



My Shelter Wants to Start a Return-to-Field Program - How Do We Do It?

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How does RTF fit in?

MANAGING COMMUNITY CATS

Trap-neuter-return

- Targeted TNR
- Mobilizing the public
- Supporting TNR groups

Return-to-field



Awareness & acceptance

- This is the cats' home
- Deterrents
- Benefits of spay/neuter

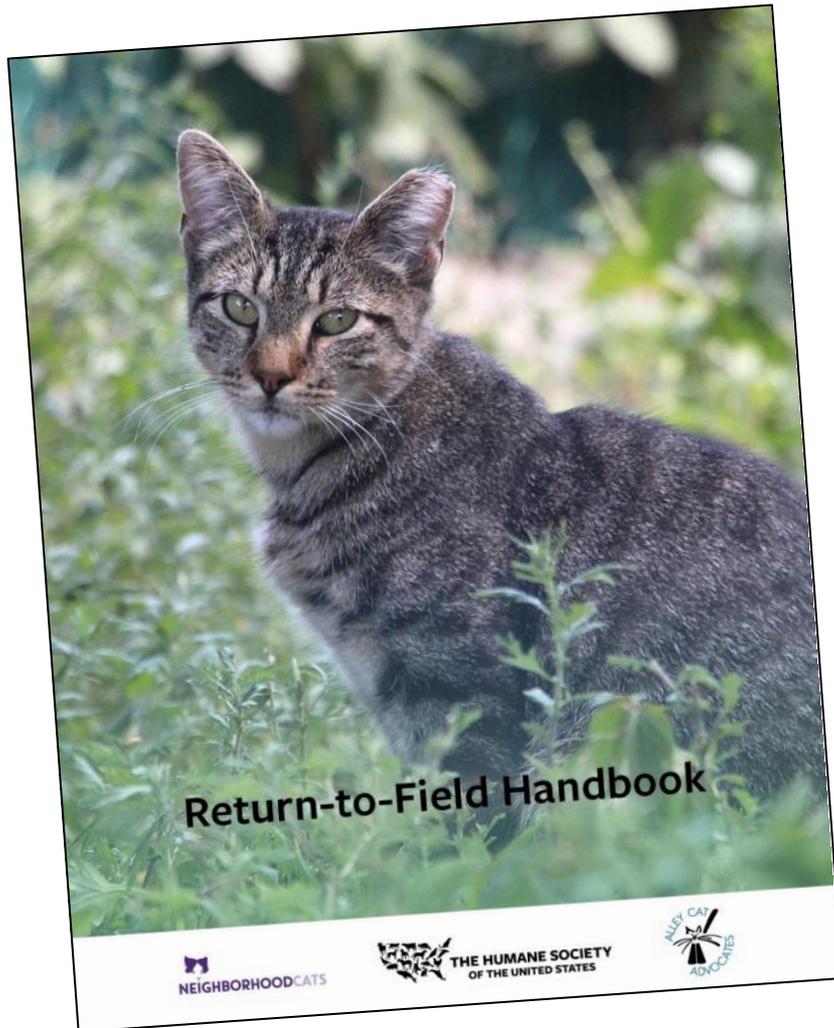
Adoptions

- Socialized kittens
- Other cats
- By group or caretaker

Low cost spay/neuter

Barn cats/working cats programs

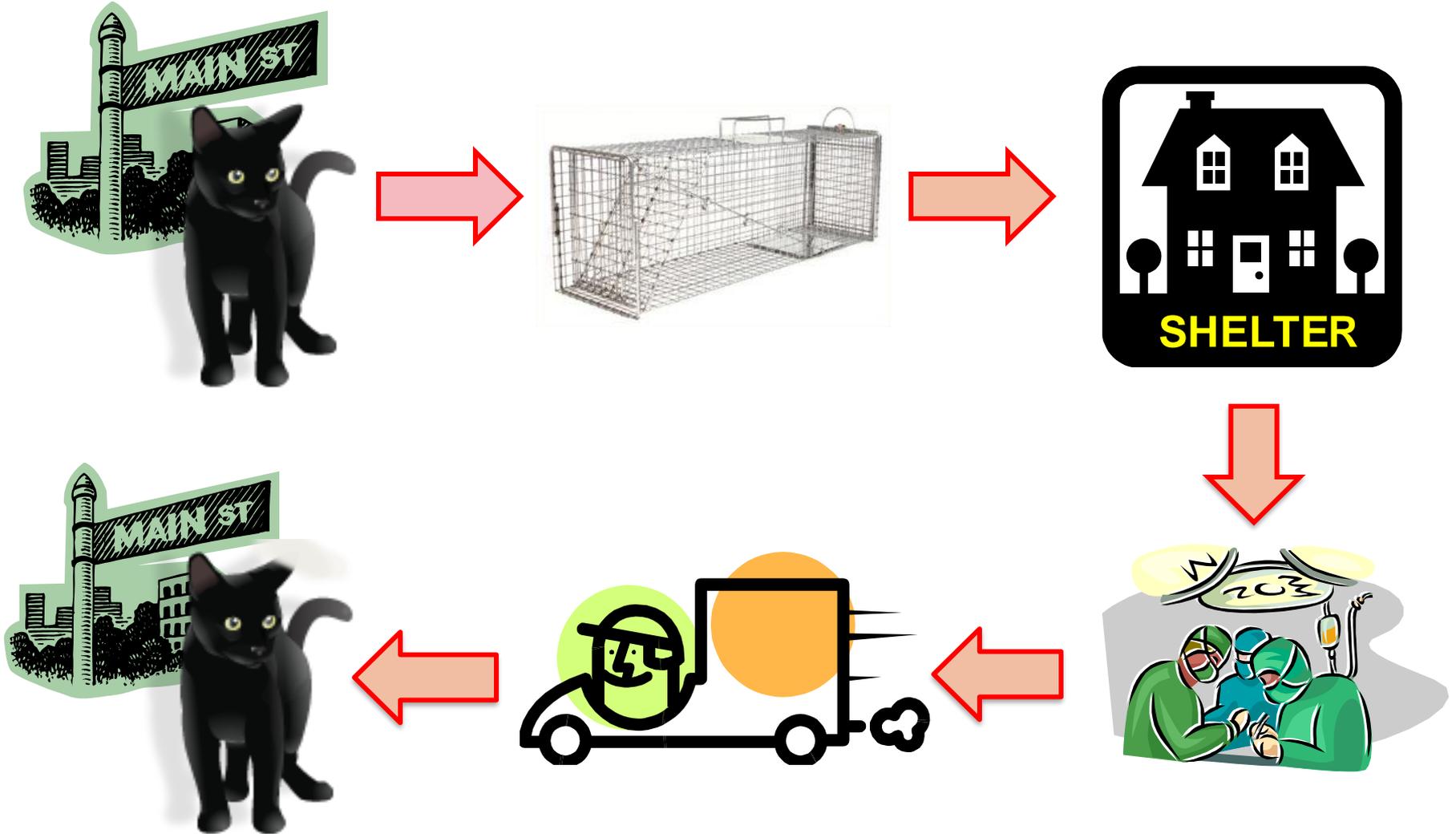
Return-to-Field Handbook



www.animalsheltering.org/return-to-field

- free download
- print copy for purchase
- authors:
 - Danielle Bays (HSUS)
 - Bryan Kortis (Neighborhood Cats)
 - Karen Little (Alley Cat Advocates)
 - Susan Richmond (Neighborhood Cats)

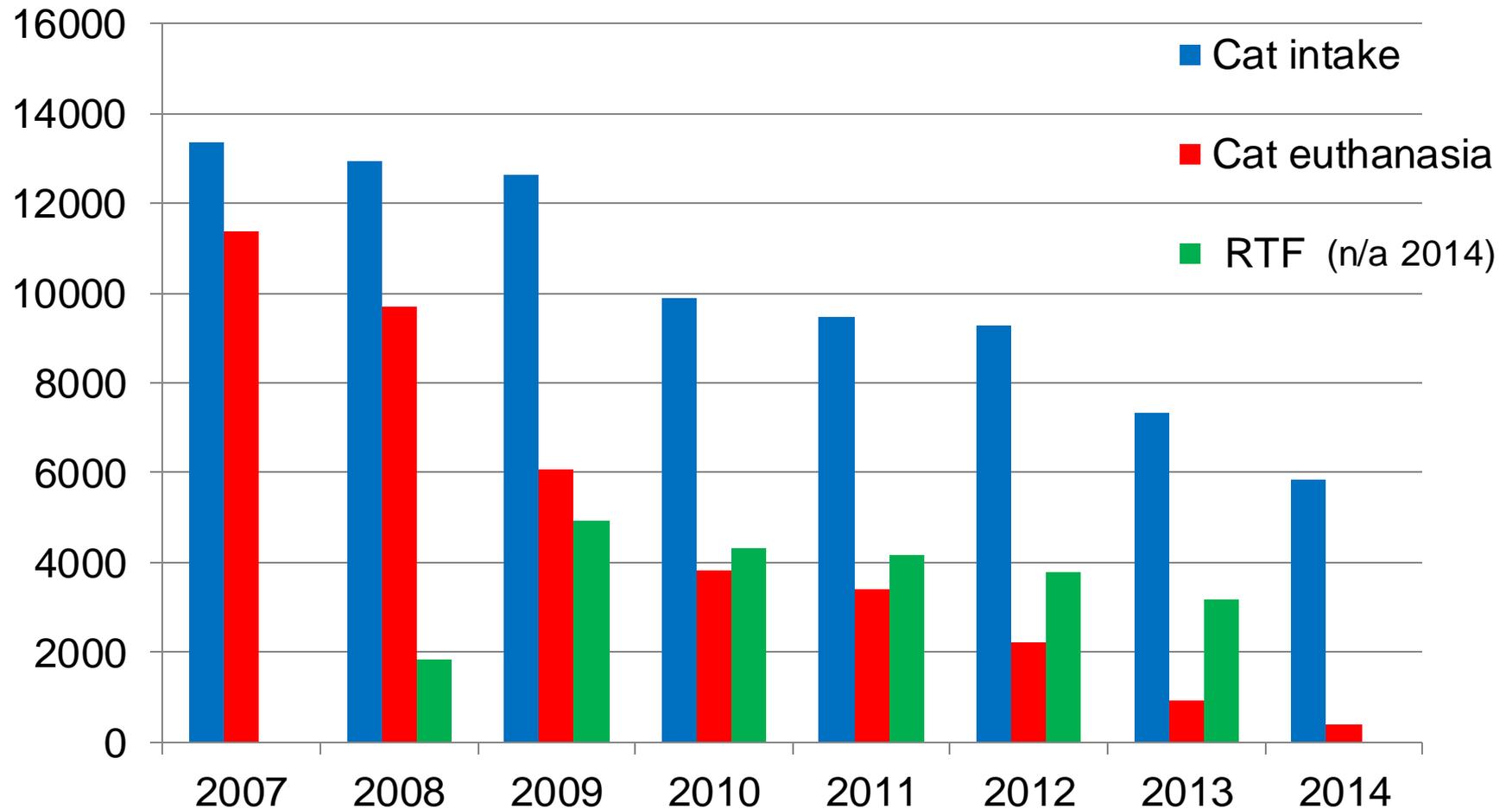
What is Return-to-Field?



Where RTF started

- In 2008, director of First Coast No More Homeless Pets (Rick DuCharme) met with the director of Jacksonville Animal Care & Protective Services (JACPS)
- Requested opportunity to return eartipped cats turned into the Shelter to their colonies
- Director of JACPS offered to return all feral cats, tipped or not

Jacksonville, FL: 1st RTF program



RTF flow

Intake / Info gathering

Talking RTF with finders

Assessing eligibility

Housing

Surgery

Return

Post-return



Intake / Information gathering



- Managed admissions vs. walk-in
- Citizens vs. staff (ACOs)
- Indicia of ownership?

Intake form/questionnaire



- Location of origin (finder's address vs. trapping location; using Google Maps)
- Cat's history (recent arrival or long-known? illness? behavior?)
- Cat's circumstances (feeder? other cats in area? construction?)
- Reason for bringing in
- Finder's attitude (hostile or friendly? to what degree?)

Keeping track



maui
humane
society

Return to Field
 Animal Number: A37792919
 Age: 2 year(s)
 Sex: Female
 Altered: Yes
 Black / Orange Tortoiseshell



Intake Date: 2/7/2018

Return to Field Location: 0000 W Kuiuaha Road,
 HAIKU

Intake Evaluation Date:

FVRCP given: Yes No

Identification:

Microchip Tattoo Tipped None

SN: Yes No Unknown

BCS (1-9): _____

Surgery Date:

FVRCP given: Yes No

Ivermectin given: Yes No

Convenia given: Yes No

Ear tip: Done

Tattoo: Done

Approximate Weight:

Is the cat:

Pregnant Lactating In Heat

Pyometra Cryptorchid

Type of Surgery:

Flank Midline

Medical/Surgical Notes:

Microchip

- Approved for release
- Released
- Surgery entered
- Outcome entered

Talking RTF with finders

- To inform or not to inform?
- Using surrender forms
- Diverting to TNR program
- Complaint mitigation – deterrents to cats

Assessing eligibility

Who decides?

- Admissions
- Specially assigned staff who reviews case
- Team

Factors to consider: the cat

- Health
- Disabilities
- Temperament
- Age
- Behavior observed by finder

Factors to consider: the location

- 
- A tabby cat with green eyes is standing in a cluttered outdoor area. The cat is looking towards the camera. The background consists of large concrete blocks and a blue corrugated metal wall. The ground is covered with gravel and some green weeds.
- Risk from physical conditions
 - Risk from finder or others
 - Any known pending changes
 - Risk to wildlife
 - Likelihood cat is owned
 - Presence of caretakers or neighbors awaiting cat's return

Factors to consider: the mission

- Objective of the shelter/rescue
- Capacity of the shelter/rescue
- Community's level of acceptance of outdoor cats



Housing: location

Maui Humane Society

- Separate from general cat population (and dogs, if possible)
- Warm, dry & secure
- Convenient to on-campus clinic and/or pickup/dropoff

Housing: equipment

Traps on tables and/or racks

OR

Cage banks with feral cat dens

Length of stray hold impact housing?

Age: 1Y
Sex: UNKNOWN
Weight:
Intake Date: 08/20/2012
AVAILABLE DATE: 08/24/2012
MICROCHIP: []

Sorry No Photo

UNKNOWN CAT

Playful
Shy but sweet
Couch potato
Chatty
Aggressive towards humans
Destructive
Should be only cat
Stray
NO CHILDREN
SUPERVISOR APPROVAL
RE-UPP:

VACCINATIONS/TREATMENTS
[] FVRCP [] Deworming
[] Rabies [] Flea / Tick treated
[] [] [] []

www.cahq.gov/pets

Tip Ear
T/M

Caring for cats in traps

- 30" traps with sliding rear door
- Trap dividers (2 from above OR 1 thru the sides)
- Sheets
- Tables and/or racks
- Video: www.neighborhoodcats.org (How to TNR > Trapping > Caring for cats in traps)



Surgery

Perform during stray hold period?

Preparations

- Timeliness
- Selecting the provider
- Off-site transport
- Scheduling
- Communication
- Payment

Surgery: veterinary care

Standard

- Spay/neuter
- Eartip
- Rabies vaccine
(where required)

Optional

- FVRCP
- Flea/ear mite/worm
medications
- Dental
- Treat injuries / illness



Return

Who does it?

- Staff
- ACOs
- Volunteers
- Partner group



Pre-return checklist

- Medical approval
- Confirm ID (remove any attached ID)
- Re-check behavior
- Address check
- Scout release site (Google Maps)
- Check trap is locked or den is secure



Return considerations

- How discrete?
- Weather
- Day or night?
- Proximity to location found
- Caretaker contacted/present?



Return considerations

- Public vs. private property
- Kittens
- Dealing with confrontation



Post-return TNR

(Where there's one....)



Measuring impact

- Baseline data
- Defining goals & metrics
- Monitoring progress
- Adaptive management
- Community messaging & response



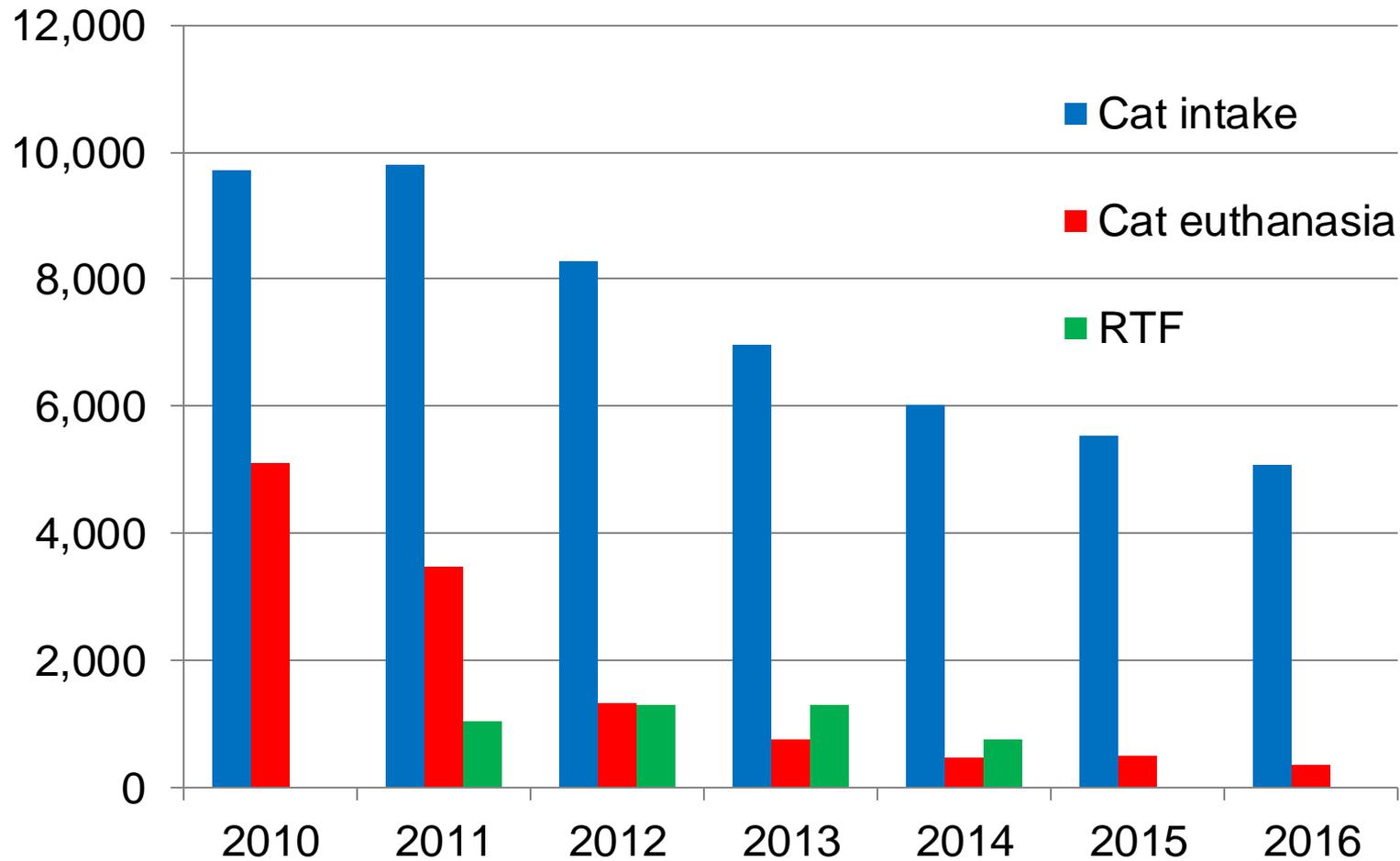
Intake & Euthanasia (% change) – Community Cat Programs

Shelter Metric	Six-CCP Median Change						
Feline Intake	-32%	-38%	-1%	-14%	-33%	-31%	-45%
Kitten* Intake	-40%	-44%	+12%	-39%	-40%	-43%	-26%
Feline Euthanasia	-83%	-84%	-82%	-59%	-67%	-91%	-85%
Kitten* Euthanasia	-87%	-90%	-86%	-64%	-79%	-95%	-87%

Spehar DD and Wolf PJ (2019) Integrated Return-To-Field and Targeted Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return Programs Result in Reductions of Feline Intake and Euthanasia at Six Municipal Animal Shelters. Front. Vet. Sci. 6:77. doi: 10.3389/fvets.2019.00077

*Kitten: San Antonio, Philadelphia, Tucson, Columbus ≤ 6 mos.; Albuquerque ≤ 5 mos.; Baltimore ≤ 4 mos.

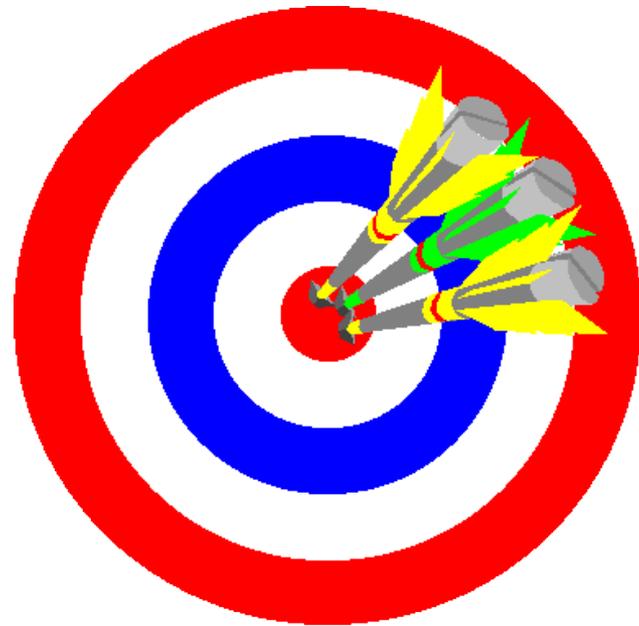
Albuquerque, NM



What is “targeting”?

Concentrating limited resources in an area of high need in order to maximize impact.

- (1) Concentration
- (2) Limited resources
- (3) Geographic
- (4) High need
- (5) Maximum impact



Geographically defined

YES



Downtown district

NO



Elderly caretakers

RTF – lone cat

Only cat in the neighborhood



RTF alone + colony

Multiple cats in neighborhood

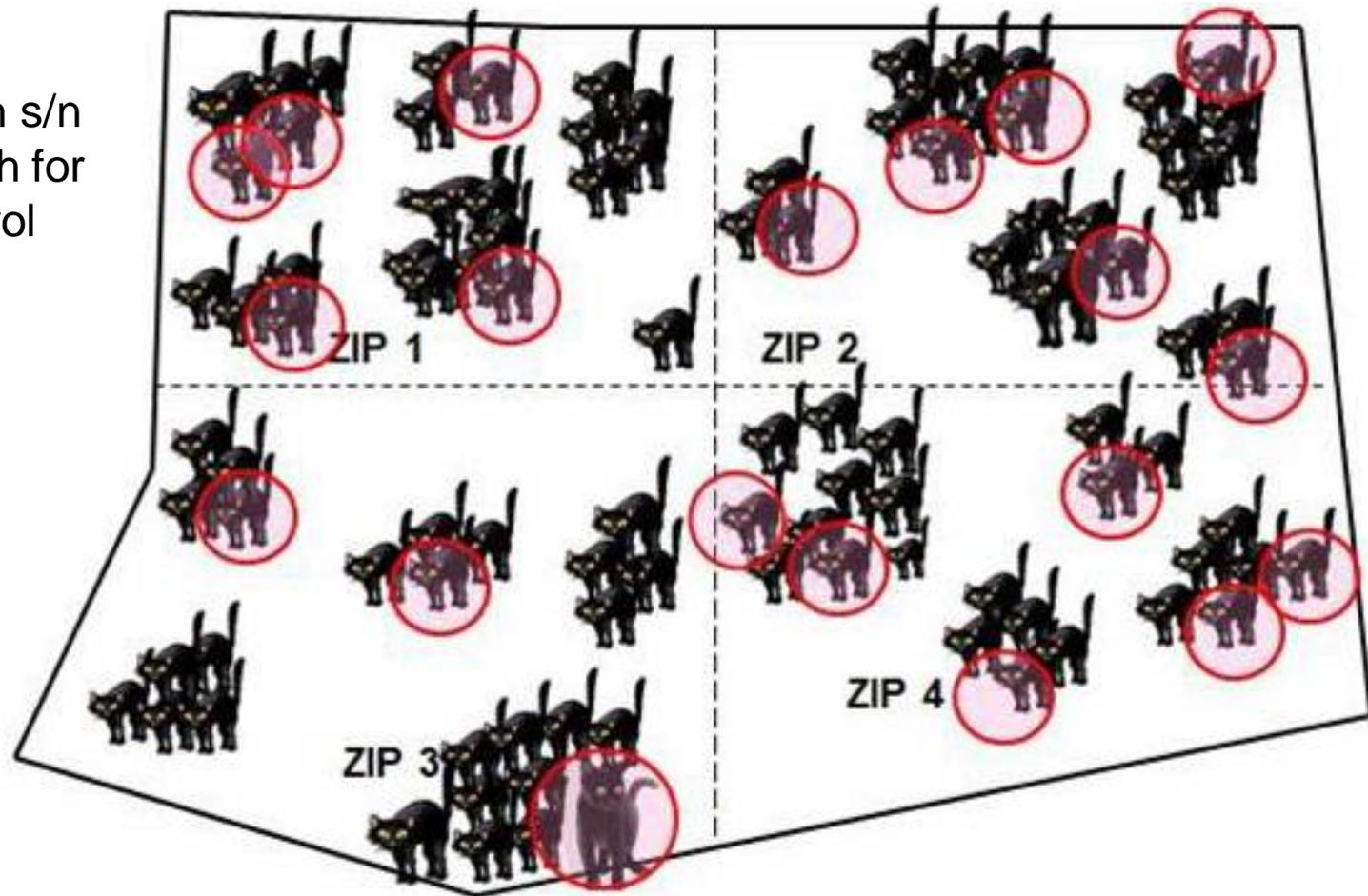
Colony = share same territory & food source

RTF alone means no population control



RTF alone – community view

No colonies with s/n rate high enough for population control

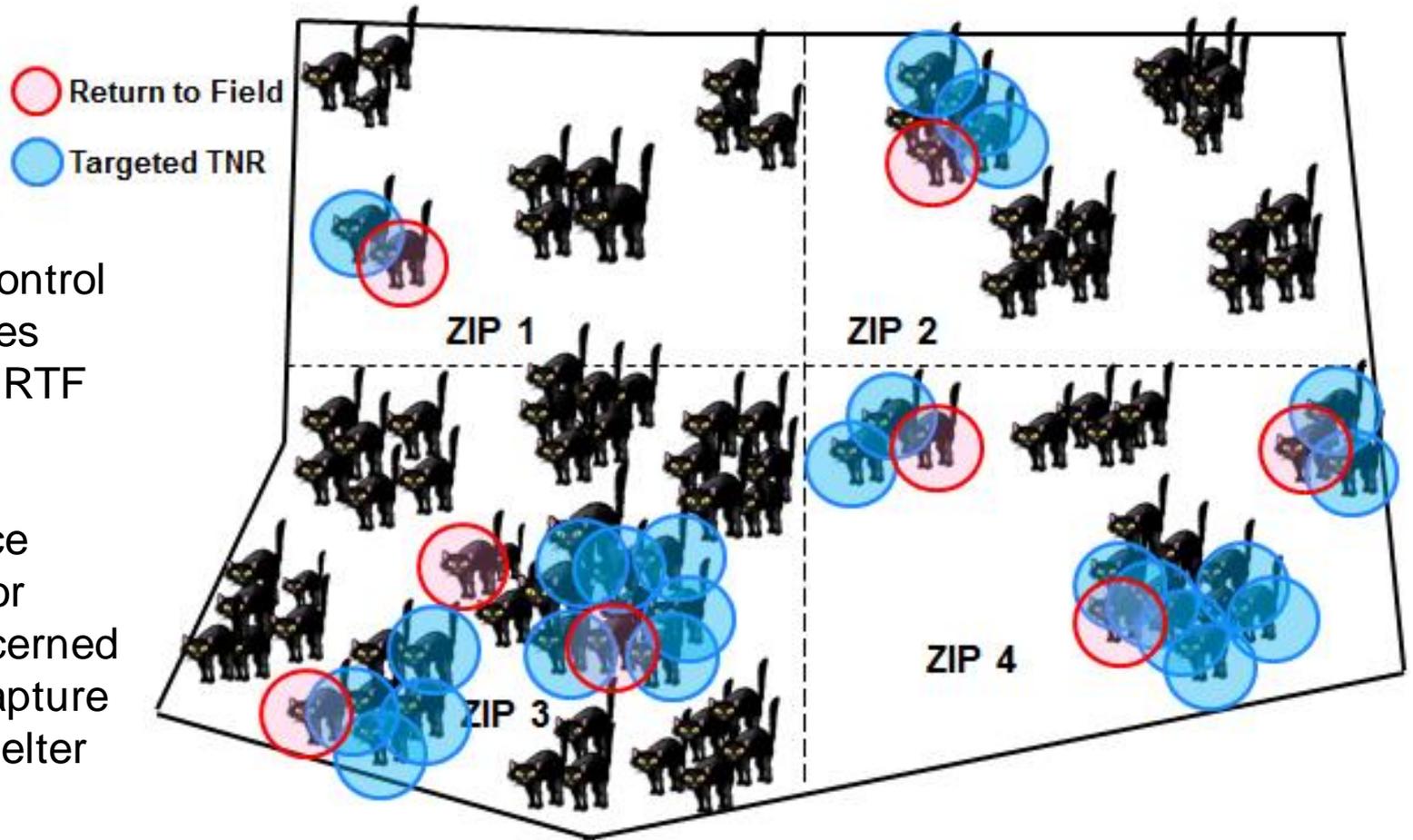


Colony-level targeting

Follow-up trapping at location of release = “red flag” approach



RTF + colony level targeting

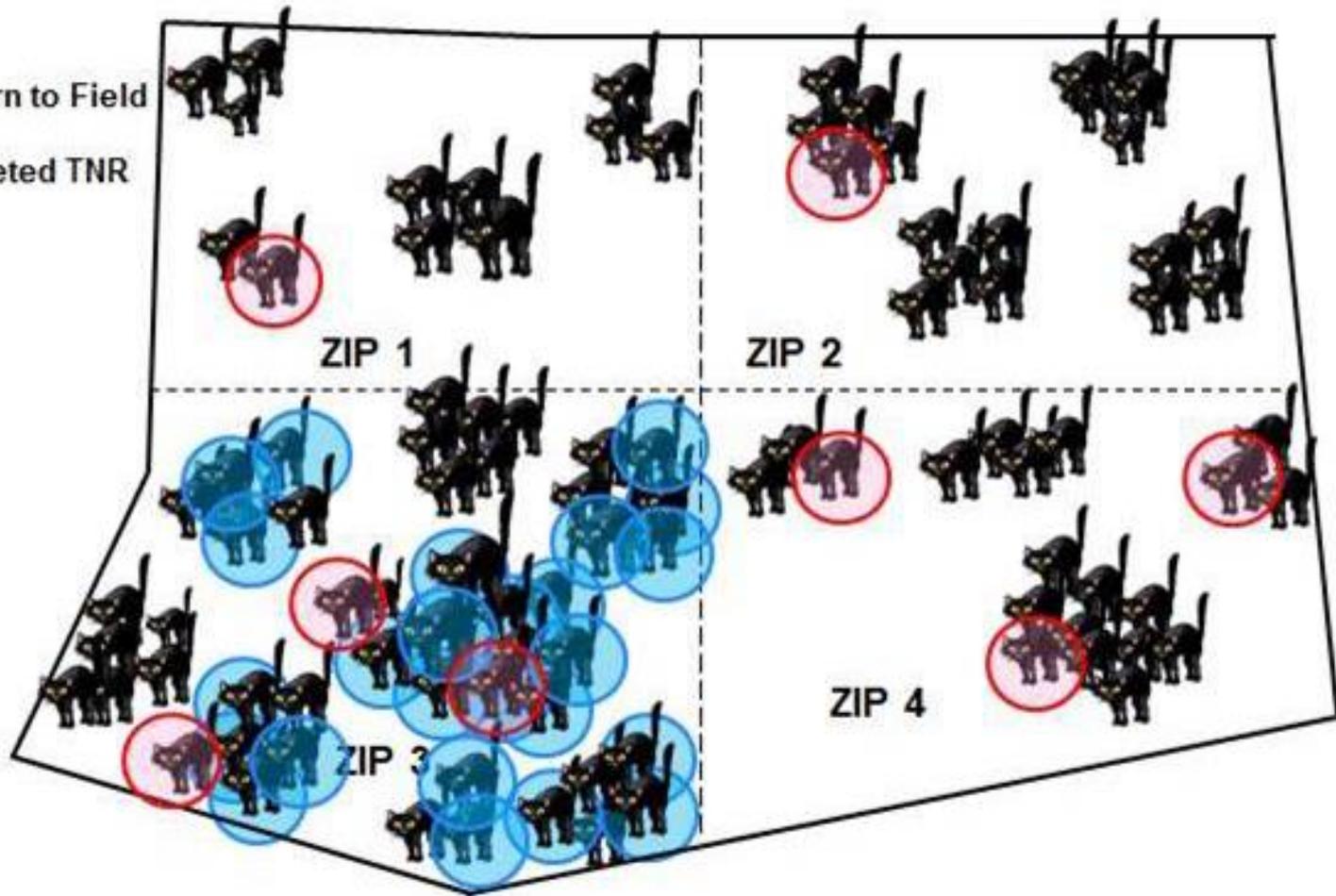


Population control
within colonies
impacted by RTF
program

Also nuisance
abatement for
citizens concerned
enough to capture
& bring to shelter

RTF + community level targeting

- Return to Field
- Targeted TNR



Target high need sections of the community, not individual colonies

Go more directly to sources of intake

Minimize vacuum effect

Where is the hot spot?



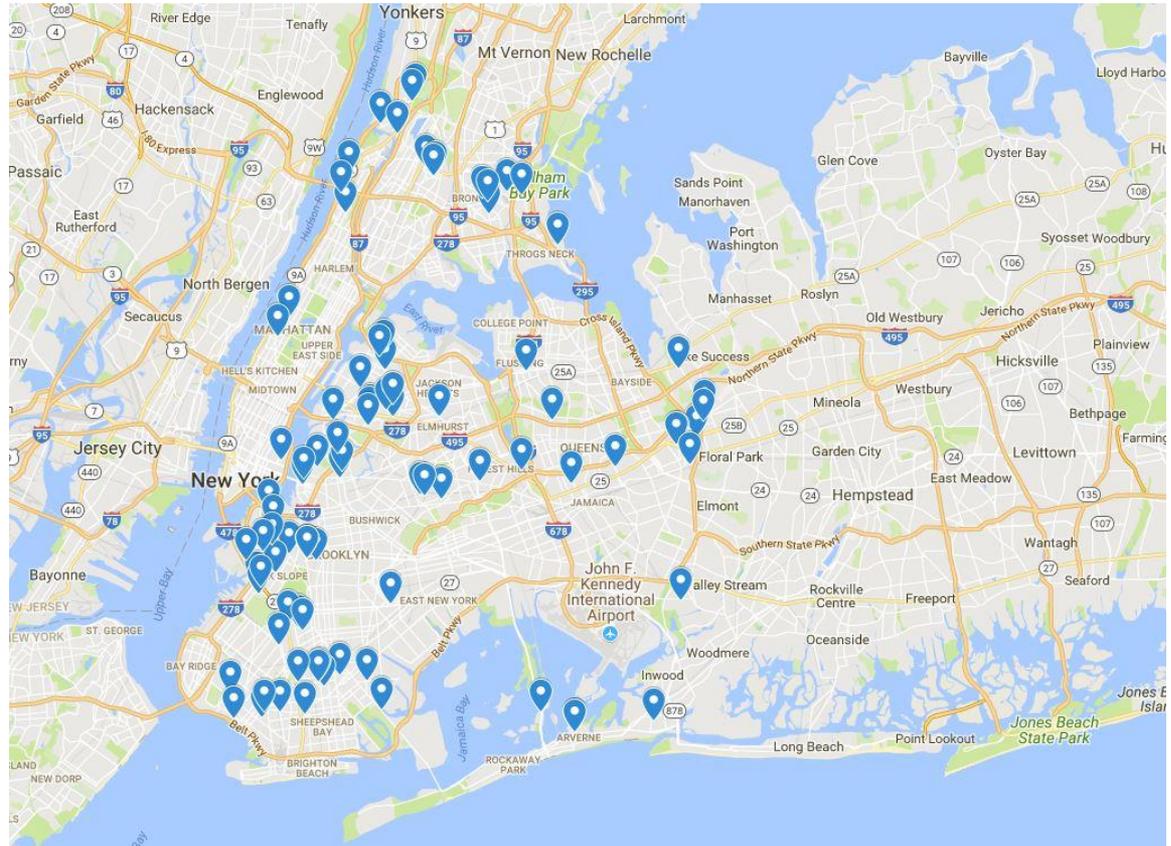
- Intake into local shelters broken down by location of origin
- Complaint calls/requests for assistance by location.
- Tribal knowledge (experience of local animal welfare groups, animal control, shelters)

GIS mapping of intake/complaints

Google Maps app
(it's free; don't need
Google account)

Menu > Your places >
Maps > Create Map >
Import

Drag Excel file of
addresses into Import
box



Estimating # of free-roaming cats

(1) Start = divide human population by 15

- Based on research data counting number of free-roaming cats fed on a daily basis

(2) Adjust according to ground space

- More rural means more cats per capita (= lower divider)
- More urban means fewer cats per capita (= higher divider)

(3) Adjust according to climate

- Warmer climate means more cats per capita
- Colder climate means fewer cats per capita

(4) Adjust according to tribal knowledge

- Based on local experience, past TNR activity and expertise, does the number make sense? If not, what does?

Outreach: finding cats & caretakers

General media (least effective):

- Mass advertising (announcements, newspaper articles, social media posts)

Targeted media (more effective):

- Advertising within Target Area (billboards, mailings, yard signs, door hangers); hotline

In person (most effective):

- Boots on the ground (door-to-door, community meetings, in-person flyering, vaccine or wellness clinics, caretaker referrals)



Trapping

NO: rely solely on residents and caretakers in target area

YES: Identify staff, experienced volunteers and/or partner TNR groups to lead the trapping, with support from local residents and caretakers

Targeting can be led by groups other than the shelter!



Questions?

