

Animal Rescue League of Berks County

Community Cat Protection Policy

Effective immediately, the Animal Rescue League of Berks County (ARL) will not impound healthy unsocialized cats typically referred to as feral cats (“ferals”). This policy authorizes the use of demonstrated strategies to stabilize and reduce the feral cat population of Berks County and does not change the ARL’s commitment to help the sick, injured and otherwise needy cats, including ‘friendly’ free-roaming cats (unsupervised strays found outdoors). This policy applies strictly to feral cats that enter the facility.

Due to their extreme fear of human contact and physical confinement, ferals are not suitable candidates for adoption as pets. Instead of accepting trapped ferals and euthanizing them, the ARL is now implementing the proven method of managing this class of cats: a community-based Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program, referred to as **ARL’s Community Cat Protection Program (CCPP)**.

ARL’s CCPP shall assist individuals who identify cats/colonies for TNR by providing low-cost spaying/neutering, other veterinary services, training, equipment and additional resources as needed and available, including on-going management of established colonies.

Through targeted TNR, feral cats are humanely trapped, evaluated by a veterinarian, vaccinated, surgically sterilized (spayed/castrated) and given an **ear-tip** for identification (top 3/8 inch of left ear removed while under anesthesia). After surgery, they are returned to their original outdoor location to live out the remainder of their lives, preferably managed by colony caregiver(s). **Once released with the ear-tip, they are considered a “Community Cat” (CC)**, for whom the following general provisions apply:

1. The ear-tip visually alerts the public that the CC(s) are sterilized and vaccinated and therefore are exempt from being considered ‘at-large’ or a nuisance.
2. Unless obviously injured or otherwise in distress, CCs shall be left where seen and shall not be trapped or otherwise harmed. Individuals may report sightings of new CCs at a location and follow-up will be provided (as resources are available) as part of the on-going monitoring/management process of TNR/CCPP.
3. Individuals bringing healthy, trapped CCs (with an ear-tip) to ARL shall be informed of the current PA cat protection law and shall be educated on the comprehensive benefits of this policy and CCPP, including providing short- and long-term resolution to specific complaints.

ARL’s goal is for the individual to gain a basic understanding of the effectiveness of TNR and at least agree to the return and release of the unharmed CC to its original location. Procedures shall be in place to record the individual’s information and location where cat was trapped so, if needed, ARL can provide for its return. Follow-up shall be performed as resources are available to ensure any further complaints are addressed and cats remain unharmed at that particular location.

To further encourage coexistence of CCs and residents, ARL will offer education, humane deterrents and other resources to those who prefer to keep CCs out of certain areas.

Animal Rescue League of Berks County

Community Cat Protection Policy

As part of initiating TNR, individuals reporting the colony shall confirm that TNR does not violate local municipality ordinances; ARL shall not be responsible to make such determination(s). It shall be understood that this policy serves as ARL's position statement to advocate, endorse and assist in performing TNR in Berks County.

We Want to Help!

ARL is committed to assisting Berks County residents and the feral cat population through effective, long-term and scientifically proven management techniques that reduces colony size over time¹, quickly stabilizes feral cat populations by instantly ending reproduction and by removing socialized cats from the colony² while improving the cats' health and quality of life^{3, 4}.

Community concerns (spraying, yowling, fighting) are addressed⁵, community morale improves and people and cats co-exist⁶. Familiar places like the NJ Shore, Atlantic City boardwalk⁷ and many other cities have had great success using TNR. Helping ARL use TNR will free up more of our resources to care for family pets when they arrive at the shelter⁸.

If you or someone you know has a concern with free-roaming cat(s) or would like to make us aware of an unmanaged cat colony, please email us at: tnr@berksarl.org or call the shelter at 610-373-8830. We have resources to assist you and these animals so everyone can live in harmony. Other cities and shelters across the U.S. have already proven the model works to solve this problem and Berks County just needs to follow those steps. Please let us help!

Important Notice:

It is illegal to poison, shoot, kill or otherwise harm any cat (pet, stray or feral) as they are protected by anti-cruelty laws in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and are NOT considered or described as pests, 'nuisance animals' or invasive species under Pennsylvania law and regulations. Violations can be considered a felony, which include fines up to \$15,000 and incarceration of up to three (3) years.

Animal Rescue League of Berks County

Community Cat Protection Policy

Footnotes:

[1] Levy, Julie K., David W. Gale, and Leslie A. Gale. "Evaluation of the Effect of a Long-Term Trap-Neuter-Return and Adoption Program on a Free-Roaming Cat Population." *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 222, no. 1 (2003): 42-46

[2] Hughes, Kathy L. and Margaret R. Slater. "Implementation of a Feral Cat Management Program on a University Campus." *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5, no. 1 (2002): 15-28

[3] Scott, Karen C., Julie K. Levy, and Shawn P. Gorman. "Body Condition of Feral Cats and the Effect of Neutering." *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5, no. 3 (2002): 203-213

[4] Levy

[5] Neville, P.F. and J. Remfry. "Effect of Neutering on Two Groups of Feral Cats." *The Veterinary Record* 114 (1984): 447-450

[6] Hughes, Kathy L., Margaret R. Slater, and Linda Haller. "The Effects of Implementing a Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Program in a Florida County Animal Control Service." *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5 (2002): 285-289

[7] <https://www.alleycat.org/resources/alley-cat-allies-establishes-trap-neuter-return-program-on-atlantic-citys-boardwalk-boardwalk-cats-project-is-born/>

[8] Edinboro, Charlotte H, Watson, Heather N and Anne Fairbrother. "Association between a shelter-neuter-return program and cat health at a large municipal animal shelter" *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 238, no. 3 (2016): 298-308

Attachments:

[PDF Atlantic City Boardwalk Cats Project](#)