Managing a Feral Cat Colony

My name is Flower.
What is a feral cat?

Feral cats are the "wild" offspring of domestic cats and are primarily the result of pet owners' abandonment or failure to spay and neuter their animals, allowing them to breed uncontrolled.

Feral Cat Coalition, San Diego, CA
http://www.feralcat.com
What is a feral cat?
What is a feral cat colony?

Feral cat "colonies" can be found behind shopping areas or businesses, in alleys, parks, abandoned buildings, and rural areas. They are elusive and do not trust humans.

Feral Cat Coalition, San Diego, CA
http://www.feralcat.com
How many feral cats live in Sarasota County?

......the estimated 60,000 feral cats living on their own from Longboat Key to North Port....”

*Ernst: Control, not death, for feral cat colonies*
Sarasota Herald Tribune, February 26, 2010
Are there local ordinances regarding free-roaming cats?

Sarasota County, Florida Code of Ordinances part II, Ch. 14, Art. II, §§ 14-35, 14-41

(See reference copy.)
Why Trap Neuter Return?

- Satisfaction of knowing that you are an integral part of improving feral cats' lives.
- Stabilizing colony populations and creating a more sustainable, less stressful environment for the cats.
- Foster compassion in your neighborhood and the community by ensuring humane treatment for all animals.

Adapted from Animal Rescue Coalition
Sarasota, FL
www.Animalrescuecoalition.org
Why Trap Neuter Return?

- Eliminates annoying behaviors associated with mating, roaming and fighting, including spraying.
- More effective and less costly than repeated attempts at extermination.

Costs for repeatedly trapping and killing feral colonies are far higher than promoting stable, non-breeding colonies in the same location. Vacated areas are soon filled by other cats who start the breeding process over again, a well-known phenomenon known as the “vacuum” effect.

Adapted from Animal Rescue Coalition Sarasota, FL
www.Animalrescuecoalition.org
Services from local feral cat support groups e.g., Animal Rescue Coalition (ARC)

Feral cats need to be trapped before the scheduled Feral Cat Clinic Day, and a reservation is required. Traps are available through ARC, coalition members or at several locations throughout the county.

Each cat will receive these services:

- Spay/neuter surgery
- Vaccination for rabies/distemper
- Ears cleaned and treated with ear mite medication
- An application of flea medication
- An injection for internal parasites
- A left ear tip, which is a nationally accepted standard that identifies that a feral cat has been sterilized and vaccinated for rabies.

Discharge and caregiver instructions are provided at the time of pickup.
Considerations in Managing a Feral Cat Colony

- Trapping/TNR
- Feeding/Hydration
- Health/Safety/Shelter
- Surrounding community issues (Support, indifference or resistance)
- Raccoons and other furry visitors
- Adoption of social ferals/kittens
- Benefits of supporting feral cats
Considerations in Managing a Feral Cat Colony

**Suggestion #1:**
Contact a local feral cat organization for expert advice.
Resources from Alley Cat Allies
www.alleycat.org

Colony Care Guide

• Overview
• Conducting ongoing TNR
• Providing food and water
• Providing shelter
• Monitoring colony members; ongoing health care
• Helping cats and people to co-exist—What you can do
• Planning for substitute colony care:
  Who will care for your cats when you cannot?
More resources from Alley Cat Allies
www.alleycat.org

- **Alley Cat Allies’ Tips:** Financial resources for cat care
- How to determine whether a cat is stray or feral
- How to deter cats from areas
- **Faux Ferals:** How to soothe a scared stray to increase her chances of adoption
- Why it’s *Trap-Neuter-Return* and *not Trap-Neuter-Adopt*
- **Sanctuaries:** No place for feral cats
- **Alley Cat Allies’ Tips:** Summer and Winter Weather Guidelines
- Caring for stray and feral cats: A quick guide
Cat Depot Support of Feral Cats

- Food bank for feral cats on the last Sunday of every month
- Grants that offer free spay and neuters to feral or community cats.
Considerations in Managing a Feral Cat Colony (Feeding/Hydration)

- Establish a routine.
- Feed cats daily at same time in same place/s.
- Many feral cats sleep during the day; feed before sunset.
- Provide adequate hard food; soft food, if affordable.
- **HYDRATE!** Abundant clean water supply. Consider automatic feeding/water stations.
- Keep area clean to minimize complaints.
Considerations in Managing a Feral Cat Colony
(Feeding/Hydration)

- Dried/canned food
- Water
- Trash bags
- Other:
  - Large plastic water bowls
  - Rags/towels
  - Thick leather gloves
  - Plastic container/scooper
Considerations in Managing a Feral Cat Colony (Health/Safety/Shelter).

- **Goal:** Trap, Neuter, Return for every cat.
- Feed in safe and quiet places, away from public and traffic.
- If appropriate, inexpensive shelters can be constructed and should be placed in inconspicuous locations, if feasible.
- Monitor cats for sickness, mange and make accommodations for trapping/intervention.
Considerations in Managing a Feral Cat Colony (Shelters)

Note: Shelters should have an entrance and exit.
Considerations in Managing a Feral Cat Colony

(Community Issues)

- Most curious people are sincere and potentially advocates for TNR.
- Depending on the area, some might be unsympathetic.
- Contact animal support groups for advice; each situation is unique.
- Community education about TNR and economic reasons for local ordinances.
Considerations in Managing a Feral Cat Colony

*(Raccoons and other furry critters)*

Feed cats before sunset to minimize interference by wild life in park areas.
Adopting feral cats
Which one is a feral cat?
Considerations in Managing a Feral Cat Colony (Adopting feral cats)

- Some feral cats have social personalities.
- They can be adopted and make great pets, but will require extra time and patience.
  - Thorough veterinary examination.
  - They’ve never been confined; may be scared and defensive; fight or flight instinct.
  - Provide a safe and secure place to stay while assimilating to indoor life.
  - Adapt gradually to other family members and pets.
Questions?