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June 2, 2009

Council President Russ Tepper  
Mount Olive Township  
204 Flanders-Drakestown Rd  
PO Box 450  
Budd Lake, NJ 07828

Dear President Tepper,

It is my understanding that your governing body has been approached by an organization wishing to replace your current feral cat control program with a program of Trap-Neuter and Return, otherwise known as TNR. I have been an animal control officer for a municipality in New Jersey for over thirty years and I have studied the TNR theory, as well as having had experience with it while being an ACO, and I would like to share my thoughts on TNR with you. Please use this information when making your decision about accepting TNR into your jurisdiction.

TNR advocates will make many claims regarding the programs effectiveness, however, many of these claims are doubtful. One of the claims made by some groups is that the colonies eventually die out. That never happens, as witnessed by the much touted programs of Cape May and Atlantic City. Even the first and largest supporter of TNR, Alley Cat Allies, no longer makes that claim, as they could not support it based on long term experience. Make no mistake, TNR will involve perpetual care of the cat colonies. If the program involves grant monies or donations for its costs, that money will have to be found each and every year. Likewise, the volunteers to run it. As you know, grants and donations dry up and volunteers come and go. The support of the program relies on an unreliable base. And eventually, when the money and volunteers become unable to support the program, you, as the governing body, will be asked to take over.

Another falsehood is the so called "vacuum effect". Claims that if you remove the existing cats, more will fill the void are untrue. More cats will come whether you remove the existing cats or not. Cats, like most animals, are territorial for two reasons, food supply and breeding rights. TNR removes both reasons for the colonies to keep out newcomers. No urge to breed and an unlimited food supply are open invitations for new cats. What you need to do is remove the existing cats and **remove the food source.** Cats

will only congregate in large numbers where there is a adequate supply of food to support them. Remove the food and you limit the number of cats and thereby the number of cat complaints. Passage and enforcement of feeding bans and enforcement of existing health codes regarding garbage containment will prevent colonies of cats forming in an area. Mandatory spay and neuter laws for owned, free roaming cats will help.

Some groups will actually import cats into your community, once they determine you are feral cat friendly, and the community they were originally in attempts to remove them. Or, you may become a dumping ground for cats that owners no longer want. This eases the dumper's mind regarding the cats not being cared for.

Statements that local and national organizations support TNR will be made. And while many animal welfare groups do support TNR, there are many other organizations that do not. The Wildlife Disease Association, National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals are among those that do not. In New Jersey, TNR is opposed by the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife Council and the Middlesex County Board of Health. Of those groups that do support it, many only support it in limited, closely monitored situations. The American Veterinarian Medical Association only supports TNR if the colonies are enclosed. The Humane Society of the United States talks out of both sides of their mouth, on one hand supporting TNR and on the other hand stating outdoor cats are not part of our natural ecosystem, cause unnecessary suffering to millions of birds and small mammals each year by their predation, cause conflicts between neighbors by defecating in sandboxes and gardens and otherwise causing annoyances, and are the most common carrier of Rabies in domestic animals.

The problem of feral cats in America is huge. While exact numbers are hard to come by, there are an estimated 65 to 100 million feral cats in our country. Using the lower population estimate, at \$50.00 per cat, it would take \$3.25 BILLION to TNR every cat. This is a number that is totally out of reach of volunteer organizations, even if the number of volunteers needed could be found. If the daily care of each cat costs only a quarter, the annual cost to maintain the cats once TNR'd would be \$16.25 million dollars, each and every year. Another number out of reach.

The biggest problem with TNR is that it does nothing to alleviate the problems free roaming cats cause. They still use flowerbeds and sandboxes as litter pans, still damage property and still kill wildlife. They are extremely difficult to re-trap for vaccination updates, creating a Rabies threat.

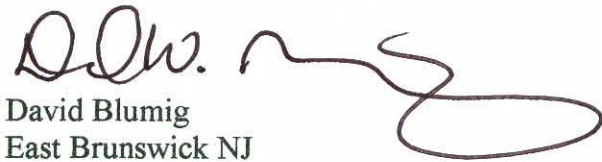
The problem of feral cats is more than an animal welfare issue, though pro-TNR groups only look at that side of the equation. It is also an ecological issue, a public health issue and a quality of life issue for your residents. In Middlesex County, it has been tried in East Brunswick, North Brunswick and Carteret. All programs were eventually shut down. South River has a program that is currently in doubt.

As an animal control officer, I deal with cat complaints on a daily basis. None of the complaints I handle could be solved by TNR. It is merely a way for cat advocates to keep cats from being euthanized at the expense of everything else. Your concern should be for all the residents you represent. While they are a vocal group, they become even more vocal should you accept their approach to the problem and then, finding it does not solve your problem, attempt to discontinue it, as witnessed by the programs in North Brunswick and Carteret. I urge you to think long and hard before accepting TNR in your community.

In addition to the information supplied with this letter, I urge you to view an informative online video called "Trap, Neuter, and Release: Bad for Cats, Disaster for Birds" produced by the American Bird Conservancy. It is under ten minutes in length and can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fvN7FNUPas>.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D. Blumig', followed by a large, stylized flourish that loops around and ends in a horizontal line.

David Blumig  
East Brunswick NJ