



Feral Cat Project

Project #

21-601

County: MD

Number of Cats Spayed: 192

Number of Dogs Spayed: 0

Number of Cats Neutered: 176

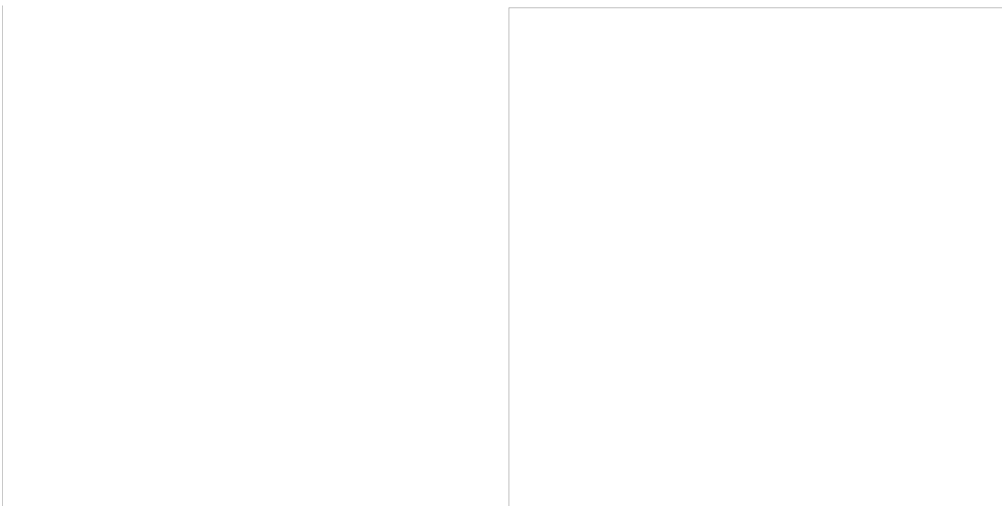
Number of Dogs Neutered: 0

Amount Received: \$21,672.00

Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0.00

Project Synopsis:

Our Feral Cat Project was a continuation of our community cat trap, neuter, and return (TNR) activities. Since 2016, we have spayed/neutered and vaccinated approximately 4000 cats, placing them into managed colonies throughout Charles County. Our project was complaint based, so community members were able to submit requests for TNR help on our website. Our coordinator evaluated each request prior to scheduling the trapping and surgery dates throughout the project period. Our Spay/Neuter Clinic provided surgery support for the TNR team throughout the project period, with an average of 24 surgeries/rabies vaccines per week. Our animal shelter, which is adjacent to the spay/neuter clinic, has the capacity to house a some of the TNR cats prior to surgery when we have a large colony that needs support, and the surgery staff can do extra surgeries some days.



Project Description:

The Humane Society of Charles County project targeted TNR services to managed feral cat colonies in the Charles County locations. Using three years of historic TNR program data, these locations had the highest number of complaint-based TNR requests, plus the highest density of unaltered community-cat population (est. +21,000 unaltered cats). This project provided (TNR) spay/neuter and rabies vaccination for 368 feral/community cats in the community. HSCC's support for managed colonies, ensures feral cat health, and ultimately reducing the intake of feral kittens and cats at local shelters, has been a multi-year project. Approximately 70% of our local shelter intakes are cats and 90% of kittens intakes are born to colony cats, reversing this trend is a high priority for the community and the shelter. The TNR coordinators trapped feral cats in their colonies, transported them to the clinic for TNR services, oversaw their post-op recovery and then returned them to their managed colony. The project facilitated some mass trapping efforts in a few of the high density colonies, but the overall work flow was determined by requests paired with the capacity of our clinic team.

Summary of Approach:

The HSCC Feral Cat Project is complaint based, so we concentrated our TNR service advertising in the targeted areas via social media, our website application and email blasts. We maintain an ongoing list of customers requesting TNR service, which allows us to begin the project when the funds are received. All applicants must sign permission forms for TNR prior to the service. The TNR Coordinator scheduled each trapping event based on the most effective use of resources, clinic availability and managing the majority of the colony cats. Finally, the TNR coordinator remained continuously in touch with all of the existing colony managers (to keep identifying any new feral "residents" that enter their colonies). Going forward, to sustain the momentum of the project, each successive year we plan to continue to expand the coverage zones in order to increase the population of altered feral populations and continue to reduce the flow of cats and kittens to the local shelters.

Accomplishments:

Our project was successful due to the rapid completion of the planned work, in part due to the reduced number of surgeries allocated to this year's funding and because of the overpopulation resulting from the 2020 Covid-19 related surgery restrictions. Our demand for TNR services outpaced our ability to provide trapping under the TNR Feral Cat program. Donations from the feral cat supporter within our community enabled us to provide spay/neuter surgeries to 171 additional cats in 2021. Donations also allowed us to administer FVRCP vaccines to all our TNR cats (569), providing them with protection against a variety of diseases that can potentially devastate an otherwise healthy cat colony. Community education about the life saving benefits of TNR remains a key component of our program and we feel that continuing our TNR services year round helps move TNR service into the status of becoming the "standard" of community behavior, which is considered a huge accomplishment.



Lessons Learned:

Our biggest lesson learned is to maintain strategic, coordinated trapping whenever possible. In 2021 we added several trappers to our team which enabled us to meet demand more quickly and more effectively. It also allowed us to be able to join together and tackle the larger colonies when needed. Strong communication with our Clinic team is also essential, especially when we have a large colony that requires multi-day trapping/surgery/transportation, so the health and safety of the cats is always the most important consideration. The biggest lesson learned is still a holdover from 2020, which is the realization that the effective and strong TNR during the few months at the beginning of kitten season is critical the the ability to keep up with the control of cat colony populations for the rest of the year.

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Maryland Department of Agriculture
Spay and Neuter Grants Program

