

TNR at HSHV

How do I work with HSHV to get my cats TNRed, and what are your TNR hours?

HSHV makes it very easy to get your cat TNRed, but there is a process you must follow.

- You can bring in your cat Monday – Tuesday, between 9:30 am and 11:00 am to the Veterinary Clinic.
- Cats must be in a live trap – NO EXCEPTIONS
- You will be asked to share some information that helps us care for and better understand our county's community cats, including where the colony you care for exists, how many cats are in it, etc.
- You can pick up your cat the day after you have dropped it off during the same 9:30 am – 11 am window. This gives us enough time to make sure the cat is fully recovered, and for the sedative to wear off.
- NOTE: ALL cats going through the TNR program will have their left ear "ear tipped," – a humane process by which the very top of the ear is cut off in a flat line. This does not impact the cat's hearing or cause any significant or lasting pain, and allows us at a glance to tell the cat has already been fixed.

Why do HSHV and other cat advocates support TNR?

Cats and humans have lived together comfortably for millennia, across many different climates and geographies.

As cats do not eat human food, and as they are not significant spreaders of disease compared to other animals, this relationship has been symbiotic and successful. And for most of this time, cats have been living happily outside. In fact the idea of them living indoors with us is new – cat litter didn't even exist until 1947.

Like many animals including humans, cats eat meat, and prey on rodents, birds and other small mammals. They have been living in our area for hundreds of years and have become a regular part of the environments in which they live. Typically, environmental factors help keep cat populations in natural balance. However, thanks to human feeders, the amount of cats that can live in any given area has increased greatly, which can lead to overpopulation if TNR is not put in place. This creates unhealthy conditions for cats and their environments. Historically, many methods of population control have been tried, including unsavory options like removal or culling. On top of being inhumane, the scientific record is clear: these methods simply do not work.

TNR not only keeps cat populations from growing but has been proven to successfully reduce populations over time. It has also been shown to reduce intake into animal shelters, and reduce feline fatalities. While it is not without challenges, it is the only reliably successful method to ensure the harmonious existence of free roaming cats, humans, and the other species who share the same environment.

Can HSHV help me trap my cats?

HSHV is one of the very few organizations to employ a full-time community cat coordinator to help with cat trapping for TNR. We do our best to assist anyone who needs assistance trapping cats as part of the TNR process. However, demand is very high and we need to prioritize colonies.

Can I rent traps from HSHV for TNR?

Yes, HSHV maintains traps for rentals, and you can get them from the front desk of our veterinary clinic. We charge \$10 for a 1 week trap rental. Please note, we do require a deposit of \$65 for traps to ensure they are returned. Therefore, when you rent the trap, you will be charged \$75, \$10 for the rental and \$65 for the deposit. The \$65 is returned when you return the trap.

It is highly recommended that you call the veterinary clinic to make sure we have traps available before driving in to get one. They can be reached at: 734-662-4365.

Why must my cat be in a trap while getting TNRed at HSHV?

HSHV has a strict, no exceptions policy requiring all cats undergoing TNR procedures to be brought in a live trap, as opposed to a carrier. This is both for the safety of your cat, as well as of our team. Because community cats tend to be unsocialised – that is, unused to dealing with humans and typically viewing humans as a threat – we are unable to safely handle them while they are conscious. To this end, they are sedated right in their cages, and are only ever removed after they have been put under.

While cats do sometimes come through the TNR program that might qualify as socialized, the large amount of TNRs we do requires us to treat all cats exactly the same; we cannot take the risk of making an exception and potentially creating a bad situation. If your cat is friendly enough to be put in a carrier, a more traditional spaying or neutering is probably a better option for your cat.

What is my cat's experience while getting TNRed at HSHV?

Your cat will be treated kindly and compassionately while with us. Your cat will be in its trap the entire time it is with us, except for when it is removed – sedated – for its procedure. The process works like this:

- Your cat's weight is estimated, and it is given sedation in-trap based on its size
- After sedation takes hold (typically 3-5 minutes), the kitty is weighed on scale
- Actual weight is recorded in surgery log, and kitty is put on the surgery prep table
- Your cats eyes, ears, feet, mouth and coat are checked for wounds/matting
- Fluids are given subcutaneously to hydrate the cat, and it is prepped for surgery (including stomach shaving for females)
- Our surgeon performs sterilization
- Cat is given pain medicine

- Your kitty’s ear is tipped to indicate it has been TNRed
- The cat is put onto a recovery bed
- Upon showing signs of consciousness, kitty is put back in its trap in TNR room with dry food
- Tech or vet checks box on cage card or adds a sticker to denote any medication that cat has received and signs or initials the form
- A wellness check is performed on cats at the end of the day to ensure everyone is doing ok
- Your cat is fed in the morning, and will be ready to be released when you pick them up!

Each cat gets a visual general checkup before techs leave for the night, and they are fed in the morning.

What is ear-tipping, and why is it required?

Ear-tipping is the humane clipping of a community cat’s left ear, leaving it flat instead of pointy. This does not impact the cat’s hearing or cause any significant or lasting pain, and allows us at a glance to tell the cat has already been fixed. We view it as a badge of honor for a cat – it indicates that the kitty has a human who loves it and cares for it.

Can community cats or kittens be taken in by HSHV for adoption?

HSHV is committed to trying to find homes for cats that would be happy living indoors and who would make good pets. However, cats that have not been exposed to humans very early in life are typically extremely difficult – if not impossible – to socialize. To that end, we have a socialization assessment to determine whether we think a cat would do well as a household pet. For both the sake of the cat and our adopters, we are not able to accept any cats who are not comfortable indoors or in the company of humans.

Kittens can be socialized if they are small enough. HSHV will take most kittens who are 2 pounds or under, or if they are showing signs of socialization.

If you are working with a cat that does not pass a socialization assessment, you are welcome to bring them back for additional assessments if you are making progress.

Can HSHV relocate or find a barn for community cats?

Relocating community cats is extremely difficult and is typically extremely hard on cats, and is tantamount to abandonment. In this scenario, a cat is being moved from an environment it knows how to survive in an entirely new location. Not only will the cat not know where to find food when relocated, it will often be opposed by other cats already in the area. For this reason, HSHV does not support and will not help relocate community cats in any except the most dire circumstances.

Barns can be a good solution for community cats, but there are far more cats than barns even in the most rural areas. Due to the extreme difficulty finding barns, HSHV does not search for barns for individual placements. That said, we maintain strong relationships with community barn owners, and do encourage them to adopt. However, any cat HSHV takes in must pass an adaptability assessment.

Ultimately, the data shows that the best way to help community cats is to leave them where they are after TNR, and this is a key philosophy of TNR.

Does HSHV provide trapping in the winter?

HSHV's Community Cat Coordinator does not, as a rule, trap in the winter (we typically end trappings in October, and don't begin until things warm up in the spring). We do, however, continue to perform TNR procedures for people who do their own trappings and bring them into us year round.

It is important to note that performing a TNR procedure on an outdoor cat while it's cold can be hard on a cat. Females end up with a shaved belly, so we highly discourage bringing in cats during winter months unless they have a shelter, and you are providing food and liquid water for them.

Where can I get food, preventative or medicine for my community cats?

Get pet prescriptions, food and more delivered right to your home! HSHV has partnered with Midwest Veterinary Supply to get you the items you need to keep your companion animals healthy and happy. Prices are competitive, shipping is often free, and best of all — all proceeds go back into the shelter to help our community's homeless animals! Go to hshv.org/vetstore.

Does HSHV provide any training to help me trap cats for TNR?

The Community Cat Coordinator at HSHV is always happy to train anyone willing to help catch cats for TNR, and we do not charge for training. While occasionally we offer group trainings, it is more common and typically more effective to do one-on-one training. Please call the Community Cat Coordinator at 734-661-3523 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

Does the TNR team need any volunteers?

In a word – yes! There are many ways to help TNR, including trapping, cleaning, transportation, surgery log entry into our systems, and more. TNR scheduling can be flexible, and suited to almost any schedule. If you'd like to help, just reach out to the Community Cat Coordinator at 734-661-3523.

[Volunteer Resources](#) – more resources for TNR volunteers

What else besides volunteering can I do to help community cats at HSHV?

- Donations: We appreciate your interest in helping our community cats! Traps eventually need to be replaced; enticing food is gobbled up; winter comes and shelters are needed. Current needs are on our [Amazon wishlist](#).
- Kittens Outdoors: Please try to bring kittens to our intake team to be adopted before they reach 2 pounds. For more info, [here's what to do](#).
- Stray Cats: If you have found a cat that you suspect may be a lost pet, it can be brought inside or to [HSHV](#). Please post signs in the neighborhood and make a [found report](#) to HSHV.
- Barn Cats: Working cats are a fantastic and natural option to control the rodent

population. [If you are looking for barn cats, learn more and apply!](#)

- Caretakers: Colony guardians are invaluable community members that help care for outdoor cats, typically providing food, water, shelter, and vet care when needed. HSHV offers a [Bountiful Bowls](#) program to help feed cats if you need financial assistance.
- Advocates: Help raise awareness of and [advocate](#) for our community cats with HSHV.

General TNR Questions

How does TNR work?

Trap, Neuter & Return programs rely on a community effort. The process is straightforward:

- Trap: Community cats are caught in humane and safe live traps. Trapping cats is not dangerous or scary if done properly, and requires only the proper tools and some patience. Many excellent resources exist on the web to teach you about trapping, including the guide from Feral Cat Focus, which you can find [here](#). HSHV rents traps to the community, and can offer suggestions about what to buy if you would like to purchase your own. Once cats are trapped, they are taken in the trap to a veterinary clinic like the one at HSHV that has a TNR program.
- Neuter or Spay: As community cats are unused to human contact, they are typically sedated within the trap itself. Once the cat is properly sedated, it is removed from the cage, given an exam, fixed, and vaccinated. All TNR programs provide at least a rabies vaccination.
- Return: The cat is returned to its cage after the procedure, so it can be returned to where it was found, and released, letting it get back to its life.
- It is important to note, in addition to neutering or spaying, cats going through TNR are also vaccinated against rabies (the program is actually often referred to TNVR, where the V stands for vaccination).

Ultimately, TNR reduces community cat populations over time. It is the only method that has been scientifically proven to work – culling or moving cats has been repeatedly shown to be ineffective. Further, TNR ensures that the cats that are around are fixed and vaccinated so they are not contributing to overpopulation or disease. And as a bonus, community cats continue to defend their territory, helping reduce the tendency for other unfixed, unvaccinated cats to move in.

Community cats - unsocialized cats vs. stray cats: what is the difference?

Community cats are typically considered to be ones that live outdoors 100% of the time, without a traditional owner. There are two main types. The most common are “unsocialized,” cats – those who are born outside and have never had a traditional owner. These cats do not trust humans and will not let people get close enough to touch them. They would be unhappy and potentially hostile if forced to live in a house.

Stray cats are cats who have lived with humans at some point in their lives, even if they now live outside. They may have gotten lost, run away, or even been abandoned. Stray cats are typically

comfortable around humans, and can often be taken in for adoption.

While behavior differs from cat to cat, the below general guidelines can be helpful for spotting the difference:

Feral Cat	Stray Cat
Silent except when mating and may hiss	Meows
Only seen at dawn and dusk to hunt	Seen at all times of the day and night
Will eat food only after humans have retreated from the feeding area	Will eat near humans
Can never be touched	May be touched or held at times or may rub against legs
If cornered, will hiss, spit or fight	If cornered, will try to hide
May look clean and healthy because they have adapted to living outside	May look dirty and unkept because they do not live their entire life outside
May have an ear tip if they have already been through the TNR process	They may or may not be fixed
No collar or microchip	Might have a collar

Best Practices for trapping and caring for cats in traps

- Set up a feeding pattern so the cats are accustomed to eating at the same time each day.
- Try covering part of the traps to encourage cats to enter.
- Use a variety of baits, including tuna, sardines, wet cat food all work well. If the cats are used to dry food, it also helps to include that.
- Don't feed the day before trapping so the cats are very food motivated (but do continue to provide fresh water).
- Stay in the area but some distance from the traps; cats are smart and if you are watching them intently they often sense something is amiss.
- Once a cat is in a trap, cover it immediately to calm the cat down.
- Keep traps covered once the cat is inside to reduce stress during transport for TNR and keep the trap as steady and level while moving as possible (as recommended by Fear Free™).

- Minimize the amount of time the cat will need to spend in the trap – you should never trap a cat more than 1 day before when you plan to bring it in for TNR.
- Plan to trap over at least two days to try to catch as many as possible and account for weather or other problems.
- Voices and strange sounds are scary to our community cats. Reduce noise as much as possible and keep the TNR room door closed.

I believe someone is keeping cats in inhumane conditions - what should I do about it?

The answer is simple and straightforward. Call the Community Cat Coordinator, or else call the HSHV Cruelty Rescue Team at 734-661-3512.

How can I keep community cats away from my yard?

The following article provides excellent insight into living with community cats, and has detailed information to help you find humane ways to discourage them from visiting:

<https://www.alleycat.org/resources/how-to-live-with-cats-in-your-neighborhood/>

What is the vacuum effect?

TNR is the only proven method for reducing cat populations. On top of being inhumane, culling or removing cats has been shown repeatedly to not make a meaningful impact. This is due to the vacuum effect, which is well-documented, describes what happens when even a portion of an animal population is permanently removed from its home range. Sooner or later, the empty habitat attracts other members of the species from neighboring areas, who move in to take advantage of the same resources that attracted the first group (like shelter and food). Killing or removing the original population does nothing to eliminate these resources; it only creates a “vacuum” that will inevitably draw in other animals living nearby.” For more on the vacuum effect, see this link:

<https://www.alleycat.org/resources/the-vacuum-effect-why-catch-and-kill-doesnt-work/>

What are some other major groups advocating for or helping community cats?

There are many excellent groups doing great work to help our kitties. Just a few of the best are listed below – each has excellent info and different ways they can help.

- [Alley Cat Allies](#) advocates for all cats and is a wonderful resource for anyone interested in community cats.
- [Neighborhood Cats](#) is a highly respected site based in New York that explains TNR and why it is so important for our community cats.
- [Maddie’s Fund](#) is an philanthropic organization that provides grants to many worthy animal causes, and is great for learning all about companion animals.

- [The Humane Society of the United States](#) has information about community cats and all other animals as well.
- [ASPCA](#) includes helpful ideas for those running TNR programs.

Can you direct me to some resources to help with trapping, shelter building, etc.?

- Quick Video on TNR Process – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=larsSTLUdTw>
- Shelter Building Video – <https://www.arlboston.org/diy-feral-cat-shelter-video/>
- Trapping Ideas – <https://www.neighborhoodcats.org/how-to-tnr/trapping/hard-to-catch-cats>
- Reasons to TNR – <https://www.alleycat.org/resources/why-trap-neuter-return-feral-cats-the-case-for-tnr/>
- Humane Cat Repellent Ideas – <https://www.neighborhoodcats.org/how-to-tnr/colony-care/keeping-cats-out-of-gardens-and-yards-2>

Caretaker Questions

What are my responsibilities as a community cat caretaker?

Deciding to care for cats – even outdoor community cats – is a big responsibility. Being a caretaker will impact you, your neighbors (who also matter), and of course the cats themselves. Core responsibilities include:

- Making sure all of your cats are TNRed.
- Making sure you are feeding your cats on a regular schedule.
- Making sure you are providing adequate shelter for your cats.
- Making sure you are being a good neighbor, which means:
 - Keeping cat areas tidy and trash free.
 - Making sure shelters do not look dilapidated or like an eyesore.

For more information on how to be a good caretaker, see this article from Feral Cat Focus: <https://feralcatfocus.org/colony-management-caring-for-your-colony/>

Are there any ordinances that impact my ability to TNR or feed community cats?

In general, there are no prohibitions against TNRing or feeding community cats. In fact, the state of Michigan is currently trying to pass a statewide statute protecting both TNR and feeders. The most important thing – for the health of your cats, for your neighbors, and for yourself – is being a responsible caretaker. This eliminates issues before they even arise – the fact is that if you can keep your colony mostly out of sight, most people are going to be happy to ignore it.

This is particularly true in places with small or no yards, like apartment complexes or mobile home communities.

HSHV has compiled a list of local ordinances for all cities and townships in Washtenaw County; we encourage you to call the Community Cat Coordinator if you have any questions or would like to learn more.

What are some tips for building shelters or caring for cats in the winter?

There is a tremendous amount of helpful information available for helping make life easier for cats in the winter. Some basic things to know include:

- Make sure shelters are waterproof, and help keep your cats out of the wind.
- Never use fabric as a liner – when it gets wet it freezes, and is also prone to mildew.
- Keeping a shelter up off the ground can not only help it stay warmer by keeping it off of the frozen ground, it can help prevent other animal species from getting in (many animals can't jump or climb).

This article from Alley Cat Allies provides links to build several different kinds of shelters, based on your budget and other considerations: <https://www.alleycat.org/resources/feral-cat-shelter-options-gallery/>

This article provides more information for the general care of cats in winter: <https://cattime.com/cat-facts/12549-ways-to-keep-outdoor-cats-safe-in-winter>

Does feeding cats attract other animals?

Cats can actually help you keep other animal populations, particularly rodent populations under control. However, if the cats are overfed – which happens by putting down too much food so there is more than the cats can eat themselves, it can attract other animals, including opossums and skunks.

As a result, feeding the proper amount of food is very important. This link provides more detailed information about the proper amount of food to put out for community cats: <https://www.alleycat.org/community-cat-care/food-and-water-tips/>

How much should I feed the cats in my colony?

Your best bet is to put out just enough food to feed the cats you have in your colony. Overfeeding has many disadvantages, including raising the cost of feeding and attracting additional animals, which not only can lead to making your neighbors antagonistic to your colony, but can also lead in new animals that might be dangerous to your colony.

The amount of food cats will eat depends on many factors, including their size and the time of year it happens to be (cats need more calories in the winter than they do in warmer months). A good rule of thumb is to put out plenty of food, and to check back directly after your cats have

finished feeding. If there is food left, continue reducing until you have just enough for them to eat.

This article, from Neighborhood Cats, provides more details on feeding community cats: <https://www.neighborhoodcats.org/how-to-tnr/colony-care/feeding>

Someone is threatening my cats, what can I do?

Hopefully not many of you will run into this situation, but if anyone threatens your cats, you do have options. We highly recommend calling our Community Cat Coordinators so we can understand your situation and offer any appropriate advice. There are anti-cruelty and abandonment laws that can help protect you and your cats.

Community Cat Health Questions

Can community cats survive outside in the winter? What are some tips for helping them survive cold temperatures?

In a word, yes. Cats have lived outside in northern climates for centuries, and have adapted for survival like squirrels, raccoons, opossums, and other outdoor creatures. However, there are still many things we can do to help make things easier, including building shelters, providing food, and ensuring they have unfrozen water.

This article provides some advice, and there is a lot of other good information online: <https://cattime.com/cat-facts/12549-ways-to-keep-outdoor-cats-safe-in-winter>

Are community cats dangerous to my family or pets?

Community cats are unsocialized cats – that is to say, they are not used to being around humans, and so they avoid people. It is exceptionally rare, in fact, almost unheard of, for community cats to attack or menace humans unless they are provoked. They will avoid humans and animals larger than themselves unless forced into a corner – avoidance and/or escape are their preferred tactics.

It is possible that community cats will interact with outdoor house cats, sometimes but not always in a positive way. They may try and mate with an indoor cat that is not fixed, and they may guard territory they see as their own. As fixing a cat tends to reduce its aggressiveness, making sure community cats in your area are TNRed is the best method for dealing with this issue.

Like all cats, community cats are predators. This means they provide significant help managing rodent populations, but also means that they can hunt for smaller animals.

What can I do with a sick or injured community cat? What vets in Washtenaw County work with them?

Many vets, including the Veterinary Clinic here at HSHV, will treat sick or injured community cats. For a list of additional vets who can help, please contact us.

Some important things to keep in mind:

- Community cats should never be brought in for care in a cat carrier; they should only ever be brought inside in a live trap; this is for the safety of both the cat and the vets. This means the cat needs to be trapped to be brought in.
- Because of the need to trap the cat, it can be hard for you to schedule a vet appointment – It is often hard to know how long it will take you to catch the animal. To make this easier for you, some places, like HSHV, will try and see your cat on any days that TNR is performed, and the hours are the same for treating community cats as for TNR.
- The options for treating feral cats are limited because follow up care for unsocialized animals is very difficult. For instance, even basic things like administering eye drops, or changing bandages, are often impossible for cats that are not comfortable being around humans.
- Treating many issues for community cats, including anything that requires ongoing medication, requires being able to keep the cat in your possession, sometimes for as much as two weeks. In this instance, the cats are typically kept in a wire dog kennel, which can be done fairly easily if you are careful and have an indoor, safe place to keep the animal. Your vet will be able to provide instructions for this.

Are people at risk from rabies or other diseases spread by cats?

Neither house cats nor community (or feral) cats are significant spreaders of rabies or other diseases amongst humans. This fact, along with the fact that they reduce rodent and other populations that *are* known to spread disease to humans, helps explain why humans and felines have developed such a close and symbiotic relationship over the years.

Simply put: Americans do not contract rabies from cats according to decade's worth of CDC and other data. From 2008 to 2017, there were only 23 human cases of the disease reported in the US in total, and none of those were found to be the result of rabid cats. You are more likely to win the lottery than get rabies from a cat: at least a few people win the lottery every year, and *no fatal cases of rabies in humans in the US have been caused by cats for over 40 years.*

The Role of Vaccination in TN(V)R

Cats themselves can catch rabies, but that too is extremely uncommon. Over the past decade, cats have made up less than 5% of the total known cases of rabies among animals in the United States, with between 200 to 300 infected cats found each year. However, even accounting for the rarity of the disease, to maximize safety for both cats and people Trap, Neuter, Return programs (sometimes referred to as Trap, Neuter, *Vaccinate*, and Return programs) vaccinate for rabies as a matter of course. It is also common in TNR programs to vaccinate cats against distemper, but this is only for the cat's health: distemper is not passed from cats to humans.

Understanding and Treating Rabies

Although it is quite rare in the US, rabies is a very serious and contagious viral infection, passed through saliva. The disease is typically fatal if not treated. It must enter the body through a wound, simply getting infected saliva on the skin is not enough to spread it. The most common way to come in contact with rabies is through bites or scratches from rabid animals. Bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes are the most common carriers of rabies in the US. If you believe you may be at risk, it is important to seek immediate treatment; after symptoms start to become apparent, it is unlikely that treatment will be effective and the disease is much more likely to be fatal.

In people, the first symptoms of rabies are typically tingling or itching at the site of infection as well as flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, and muscle pain. As rabies progresses, it becomes very difficult to treat as it affects the brain and other parts of the nervous system. This will cause the well known and more serious symptoms, such as anxiety, delirium, hallucinations, fear of water, and insomnia. Symptoms in animals can vary, but some common signs include panting, restlessness, and aggressive behavior. They may begin to lose their ability to move as well.

Toxoplasmosis

Cats are one of many animals that can carry the toxoplasmosis parasite. Between 20 and 25% of the people in the US are thought to be carriers, but most did not catch it from cats: the most common way to get toxoplasmosis is through eating undercooked foods (which is how cats themselves get it).

The good news is that, for the vast majority of people, toxoplasmosis is not dangerous, and most will never know they have it as they experience no symptoms. However, for individuals who are immunocompromised or for pregnant mothers, it can be more serious.

Fortunately, toxoplasmosis from cats is easy to avoid. Cats themselves only pass on the cyst that carries it in their feces, and only then for 1 – 3 weeks after contracting it themselves. Simply avoiding skin to skin contact with the feces will prevent any chance of getting the infection from a cat.

Sources:

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