



SUNY Buffalo Animal Law Pro Bono Project
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the
Model Community Cat Ordinance

What is a community cat?

A “community cat” lives un-owned outside, anywhere from cities to rural areas. Many are feral, but others were abandoned or ran away. People often feed them, and some community cats may be friendly.

Why do we need a law for community cats?

Many municipalities have laws that don’t reflect modern knowledge or best practices in dealing with community cats. Those old-fashioned laws cost municipalities money and cost healthy cats their lives.

What is the Model Community Cat Ordinance and what does it do?

The SUNY Buffalo Animal Law Pro Bono Project drafted the Model Community Cat Ordinance to authorize local best practices for managing community cats. The model law encourages TNVR but also allows the community to leave cats alone.

What is TNVR (or TNR)?

TNVR, or “trap, neuter, vaccinate, return,” (also referred to as just TNR) helps manage community cats. Humanely trapped cats are evaluated by a licensed veterinarian, spayed or neutered, vaccinated, eartipped, and returned where found. TNVR is the scientifically proven best way to manage cat populations, as recognized by many experts including the Humane Society of the United States and the International City/County Management Association.

How does TNVR benefit humans in the community?

TNVR halts cats’ reproduction cycles to keep the population in check and decrease cats’ propensity to engage in unpleasant behaviors such as fighting, spraying, and yowling. Vaccinations create a safer, more sanitary environment for cats and the rest of the community. TNVR puts cats back home in the community and helps keep the rodent population under control.

Don’t community cats kill a lot of birds?

Cats have shared the outdoors with birds for 1000s of years without declines in overall bird population. Cats sometimes kill birds, but almost never in significant numbers. Those who blame community cats sidestep the primary reasons bird populations are in decline: human population growth and resource use.

Is TNVR expensive?

Euthanasia costs municipalities more than \$100 for each cat. TNVR costs \$60 or less in most Western NY locations and is often funded by donations and/or volunteers.

Does the Model Community Cat Ordinance impose any financial or other obligations?

The Community Cat Ordinance simply supports and encourages either TNVR or leaving cats alone. It does not require adopting municipalities to implement a TNVR program or to designate any funds.

Under the Model Community Cat Ordinance, who pays for TNVR?

It depends on the community. The ordinance simply allows TNVR; it does not require your municipality to pay for it. In many communities, volunteers cover the costs.

Why does your municipality need a Community Cat Ordinance?

Although outdoor cats have lived alongside humans for thousands of years, some municipalities have tried and failed to “control” the population by killing healthy cats. Trapping and killing cats is not effective due to a scientific phenomenon known as the “vacuum effect.” When cats are removed, other cats quickly move into the territory and breed back to capacity. Instead, TNVR stabilizes the population and ensures that community cats are managed in such a way that addresses the communities’ needs while also ensuring the cats’ humane treatment.

