



# Feral Cats in Cumberland County

ADDRESSING THIS ISSUE  
HUMANELY AND  
EFFECTIVELY

# What is a “feral cat”

- ▶ Often called “community, stray, wild, alley, barn, or neighborhood” cats
- ▶ Live outdoors
- ▶ Avoid humans
- ▶ Not socialized, cannot be touched
- ▶ Unadoptable
- ▶ 100% euthanasia rate at our shelter



# Why are feral cats an issue?

- ▶ Feral cats are a nuisance, a public health hazard, and a financial burden to the Animal Services Department.
- ▶ Animal Services Employees are exposed to potential injury and/or illness when handling feral cats.
- ▶ Well meaning citizens provide food and shelter to feral cats, but without sterilization, this encourages the cats to reproduce.

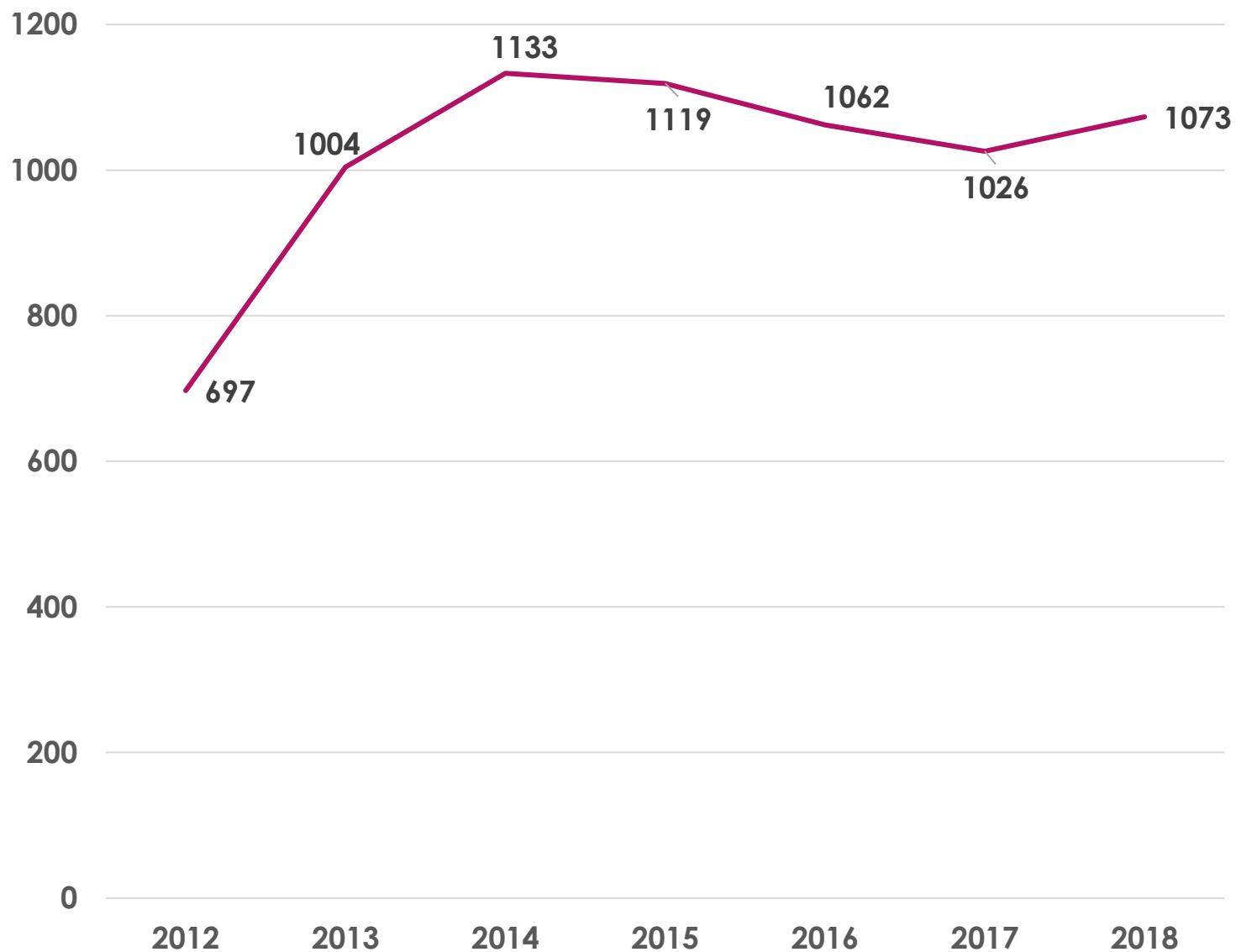




# What are we doing now?

- ▶ The previous policy was to Trap and Euthanize any feral cats identified by citizen contact. Traps were loaned to the citizen, and Animal Services Officers picked up cats from the traps.
- ▶ State mandated 72 hour hold for all stray animals, therefore an impounded feral cat was housed and fed for at least 3 days before being euthanized.
- ▶ Each feral cat trapped and transported to our shelter cost the county approximately \$27 in labor and \$2 in materials, for a total cost of \$29, not including vehicle costs (fuel and mileage)





**Number of  
Feral Cats  
trapped and  
euthanized at  
CCAS  
annually**

# Why do we need TNVR?

- ▶ Clearly, the former policy was not working, as the number of feral cats was continuing to increase.
- ▶ The former policy was arguably inhumane to the cats, it was costly for the county, and it put our employees at risk of illness and injury while handling these cats.
- ▶ Euthanizing over 1,000 feral cats each year had a serious impact on employee morale.
- ▶ Each year, the shelter was inundated with kittens that were produced by feral cats and brought in by concerned citizens.



# Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate and Return (TNVR)

- ▶ Instead of bringing trapped feral cats into the shelter, they are spayed or neutered, vaccinated for rabies and other diseases, and returned to where they were trapped.
- ▶ Cats that have serious injuries or illness are humanely euthanized.
- ▶ The left ear of each cat is “tipped” to allow easy identification in the future.
- ▶ Small kittens are “rehabilitated” and placed in homes.





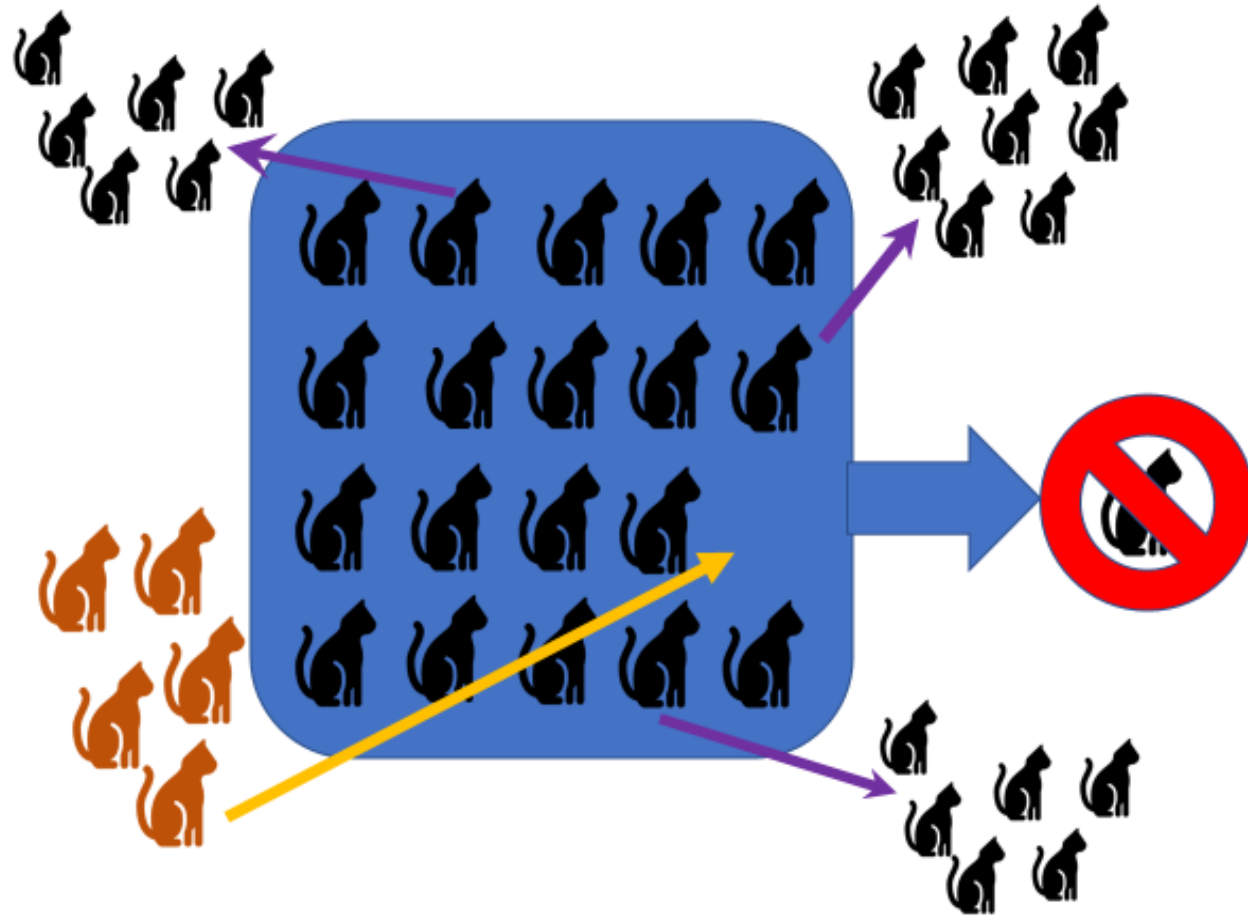


**Why does this  
work?**

**Wouldn't  
euthanizing the  
cats be the  
“ultimate”  
deterrent?**

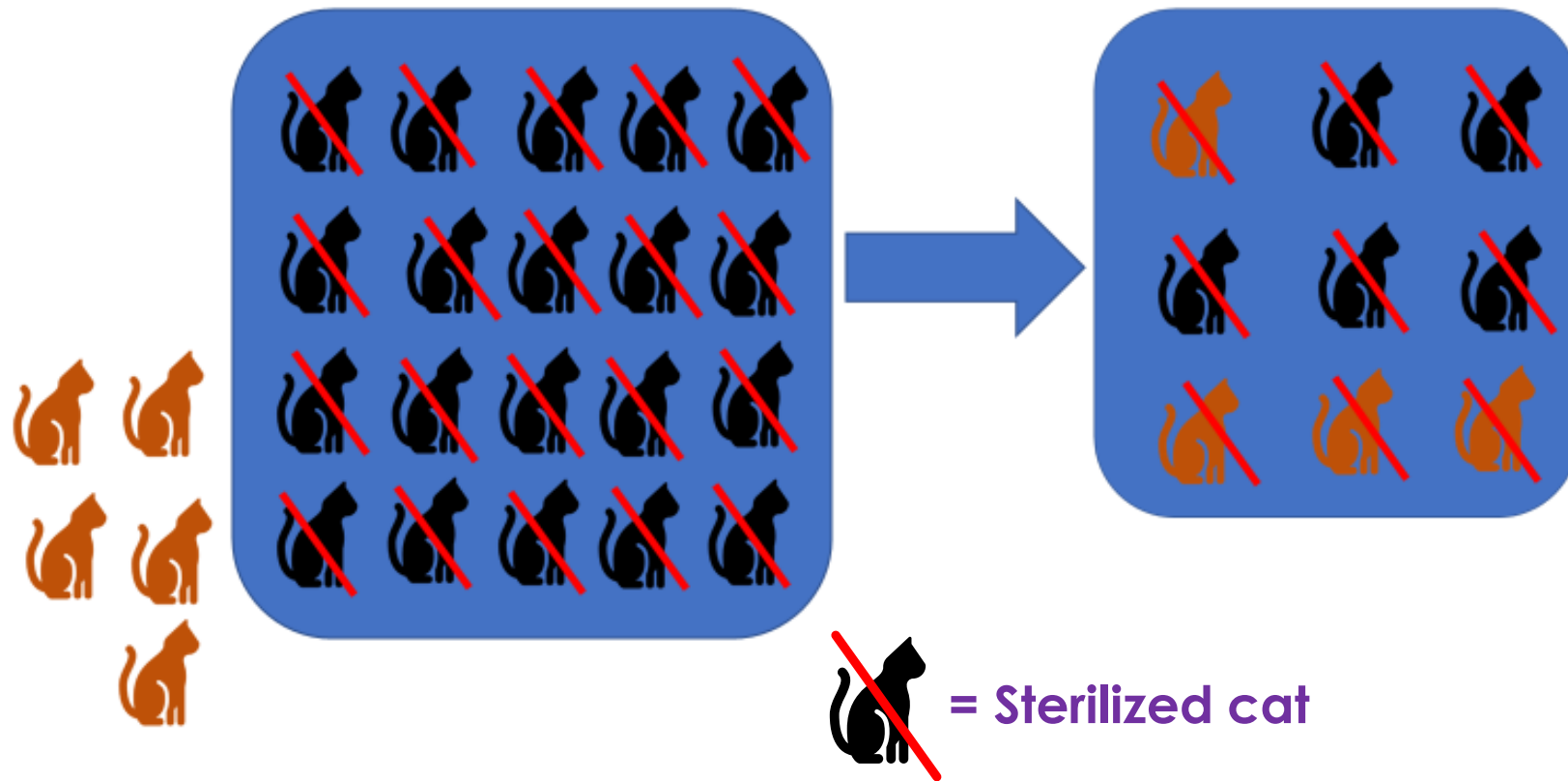


# The “Vacuum Effect”



**Trap &  
Euthanize**

# Managed TNVR “Colony”



# TNVR vs. Trap and Euthanize

- ▶ With Trap and Euthanize, we are essentially trying to empty a full bathtub with a teaspoon while the tap is running – we can never euthanize more cats than are being produced.
- ▶ With TNVR, we are “turning off the tap” by sterilizing as many cats as possible. Each year, some will die from natural causes or accidents, so the total number will decline with time.



# *Integrated Return-to-Field and Targeted Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return Programs Result in Reductions of Feline Intake and Euthanasia at Six Municipal Animal Shelters*

Frontiers in Veterinary Science, March 2019

- ▶ **3 year study of 6 municipal TNVR programs**
- ▶ **Albuquerque, San Antonio, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Tucson and Columbus, GA**
- ▶ **72,970 cats total.**
- ▶ **60,613 were “TNVRd”, 10,698 were adopted or rescued, 459 were returned to an owner, 349 were euthanized for serious health concerns, 204 were relocated due to unsafe location to return, 140 died during surgery**



# Study Results

- ▶ 83% decline in feline euthanasia in the six shelters involved
- ▶ 87% reduction in euthanasia of kittens
- ▶ 84% decline in euthanasia of cats per 1,000 residents in all 6 locations
- ▶ 32% reduction in feline intake at the six shelters
- ▶ Live release rate increased by 53%
- ▶ In other studies, Jacksonville FL and San Jose, CA observed 70% reduction in feline euthanasia due to TNVR. Las Vegas dropped 80% in feline euthanasia after implementing TNVR.

# Benefits of TNVR

- ▶ Reduction in number of feral cats over time.
- ▶ More humane approach than Trap and Euthanize.
- ▶ Cost savings to the county (less than \$15 for female cat, less than \$6 for a male cat) vs Trap and Euthanize (\$29 per cat). This is due to volunteer labor for the TNVR clinics.
- ▶ Grant funding can reduce cost of materials for TNVR to zero.
- ▶ Less risk of injury or illness to county employees from feral cats.
- ▶ Fewer citizen complaints due to nuisance behaviors.
- ▶ Lower euthanasia rate and improved live release rate for the shelter.



# Who in NC already does TNVR?

- ▶ 64 NC Counties have some form of TNVR program
- ▶ Mecklenburg, Wake, Guilford, Forsyth, Durham, Buncombe, Union, New Hanover, Gaston, Cabarrus, Johnston, Onslow, Pitt counties all have programs.

# Concerns about TNVR

## Concern

- ▶ Cats kill the wild birds. TNVR will return the cats to kill more birds.

## Response

- ▶ TNVR will, in time, reduce the overall population of cats, therefore saving more birds than the current program of Trap and Euthanize, which is not reducing the number of cats.



# Concerns about TNVR

## Concern

- ▶ Stray cats at my house are creating a nuisance, I don't want them returned, I want them gone!

## Response

- ▶ If the cat is causing property damage or other nuisance behavior, CCAS will provide assistance with deterrents for the cat, and if this doesn't solve the issue, the cat will be removed and either relocated or euthanized.

# Concerns about TNVR

## Concern

- ▶ Stray cats spread diseases to people or pet cats.

## Response

- ▶ Feral cats have been found to have the same incidence of Feline Leukemia and FIV as pet cats, and therefore pose no higher risk than outdoor pet cats. Feral cats that are ill are euthanized, not returned.
- ▶ TNVR cats are vaccinated for rabies, reducing the risk of that deadly disease.
- ▶ TNVR will ultimately reduce the number of cats, whereas trap and euthanize will not.



Questions?