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Feral Fix Project

About Feral Fix:

The project is a collaboration that started last summer between Greenhill Humane Society, Lane County Veterinary Medical Association (LCVMA), Lane County Animal Services, and the City of Eugene. Since September, each Sunday no cost spay and neuter services have been provided to feral cats throughout the area as part of a local Trap-Neuter-Return project.

LCVMA Veterinarians volunteer their time, and Greenhill Humane Society opens up their surgery suite for the day. Greenhill coordinates the appointment schedule, schedules volunteers and a Certified Veterinary Technician (CVT) for the clinics, and provides training to community volunteer trappers and feral cat caregivers. Lane County Animal Services helps identify colonies in need of trapping. The costs of the project are split between Greenhill, Lane County Animal Services, and the City of Eugene.

As part of the program, the website www.feralfix.org was also established to serve as an on-line information source for Lane County residents. The website provides basic information about caring for feral cats and contact information for local resources including spay/neuter, medical services, and trap rentals.

Since the project started in September, 395 feral cats have been spayed or neutered at Greenhill Humane Society through Feral Fix, and an additional 78 cats at the one-day Neuter Scooter event .

Feral Fix is one component of a community response to feral cats. The solution includes the many individuals who are willing to trap these cats and arrange for them to be altered. These people often invest large amounts of their own time and money to help fix this problem. It also includes the low-cost spay neuter clinics in Lane County that make it more affordable for people who are trying to do the right thing and keep these cats from continuing to reproduce. The solution also includes those people in the community willing to provide basic food and care for these cats after they are altered, helping to maintain healthy colonies.

About feral cats:

A feral cat is not the neighborhood cat allowed to wander freely, but a cat that is the unsocialized second generation, or more, of an abandoned cat. These cats, being unaltered, breed and produce more feral cats. When they live together, the group is called a colony.

Lane County residents are not alone in expressing concerns about feral cats. It is estimated that there are more than 70 million feral cats in the United States. A recent estimate puts the number of feral cats in Lane County at up to 40,000.

Research has shown Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) to be the most effective strategy for controlling feral cat populations and cat over-population in general. An established colony will defend its territory to protect the food source, limiting the addition of new cats to the group. The TNR approach stabilizes the colonies and eliminates many of the problems people find annoying about feral cats—spraying and urine odor abates; mating yowls are eliminated; and fighting is reduced.

Additionally, the act of spaying and neutering feral cats reduces the number of unwanted kittens that enter shelters. The average stray female cat will have 5.25 litters in her lifetime, encompassing 22.3 kittens, with roughly 12.9 of those surviving to age 2 months (roughly 6 females and 7 males). Realistically, over 12 years, one unspayed female, with all her unspayed female offspring, reasonably can be expected to be responsible for more than 3,200 kittens if there is no human intervention.

Feral Fix Recognition

July 8, 2009

People Present for Recognition, representing the primary project sponsors:

Cary Lieberman, Executive Director of Greenhill Humane Society

Greenhill provides the surgery facility, and is the main contact point for the project. Staff at Greenhill make sure that trained volunteers are available and on site for each surgery day, and field calls and emails from the public who want to schedule cats for surgery. They have created and maintain the website FeralFix.com where the public can get more information about working with feral cats, identify local resources to support spay/neuter, and register any colonies in the County so that progress can be tracked. To date Greenhill has recruited, trained, and scheduled more than 34 volunteers to help make this project work, in addition to the wonderful community members who use their time to trap and transport these cats for surgery.

Dr. Sandy Smalley, Lane County Veterinary Medical Association

This project would truly not have been possible without the volunteer veterinarians. The LCVMA has supported the project from the beginning, identifying monthly "team captains" who in turn recruit individual veterinarians to give up their Sundays and come do a day of surgery completely pro bono. To date, 35 different Veterinarians, including Dr. Smalley, have donated at least one surgery day to the project. This contribution enables the project to keep expenses to a bare minimum and makes it possible to offer the spay/neuter services at no cost.

Tom Howard, Supervisor of Lane County Animal Services

Lane County Animal Services staff and Advisory Committee members have been at the table from the beginning helping to craft this community collaboration. LCAS officers in the field and other staff play an important role in informing citizens about Feral Fix as a resource to help with feral colonies. Additionally, when the waiting list for the program grew to a point where people would have to wait months, LCAS arranged for a visit to Eugene from the Neuter Scooter to provide low and no-cost spay and neuter services to 78 feral and other cats during one Saturday in June.

Dee Ann Raile, Finance Director for City of Eugene

The City of Eugene has been a terrific partner in helping make this possible, specifically supporting the surgery costs associated with feral cats trapped in Eugene. A little more than a year ago the City Council held a work session and discussed the latest research on effectively dealing with feral cat colonies, where the effectiveness of Trap-Neuter-Return was highlighted. The City of Eugene is a partner with LCAS for animal services, and agreed to support this project to help provide a no-cost option for these feral cats.

The financial costs for the program are shared by LCAS, Greenhill, and the City of Eugene in order to cover all the non-veterinarian expenses required for the surgeries.