

Why Does United Paws of Tillamook Feed Feral, Wild, or “Barn” Cats?

First of all, if you see a United Paws volunteer feeding feral, wild, or “barn” cats, rest assured all the cats are sterilized or we are in the process of sterilizing them all ... so there will be no more kittens! This is the whole purpose of what we do, which is called TNR (trap, neuter, return). We humanely trap all the adult cats, take them to a veterinarian to be neutered (the males) or spayed (the females), then return them to the only place they’ve called home, where we trapped them.

Why don’t you take them away? The simple answer to this is there’s nowhere for them to go. Cats are very territorial animals, unlike dogs who are happy as long as they’re with their person no matter where that is. And while you can successfully move domesticated pet cats to a new home when you move house, cats who have never known the love of humans and are forced to exist outside in the wild become attached to where they were born or where they first found enough food to survive. Therefore, to trap feral cats and dump them somewhere is cruel, condemning them to a slow death by starvation or a cruel death from predators or under the wheels of a vehicle. The kindest thing is to take them back where they came from, where they know which predators and roads to avoid and where there’s a supply of food ... which, by the way, is usually rodents. (Why do you think farmers encourage “barn” cats? To kill rodents, which is a better way of controlling these devourers of food than pesticides.) Rodents also eat birds’ eggs and gardeners’ bulbs, so cats in a neighborhood can be beneficial ... as long as they’re sterilized!

Some misguided persons advocate killing feral cats. The simple answer to this is IT DOESN’T WORK! You have to kill over 70% of any predator species to have any effect on their numbers. So unless you kill all feral cats in the land, which is impractical and morally disgusting, you’re not going to change a thing. Survivors will continue to breed, and a new colony will soon spring up. Stopping the cycle of birth works! TNR WORKS!

Advantages of Trap Neuter Return:

- 1) Once all cats in a colony have been sterilized, they become a unit, rather like a family, and keep outsiders out. So a visiting tomcat is likely to be run off by the other tomcats. (It’s unlikely however that a tomcat would visit in the first place, because there are no intact females for him to mate with.) Eventually all the cats in this family unit will die of natural causes, and the colony will be no more. This is the purpose of TNR and why United Paws of Tillamook practices it – to *humanely* reduce the population of feral cats.
- 2) When tomcats are neutered, while they may still spray, there will be no obnoxious odor; and they will no longer fight each other for females, so all caterwauling through the night should cease.
- 3) The females can no longer have kittens, and this is the tremendous benefit of TNR. There are simply too many cats in the world, so by preventing their birth, United Paws of Tillamook is contributing to a better environment for all. You will probably enjoy watching their antics as they are now free to play and groom in the sun, no longer always hungry because constantly pregnant, no longer skittish and on edge worrying about their kittens or tomcats endlessly prowling after them.
- 4) United Paws ensures all cats are healthy before releasing them back into the wild, by inoculating and treating them for parasites and worms. Any sick cats are euthanized. In this way we prevent the spread of disease.

Kittens: If United Paws of Tillamook comes across kittens in a colony who are young enough to be domesticated (less than 12 weeks), and if we have foster homes for these kittens to be placed in, we will take the kittens out of the colony and put them up for adoption. This isn’t always possible because we have so few foster homes. So if you have a colony of cats near you, perhaps you might consider taking in the kittens – we can advise you if they’re young enough to be domesticated – and we’ll help you place them into good homes. It’s a very rewarding experience.

The last word: United Paws of Tillamook’s position is that feral, wild, or barn cats are out there because we humans didn’t sterilize their ancestors. Therefore, we believe we owe it to these cats to make amends by giving them the best life they can have under the circumstances. And that’s TNR.