencies must include how the Vacuum Effect affects feral cat colonies before enacting laws and policies. This will ensure effective, responsible governance, while at the same time provide the best outcome for every feral and stray cat.



CURRENT "SOLUTIONS"

[Street Cat Controls That Don't Work]

Removing and Relocating Feral and Stray Cats

Any attempts to permanently remove feral and stray cats from an area fail because of a natural and scientifically-documented phenomenon known as the Vacuum Effect (see left). In basic terms, whenever cats are removed, new cats move in or the surviving cats that are left behind continue to breed. Also, the catch-and-kill methods practiced and used for decades by animal control divisions are ineffective. As the Humane Society of the Ochocos in Oregon says, "...We know now that more than 30 years of trapping and killing cats has done nothing to reduce the feral cat population."

While it sometimes seems like an attractive option, relocating feral and stray cats is ineffective, because it also creates the Vacuum Effect. Relocation also causes these cats undue stress and suffering, because they are not socialized to people and bond to their outdoor homes. People misguidedly believe that a feral or stray cat's life will be better someplace else, but once removed and relocated, many will try to go back to the place they called "home." In most cases, these cats have died trying to get there.

Feral and Stray Cat Adoptions

Studies show that cats who have lived outside their entire life have trouble making the transition to living indoors. This is especially true for feral cats who are frightened of people, so to suggest that all feral cats can go into homes lacks the big picture of the true behavior of cats who live their lives outdoors and thrive with their colony members. More importantly, without established and successful spay and neuter programs, the sheer number of feral and stray cats that need to be placed into loving homes make adoption efforts nearly impossible.

Cat Sanctuaries

While cat sanctuaries are wonderful and their workers are well-intentioned, they do nothing to stabilize the cat population. There will simply never be enough sanctuaries to house every cat in every community. What's more, feral cats who are used to living outdoors and are afraid of people will never do well living in a sanctuary.



CURRENT “SOLUTIONS” CONTINUED ...

FEEDING BANS—ROAMING

[Info On Current Laws in Bay County]

Reducing Feral Cat Populations Using Feeding Bans

Bay County’s current law makes it illegal for residents to feed stray and feral cats. This law was enacted based on the belief that removing a stray or feral cat’s food source would force it to go elsewhere to find food or reduce and even eradicate feral cat populations in cities. However, new scientific studies have proven this belief to be false (see right).

Attempts to eradicate feral and stray cats by starvation fail because other sources of food are always readily available. Cats are natural scavengers and can easily find food in garbage cans and dumpsters, and their populations’ density and location are not contingent on individuals intentionally providing them with food. Also, cats are territorial and bond to their surroundings, so they will remain in familiar location and find food in household trash, behind restaurants, and at municipal garbage facilities.

Further, feeding bans don’t work because compassionate people cannot stand by and watch a stray cat starve. While, these Good Samaritans may not want to take a stray cat into their home, they will certainly provide the cat with food and water—and sometimes even shelter. Caring people will continue to help these cats, regardless of any law.

Reducing Feral Cat Populations Using Leash Laws

Bay County’s current laws make it illegal for cats to roam freely. At-large regulations or “leash laws,” may help to make sure the owners of domesticated cats do not allow their pets to roam freely, however, this fails to address the many cats who live on the streets and are homeless. Because feral and stray cats are, by nature, free-roaming and don’t have an owner whose property they can stay on, many jurisdictions have repealed their leash laws. These leash laws are more applicable to dogs than cats, and are also almost impossible to enforce.

Feeding Bans Don’t Work: The Research

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A REAL SOLUTION FOR BAY COUNTY'S CATS

[The Way to Decrease Stray and Feral Cat Populations]

Simply put, Bay County's bottom line—and its taxpayers—will benefit financially by supporting the Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) efforts made by established and responsible animal welfare organizations like STREET CAT SOCIETY.

TNR stops the breeding cycle of street cats living in feral cat communities by preventing reproduction. This "control" method is grounded in science, is both humane and effective, and more importantly, has proven to be the ONLY substantive approach for lowering and controlling stray and feral cat populations.

The Trap-Neuter-Release Win: Decreases expenses and workload at animal control facilities; Saves taxpayer dollars; Addresses and solves community concerns ... All while humanely lowering and stabilizing feral and stray cat populations. That's not just a win, it's a WIN-WIN. Here's more:



- TNR is successfully practiced in hundreds of communities and in every landscape and setting: Cats are humanely trapped and taken to a veterinarian to be neutered and vaccinated. After recovery, the cats are returned to their outdoor home—their colony—outdoors. Cats and kittens who are friendly and socialized to people are adopted into homes.
- The catch-and-kill method, funded by taxpayers, has been used by animal control for decades. This method is clearly not reducing feral cat populations. Adopting and investing in TNR will lower costs for taxpayers and demonstrate a socially-responsible, compassionate, and efficient approach to serving the public—and feral cats.
- TNR answers the needs of the community. Prominent researcher Julie Levy, DVM, said, "One of the most substantial [benefits to a community] is the resolution of the conflict that [can] surround cats in neighborhoods. Once residents understand that something is being done to control the cat population, they usually embrace having a TNR program there."

MORE ON TNR, PAGE 7 ►



TNR, THE WISE SOLUTION

[Trap-Neuter-Return and Vaccinate]

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) provides a cost-effective answer to stray and feral cat overpopulation. TNR involves trapping the cats, providing them with spay/neuter surgery, ear-tipping for easy identification, and vaccinations—then they are returned to their familiar, outdoor homes. TNR humanely handles stray and feral cat overpopulation, allowing these cats to live out their lives, and over time, the number of cats living in outdoor groups will decrease because these cats can no longer reproduce.

Best of all, TNR is much less costly than trap-and-kill methods. It has proven to reduce shelter intake and euthanasia rates, which saves local governments' time and resources. TNR also brings peace to communities by curbing problem behaviors such as roaming, howling, spraying, and fighting.



TNR By the Numbers

- Approximately 400,000 healthy stray and feral cats and kittens are euthanized annually at shelters across the country.
- In 1993, San Francisco became one of the first American cities to embrace TNR. Richard Avanzino, President of the San Francisco SPCA for 23 years, said, "Money, instead of being spent on killing, is now being used to protect the animals, to basically support the colony caregivers and to provide the surgeries so that we don't see the wasted dollars, the waste of life, and the extra burden put on the cat-colony caregivers. It was a tragedy that needed to end, and Trap-Neuter-Return stopped it."
- Arlington, Texas had a 48% decrease in cat intake at the Arlington Animal Shelter after implementing a TNR program.
- During an 11-year study of TNR at the University of Florida, the number of cats on campus declined by 66%, with no new kittens being born after the first four years of operation.
- A TNR program at Texas A&M University neutered 123 cats in its first year, and found no new litters of kittens the following year. Over the course of the same study, 20% of the cats trapped were found to be socialized stray cats and they were adopted.
- In Alachua County, Florida, a TNR program led to a 70% decline in animal control cat intake in the targeted area and a 13% decline in other areas. In the non-target area, per capita shelter intake was 3.5 times higher and per capita shelter euthanasia was 17.5 times higher.
- After implementing TNR at The Fairfax County Animal Shelter in Virginia, there was a significant 58% decrease in the number of feral offspring in the foster care program.
- The Stanford University Cat Network reduced its feral population from 1500 cats down to 300 over a ten-year period by implementing a campus TNR program.
- A TNR and spay/neuter voucher program resulted in a 50% decline in animals euthanized and a 50% increase in animals saved in Aiken County, South Carolina.
- In an 8-year period of implementing TNR, the San Jose County shelter reduced its cat euthanasia rate from 66.6% down to 34.9%.

[Sources available upon request.]

STREET CAT SOCIETY

[What We're Asking For]

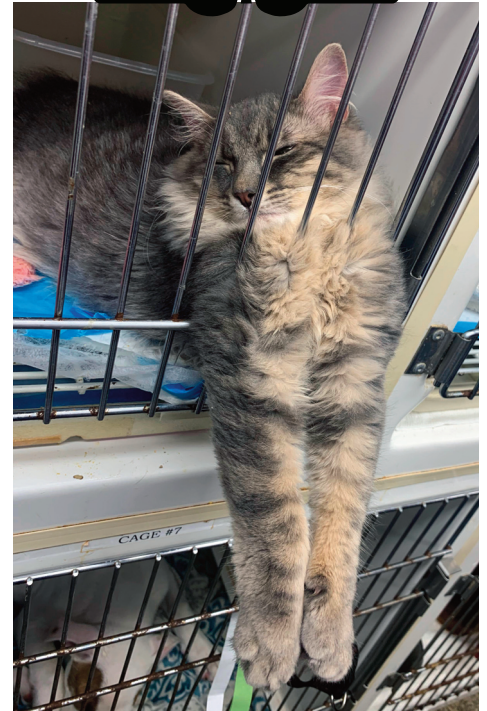
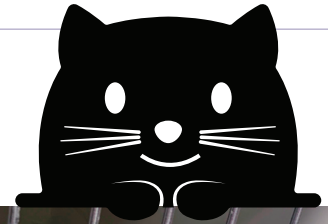
Street Cat Society is a recognized 501(c)(3) charity dedicated to saving the lives of Bay County's homeless, abandoned, sick, and injured feral cats.

We are respectfully asking Bay County's Board of County Commissioners:

- To work with us and approve a Trap-Neuter-Release (and Vaccinate!) program for the County's stray and feral cats.
- To remove restrictions and laws that prohibit rescue organizations from feeding and caring for stray and feral cats, including those living in colonies.
- To change at-large regulations, ordinances, and leash laws, exempting stray and feral cats.



Here's a common sense question: If a reputable organization is willing and able to safely and responsibly do the work—saving local government valuable time and resources, and reducing the burden to taxpayers—then why not help them do it?





**STREET CAT
SOCIETY**



OUR ONGOING MISSION

[Saving the Street Cats of Bay County]

Street Cat Society is dedicated to saving the lives of Bay County's homeless, abandoned, sick, and injured feral cats—and there are many!

Our mission is to do more than just feed the cats living in these colonies. We want to make sure they are all spayed and neutered, given regular medical care, and have safe, all-weather shelters. We will also show them all the love and kindness in the world, and if possible, find loving, forever homes for any of the cats who want to be around people. Will you help?

