



The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc.

"World's Largest Registry of Pedigreed Cats"

Why Back a Proven Loser?

For at least ten years some organizations and groups have continued to advocate for policies and laws that have been tried over and over again and proved abject failures? Why do these organizations make promises to solve animal related problems when they are aware this is impossible? As The Cat Fanciers' Association monitors state bills and local ordinances introduced throughout North America, it is clear that most such laws lack the kind of public consensus that could mean the difference between success and failure, and too often, even the need for such legislative intervention or its purpose is not clear.

The article that illustrates this dilemma appears in the on-line site, Neighborhood Cats, at <http://www.neighborhoodcats.org/>. This writer points out that decades of attempts by cities and towns to eradicate feral cats by the trap-and-kill methods have failed to make a dent in the burgeoning population.

The author says, "Let's assume feral cats annually kill 100 million birds in New Jersey, poisoned all the otters along the California coast and are about to wipe out every endangered species west of Africa. ... What's the solution for the growing feral population? How are we going to stop there from being so many feral cats who supposedly kill so much wildlife? Here's the big secret - the wildlife groups don't have a realistic answer."

He concludes, "Trap and remove, the traditional approach to feral cat control for decades, has resulted in the current dilemma. It's a complete and total failure and the wildlife organizations are backing a proven loser."

And yet, the year 2003 saw a movement by both law and by administrative policy to block the trap-neuter-return programs that are proving nationwide to both reduce shelter euthanasia and to reduce by attrition the numbers of cats residing in feral colonies. For instance, despite Dr Julie Levy's ground-breaking and documented work with trap-neuter-return at the University of Florida, and despite Alley Cat Allies nationwide guidance and documentation of successful TNR programs, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission last spring adopted an only slightly modified version of an outright and total statewide ban on feral and free-roaming cats.

The trap-neuter-return movement is being conducted by university academicians and established animal welfare agencies and cat clubs in addition to the often-maligned individual cat caretakers, and records are being kept to prove the success. The advocates of trap-and-kill most often depend on outdated and flawed studies that have been discounted by independent analysis.

The Cat Fanciers' Association was among the earliest to recognize the benefit to all cats and to society from the trap-neuter-return movement, and has both sponsored and participated in studies, workshops and other programs.

Landmark studies during the last decade dealing with the demographics of cat populations in homes, in shelters, and free-roaming, have established firmly that many preconceived ideas being used to pass restrictive cat laws are either outdated or simply incorrect. When lawmakers are given an opportunity to see both sides of the issue, they generally will back away from the counter-productive approach of coercive legislation.

Unfortunately, in some cases misguided campaigns that promise either to "end shelter euthanasia" or to "generate funding for animal welfare" have caused local ordinances or state laws to be passed that will set back the tremendous progress made in recent years.

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