

DAWG COMMUNITY GRANT FINAL REPORT

Douglas Animal Welfare Group (DAWG) Project: Trap-Neuter/Spay-Vaccinate-Return (TNR/TNVR) of Feral and Free Roaming Cats in Douglas County

Who we are.

Douglas County Animal Welfare Group (DAWG) is an all-volunteer non-profit animal rescue group whose mission is to better the lives of Douglas County animals by improving their adoptability and thereby increasing the adoption rate while at Douglas County Animal Services, educating the community about responsible pet ownership, and engaging in other projects and activities that may come available that will yield positive benefits to the animals, owners, and citizens.

The TNR Program

The goal of the TNR program is to prevent the procreation of thousands of unwanted cats/kittens by spaying and neutering feral and free roaming cats, to prevent the spread of diseases such as Rabies by vaccinating feral and free roaming cats, and to provide education to the residents of Douglas County about the need to spay and neuter cats and dogs along with resources to assist them.

This public service to the residents of Douglas County fosters a safe, healthy, scenic, and vibrant community for the enjoyment of our residents and visitors. Out of control populations of any kind of animal can lead to unsightly and smelly conditions which is unpleasant and unenjoyable for most people. These conditions often lead to health hazards, not only for animals but for people as well. In some cases, unvaccinated feral cats can carry diseases that can be passed on to household cats. Unneutered male cats tend to fight and “spray” leading to noisy and very smelly, unsanitary conditions. Maintaining a healthy feral cat population assists in reducing the number of rodents in the community. Many home bound residents enjoy their “feral friends” and the services we offer assists in maintaining healthy colonies which increases the pleasure for those who enjoy these “friends”. Lastly, reducing the population of free roaming cats reduces shelter admissions and animal control calls for injured or dead cats.

There are estimates of thousands of free roaming cats in Douglas County, including stray, abandoned and feral cats. For the most part, the Douglas County Animal Services facility is unable to accommodate these cats. Often unaware of the inability for the county shelter to take in found or abandoned cats, residents who find these cats are left with a dilemma as to what to do with the unwanted cat. Unfortunately, this has led some residents to re-release the unaltered, unvaccinated cat back to where they found it or, in some cases, drive it to an area to be dumped. Either action leads to continued propagating if the animal survives the elements, or a slow and miserable death for the stray cat. Cats are not wildlife and they do not have the instincts to survive in the wild.

How the TNR Program Works

The volunteer program coordinator for DAWG's TNR program works alongside a very hardworking team of 4-6 volunteers, most of whom work, who dedicate their time and efforts to the TNR cause. We have two main trappers and four trappers who help when they can. We serve all of Douglas County: from as far north as Jacks Valley Road to as far south as Lake Topaz, from west at Stateline and east to the edge of Smith Valley, and, of course, everything in between!

This project allows volunteers to assist residents with the trapping and transporting of cats to participating veterinary offices for sterilization surgeries (spays and neuters) and vaccines at DAWG's expense.

A). Residents needing to trap and fix a free roaming or feral cat call the Douglas County Animal Services to enlist the TNR services. Their name is placed on a "Trappers List". This list contains well over one hundred people who need TNR services with anywhere from 1-30 cats in each home or area of a neighborhood where cats need to be fixed. One area reported at least 80 cats needing to be fixed with another homeowner in a different area reporting 75 cats in need of our services. These numbers change regularly as calls come in requesting help weekly.

B). Traps owned by DAWG are loaned to residents via DCACS for a deposit of \$60.00, if needed by the resident. Instructions for trapping are provided when a trap is loaned out. (See attachment A). The deposit is refunded in full when the trap is returned. DAWG volunteers will also assist with the trapping and transporting, if necessary. Our volunteers use DAWG owned traps that are assigned to them.

C). An appointment is made with a local participating veterinary office for the cat's spay/neuter and vaccines. Along with the spay/neuter and vaccines, cats have one of their ears tipped to easily identify them as having been fixed and vaccinated during the TNR (TNVR) process.

D). Trapping occurs and the cat is taken to the veterinary office. The cat is picked up at the veterinary office by the end of the day.

E). Once the surgery is completed and the cats are fully vaccinated with a Rabies and FVRCP vaccines, the cats are returned and released to the community where they originated. If a location is not safe for the return of a cat, the TNR team tries to relocate altered cats to suitable barns that are able to follow a proper protocol for rehoming a cat. (See attachment B) In addition, Team TNR helps many friendly cats and kittens that are trapped, often the result of having been abandoned by previous owners and have become free roaming, by assisting in finding foster homes for them to facilitate the adoption process of adoptable cats.

At any given time, a minimum of 50 people actively utilize our TNR program. As mentioned, some citizens of Douglas County are able to do their own trapping and transporting of the cats. However, most of the trapping and transporting of cats is performed by our volunteers. The TNR team member goes out to trap, transport, temporarily house cats (especially the altered females), and return the cats to their original locations. Our volunteers donate their time, cat food, and gas to assist in the success of our overall goal. The volunteer often drives to the area requesting help prior to the actual trapping to assess the situation to allow for a coordination of a plan. Once a plan is created, it is put into action. This can be immediate, or it may take weeks for the planning and execution.

There is no limit to number of cats serviced except when the money runs out.

1. Describe how the Community Grant funds were used to serve Douglas County Residents:

Douglas County Grant Funding was used to support the spays or neuters, FVRCP and Rabies vaccinations, and minimal medical services for the feral and free roaming cat population in Douglas County. To allow us the ability to maximize our funding our volunteers transport cats to Carson City's Nevada Humane Society every Tuesday where we are allowed to take in anywhere from 2-9 cats at a time to be altered and vaccinated at a cost of \$30 per cat versus \$88-\$154 plus per cat which is the cost at our private veterinary offices that participate in this program.

2. How was the project successful?

We were off to a great start in July 2022, with a total of 138 cats fixed by the end of November; 72 females spayed and vaccinated, and 66 males neutered and vaccinated. But then came unforgiving weather! It slowed us down, but we did not give up! Cats hunkered down. The snow and very cold rains prevented us from trapping. Unfortunately, during our inability to trap, female cats continued to go in heat and became pregnant. Once the weather permitted our trapping, our small team resumed in full force, and we ended with a successful trapping season! But we also noted we were faced with a late "kitten season". Many friendly kittens were rescue, placed in foster care and have been adopted or are still available for adoption. This part of DAWG's program is the Found Cat Program.

The success of our program is measured by the number of cats that we vaccinated to stop the spread of diseases, including Rabies, and by the number of cats we spayed and neutered stopping the births of 1000's of kittens. Spaying and neutering immediately stops the reproductive process.

From July 1, 2022, through the end of May 2023, we exhausted our funding by "fixing" and vaccinating a total of 238 cats: 126 female cats were spayed, and 112 male cats were neutered.

Considering each female cat can give birth 3 times a year to 3-7 kittens each time, we estimate we prevented a minimum of 1,134 kittens from being born. This number does not include the number of any births from "new female kittens" born which would reproduce at the same rate. Some agencies estimate the number of prevented births to be much higher utilizing a chart created by advocates of TNR. (See attachment C).

In addition, we provided euthanasia services to one very sick cat and provided minimal medical services to a few cats such as long-acting antibiotic injections for minor illnesses. The educational information and resources we provided will assist the community in becoming more proactive with the reduction of unwanted cat procreation.

3. How many people did we help?

Although our small team of trappers assisted all areas of Douglas County, we had heightened focus this year on a few areas of major concern with overwhelming numbers of unwanted cats propagating: the Topaz Ranch Estates (TRE) neighborhood, the Ranchos neighborhood, the Riverview Mobile Home Park, the Kingslane Mobile Home Park, and the Dressler Reservation. These areas seem to be "hot spots" where many animals are dumped or abandoned. Often the residents of these areas witness cars driving through, stopping to open

a car door to dump an animal out and continue to drive away with no regard for the animal or the community left to deal with abandoned animal. Although this action is against the law (County Code 6.24.020), not much is able to be done to prevent this from occurring. In each of these areas a TNR team member was able to coordinate with a local resident or two which helped facilitate and expedite the process therefore aiding in the overall success of the project. In many situations we would not have had the success we had if not for these residents.

4. What was the impact of the program for Douglas County citizens?

We receive praise and expressions of gratitude on a regular basis as we drive through the areas we have helped. Many residents remark at the reduction of unwanted kittens, cat fights, Tom cat spray, and the reduced number of dead or dying cats. Often, they remark how “pleasant it is to be outside and not hear the fighting, smell the horrible smells or drive by a dead or starving cat”. The areas impacted seem cleaner and the community cats appear to be much healthier. Not only will a healthy colony of fixed cats keep the rodent population down, maintaining a healthy colony of fixed cats often prevents other cats from coming into that area.

Some of these residents are home bound and have found the remaining “fixed” cats to be pleasant and joyful to watch. The education we provided proves to be beneficial as many residents have taken the necessary steps to spay or neuter their personal pets; therefore, reducing unexpected accidental births. We are thankful to the residents of Douglas County that have stepped up to participate in our TNR program and we are pleased with the letters of gratitude we have received from many of the residents of Douglas County who have participated in our program. (See attachment D)

Two of our most memorable trapping experiences of this year:

A Walmart employee called us about an abandoned momma cat who had a litter of two kittens in storage racks at the outside of the store. Three of Team TNR’s trappers drove out very early (before activity and commotion started) for a couple of days in the freezing temperatures to identify the cat’s location and that of her kittens. Once her location was identified, the trappers rescued her kittens and set a trap for the momma using her kittens as bait. It had been successful in the past with other cats, but this momma cat was not going for it. We took the kittens to a foster home for safety and warmth as the temperatures were hovering at 20 degrees during the day. We returned the next day and set a few more traps for momma with some yummy smelling food. For momma cat. The trappers took turns sitting in their cars in the freezing cold temperatures with the engines turned off and parked at a distance (so to not scare the momma) and waited for the momma cat to go into the trap. We sat watching with binoculars for several hours until we trapped her. It was a wonderful moment to get the momma cat reunited with her kittens to complete nursing them and for us all (cats, kittens, and us) to get back to a warmer place! (See picture E.1)

On a separate occasion, we received a call from a resident that a neighbor had moved and left behind “several cats”. We were not certain what “several” meant until we arrived to assess the situation. We took several traps with us, just in case. Upon arrival, we noticed a few cats that appeared hungry. As we approached the cats and began laying down food and water,

we were suddenly surrounded by at least 25 cats! (See picture E.2) We called one of our participating veterinary offices to see when they could possibly squeeze in some cats for spays and neuters. We were given the go ahead to bring in 10 cats the very next day “if” we were able to catch them. We set up traps and within 45 minutes managed to trap 10 cats for the very next day. We have since returned to that location and continue to trap and fix more cats, remove several friendly kittens for placement in our foster homes, and we have been successful in rehoming 15 of the feral cats from that location to barns that are willing to follow a certain protocol for rehoming.

We are grateful beyond words for the funding provided by the Community Grant. It allowed us the ability to help many residents of Douglas County who were facing the problems associated with unwanted cats and kittens by helping us to reduce the number of unwanted cats and kittens in general. Whether you like cats or not, our TNR program serves the interests of all. We work to reduce the number of unwanted cats in the community, and we work to provide for healthier cats remaining in the county.

Douglas County Residents Instructions/Guide for Successful Feral Cat TNR
Trap-Neuter/Spay-Return
aka TNVR- Trap-Neuter/Spay-Vaccinate-Return

Douglas Animal Welfare Group (DAWG) operates a TNR/TNVR program for Douglas County feral cats. The purpose of this program is to spay/neuter neighborhood cats to reduce their population. Rabies and FVRCP are included. Minimal medical treatment up to \$500.00 is available, if deemed necessary by the veterinarian.

Below are steps that will assist you in a successful TNR/TNVR to reduce the overpopulation of feral cats in our community and to assist in maintaining a healthier status for these cats.

1. Call Douglas County Animal Care and Services (DCACS) to request TNR assistance. Their number is 775-782-9061. DCACS will log resident's information into their system. A contract including a "Hold Harmless" agreement will be completed and DCACS will loan a trap (owned by DAWG) if one is available. A \$60 refundable deposit will be required. Please make checks payable to DAWG.
2. An appointment for spay/neuter **MUST** be scheduled with Animal Medical Services (AMS) at 775-782-2297 **OR** Carson Valley Veterinary Hospital at 775-782-3693 **BEFORE** attempting to trap any cat. **This appointment should be scheduled for the day after you plan to trap the cat or for the morning you plan to trap the cat.** Nevada Humane Society (NHS) in Carson City takes cats for TNR on Tuesday mornings. Call the TNR program coordinator for approval before calling the NHS at 775-887-2171 to schedule an appointment with NHS.
3. Prepare the trap by placing newspaper or similar material on the inside floor of the trap making sure it does not interfere with the trigger (tripping mechanism). Skip this step if it is windy.
4. Place a towel or blanket over the top and sides of the trap. This will make the trap feel safe, like a cave, and will keep the cat warmer.
5. If trapping immediately, place the food on the backside of the trap so the cat will set the trigger. Continue with step 10.
6. In some cases, trapping can be successful immediately: Bait and set the trap out and BOOM! You've got it! In other cases, a "safe situation" for the cat needs to be established. Here are steps to establish a safe situation: Prior to the trapping date, place the trap in a suitable area. This could be under a table, near bushes or on a patio. The trap should be in the opened position but **DO NOT SET THE TRAP**. This will allow the cat to become familiar with the trap and prevent fear on trapping day. Continue to follow steps 6- 9, below:
7. Place food at the mouth of the trap. Each day the food should be moved closer to the inside of the trap. Within a few days the food should be placed all the way to the back of the trap. This is where it should be placed on trapping day. Soon, the cat should walk right into the trap to eat. This allows for a successful trapping day!
8. Try to place food in the trap at the same time each day, or as close to the same time of day as possible. This should reflect the time of day you wish to trap the cat. This will help to set a pattern for the cat.
9. The day before the trapping date, feed the cat a much smaller portion of food, or none at all. If the cat is hungry it is more likely to go all the way inside the trap to eat.
10. On trapping day, set the trap. Make sure the back door of the trap (if there is one on that model) is closed and **LOCKED!** Keep a towel over the trap for the cat's comfort.
11. Once the cat is trapped **DO NOT OPEN THE TRAP!** (If the cat needs to remain in the trap overnight, please refer to the information on the back.) The cat must be dropped off **in the trap** to AMS between 8:30-8:45am on the scheduled day, **OR** to Carson Valley Veterinary Hospital at the time they indicated when you scheduled the appointment. The cat will receive spay/neuter, FVRCP and Rabies vaccinations and any necessary minimal medical treatment. The cat will also have its ear tipped to identify the cat has been altered and vaccinated.
12. Call the TNR program coordinator to inform of the number of cats being dropped off for spay/neuter and the veterinary office being used.
13. Pick up the cat after 2:00pm, (or as indicated by the veterinary office being used) on the same day.

14. **KEEP THE CAT IN THE TRAP** until ready to be returned to the original trapping site. Try to keep the cat overnight for healing in a secure place such as your garage, laundry room or spare bathroom.
 - a. Male cats are usually fine after an overnight stay in the trap and in most cases may be released when the anesthesia wears off (a few hours after surgery).
 - b. Female cats should be confined for two days or more for additional healing, especially if they were pregnant or in heat. * Please provide small amounts of food and water for the overnight guest. Please call our TNR team for advice on how best to do this at 775-901-1968
15. Once the cat has been released, return the trap to DCACS and pick up your deposit.
16. As spayed/neutered cats are released back to their community, this stops the breeding cycle and improves the lives of the cats.

If the cat needs to remain overnight in the trap prior to returning it to its original site.

1. Keep the trap (with the cat in it~ do **NOT** let the cat out of the trap) in a warm, quiet place like a garage, spare bathroom, laundry room, shed, etc.
2. Place puppy pads or towels **UNDER** the trap (on the outside). More than likely the cat will pee.
3. **DO NOT** try to put anything in the trap unless you are experienced in doing so or you have a **cage divider** that will allow you to open the door to place or slip food and water in it without the cat escaping. Most times a small paper plate can be slipped under the trap door without it being fully opened and water can be poured on to the plate with a funnel. Dry food can be dropped through the top of the trap, as well. For more assistance, please call our TNR team.
4. Keep a towel or blanket over the trap. This will make the cat feel more secure.
5. Try not to disturb the cat during the night. Keep dogs away from the trap.

Things to consider:

If trapping on another person's property, permission with a "hold harmless" agreement must be granted by that property owner. DAWG is not responsible for anyone entering someone else's property, with or without permission.

While transporting the cat in the trap, place puppy pads, towels, or a waterproof tarp under the cage before placing the trap in your car. The cat might pee while in the trap.

Keep a towel or blanket over the trap as much as possible.

Try to keep the cat (in the trap) in a quiet place at all times. Be aware of the radio, talking, noises, etc. The less stress the cat experiences, the better.

*Ideally, a cat should remain in a safe, warm dry place for at least one night for recovery before returning them to their environment. Males are usually fine with a "one-night stay". Females usually need a little longer. If the female is pregnant or is in heat when the spay occurs, a three-day to one full week stay is usually recommended. Please call our TNR team at 775-901-1968 if you need assistance with this recovery time. Sometimes a large cage is available for the cat to recover in (placed in your garage, shed, etc).

When planning your trapping date, keep in mind your availability with the appointment with the veterinary office being used, the day/timing for trapping, travel time to drop off and pick up, a possible an overnight stay in a safe place, and the return date.

These instructions are provided to assist residents for a successful TNR. Participation and/or involvement in a Douglas Animal Welfare Group (DAWG) program carries with it the potential for certain risks. Trapping party will hold harmless and release from all liability DAWG and all its members for any injuries to people and animals, including those owned by me and/or damage to my property. DAWG is not responsible for any damage or injury that might occur during any TNR activity using DAWG's trap or these instructions.

How to Help Your New Cat Acclimate to Your Barn

Cats are not wildlife. They do not have the instinctive nature to survive in the wild. To ensure the safety of the cat during the transition stage and afterwards, please follow these simple steps.

Keep the cat secured in a large dog crate or tack room for the first 3-4 weeks.

Double check for areas a cat can slip out from. A cat can squeeze through a surprisingly small hole or space like a break or gap in the fencing or a loose board. Keeping the cat secure for the first few weeks allows the cat to understand that this is now where it lives and that you are its **caretaker**. If just let the cat loose in the barn, the cat will try to find a way out and **TRY** to return to its original location. Seldom do they find their way back home. That is just in the movies. They are usually eaten by coyotes, hit by cars or they starve to death. It can be a frightening situation for the cat, at first. It would be like dropping a kid off inside Costco and walking away.

Create a safe “cave feeling” for the cat. Place a cover over part of the crate or put a carrier inside the crate. If no crate is used, give the cat some sort of “hut” to hide in like a box turned upside down with a hole in it, a cat or dog carrier with a towel in it, etc.. This helps the cat feel safe and lessens the overstimulation the cat might experience during the first few weeks. In cold weather, an old cooler with the lid removed and a towel inside really helps keep them warm.

Provide food, water, and clean litter daily. Establish a routine feeding schedule.

Provide your cat food at a certain time such as every morning with something really yummy in the evening. This helps create the “time to come home” routine in the evening which will allow you to get your cat in the garage, tack room, or other safe location for the night in the future, if necessary. *

After the first or second week, kitty might be able to live outside of the cage, but still in the tack room (or other room set up).

Leave the crate set up in the tack room but keep the crate door opened. This will continue to help the cat become familiar with its new environment while exploring a bit more each day, and still have its safe “cave” to retreat to. This process is slow but sure.

By the end of week 4 or 5, the kitty may be ready to step out of the barn to do its job!

Continue to provide a safe place at night and during very cold weather.

Continue to provide fresh water and small amounts of food. *Having established a routine feeding schedule early on, give kitty some wet food in the evening to get it in the safe place for the night.

For questions or advice, please feel free to call or text: Eloise Reed 408-309-4625

Dear DAWG,

My name is Shelly. I live in the TRE area of Gardnerville. Every year, we end up with a lot of cats and kittens. We know many of them are dumped here by people from out of the area, or they are from people that live in the area and move and leave their cats behind.

Last year we had over 40 kittens and about 15 adult cats! We did not know what to do or how to take care of this situation. Fortunately, we found out about DAWG's TNR program. It is an amazing program that not only helped us with the kittens by placing them in foster care and eventually adopting them out, but they helped us spay and neuter and vaccinate all of the adult cats.

We now have a manageable colony of cats that are healthier and doing a great job of killing the mice.

We appreciate DAWG's TNR program, and we are grateful that you gave them a grant to help people like us.

Sincerely,

Shelly and Julie Setsodi

To whom it may concern:

I want to share the story of the huge impact D.A.W.G. and its volunteers have had on my neighborhood and my life.

Several years ago, I found 4 kittens, without a mother cat in sight, under my back patio. I assumed momma would return, and she did, but it was several months later with another litter. I had been feeding the first kittens for sometime, and I knew they were all males, so I wasn't too alarmed, but the instant I saw the momma back, I knew we had a problem.

I was referred to D.A.W.G., and they went into action immediately.

Eloise and Tracee started by educating me about feral cats. Then, they provided traps, taught me how to use them, picked up and returned the trapped cats and helped arrange future trapping.

The next few months as we trapped the cats here, I discovered my neighbor had a similar situation. Within a short time, neighbors I had lived by for years started coming over and telling me their feral cat participation!

We quickly built a small network with the help of D.A.W.G. and we slowed the feral cat population explosion in our neighborhood. We met and communed with folks I'd only nodded to in the past. Less sick and hurt cats appeared, and healthy, fed cats took their places. We all still coordinate our efforts together with D.A.W.G.s support.

I found out that every person I spoke to was willing to feed the cats and treat them kindly, but none were willing to trap, so I've continued to work with Eloise and Tracee, keeping our ferals safe and their numbers low enough for our group to sustain. My neighbors call me the Cat Lady (not crazy yet) and come to me to discuss their experiences and for advice.

Aside from the TNR, D.A.W.G. has stepped up to help remove deceased cats, brought cat food in storms, taken in tiny kittens that needed to be bottle-fed and allowed a few heavily pregnant momma cats a place to give birth and wean their kittens.

I absolutely love this group and I will help them in any way possible. They don't just keep the feral population healthy, they help build a stronger community.

Thank you,
Bonnie Haesaerts

1334 Leonard Road
Gardnerville NV 89460
775.392.1324 (Land)
dillpixel@gmail.com

To whom it may concern,

I would like to express my gratitude to DAWG and the volunteers with the Trap and Release program for feral cats. Their unselfish dedication to controlling the feral cat population is admirable.

I contacted DAWG to see if the protocol had changed on the trap and release program as I had noticed a feral kitty in my stable.

Subsequently, I was able to have my feral female spayed. Soon thereafter, I saw her feral babies. By the time they were old enough to be spayed or neutered, I had hip replacement surgery and was restricted in my activities. The volunteers sprang into action. They assisted with trapping, transporting as well as assisting in follow up care at home. Within 2 weeks all 4 of the kittens were spayed/neutered and had their shots.

I am an animal lover and wanted my feral cats to have a safe place to land and food to eat. I appreciate my feral cats as they keep the rodent population in check. These volunteers have the same goals as I and proved to be an indispensable part of this process.

The feral cat population doesn't have to be a problem if people have the compassion to stop the procreation of new generations. People need to appreciate the work that DAWG does for our feral, homeless, and sheltered domestic animals. People also need to take responsibility for their pets by spay and neuter practices.

Thank you DAWG!

Sincerely,

Donna Theriault

This is a huge THANK YOU to DAWG TNR (Trap, Neuter/Spay and Release) program's support.

We had/have a surplus of unknown cats in my neighborhood. With the support from DAWG, we have trapped over 25 cats (15 of which were "fixed" and released back into the neighborhood), and 12 kittens that entered DAWG's Found Cat Program, much like a foster system. These kittens were all adopted to new happy homes.

Without the support from DAWG, the explosion of feral (I call them "covid") cats would be absolutely unsustainable and most would have to be eliminated. Without the dedicated volunteers like Eloise and Tracee, foster parents like Corine and Steve, the vets at AMS, CVVH and NHS and the coordinated effort of the staff with DAWG, there is no way we could ever get a handle on the situation in our Neighborhood let alone anywhere else in the county.

THANK YOU DAWG, and to all who support this greatly needed, necessary and appreciated organization.

Thank you
Larry and Randi Wooton

The TNR Group is such
a great part of Dowg.
Without them so many
people would be helpless
to get the ferals 'fixed'.

In my 80's now they
have helped me so much
I'll always be grateful for
people like Eloise and
Judy who were always
there to help me. I don't
think even the county know
how hard they work and how
many hours they work.
M. Hayes















