

The Cat Dilemma: Our Creation, Our Compassion, Human Cruelty, Now Our Responsibility

BY Heinz Dinter, PhD

*Of all the animals, man is the only one that is cruel.
He is the only one that inflicts pain for the pleasure of doing it.
Mark Twain*

What if it's YOU who's abandoned by your master?

Let's turn things around: Cats rule the world and they domesticated us two-legged creatures because they needed us to stem the tide of other creatures causing hardships for the life of the cats?

Having been with us for nearly 10,000 years, domesticated by the Egyptians, for example, when rats interfered with the building of the pyramids, cats were domesticated by us humans and are today the most popular pet in the world.

Unlike animals that devour others for self-preservation only, man's unique nature — we are the only creatures on this planet who kill for reasons other than to still hunger — makes the cat suffer. Why must we muster cruelty and even exterminate our feline friends because cats' rapid breeding rate is nature's way?

The "cat ladies" are angels, so say the neighbors

We have among us good Samaritans, though still small in number, who care and dedicate themselves to helping the many cats in our neighborhoods that were cast aside by people who no longer would or could care for their pets — most of these castoffs became feral and produced generations of feral cats.

That's when the friends of the cats, affectionately, respectfully, and most importantly in appreciation of their noble deeds called "cat lady" in the neighborhood stepped in as caregivers. These ladies and some men make it their duty to scour the neighborhood and deliver food on a daily basis to the many spots where the stray cats make their home.

Their second crucial task, though not easily accomplished, consists of setting traps to capture those felines who are not sterilized and then reach into their own pockets to pay for the sterilization. Miami's Cat Network (www.thecatnetwork.org) makes certificates available that are redeemable at certain veterinary clinics to make the volunteers' efforts more affordable.

Not to be forgotten is the cost of the cat food: These noble ladies reach into their own pockets, made more palatable by continual watch for specials at local pet stores.

And let us not forget the time dedicated to the stray felines in the neighborhood. Of the network of volunteers (a count most probably will reach into the hundreds) in the Miami neighborhood, my personal experience lets me report the dedicated effort of one "cat lady" (her modesty won't let her be known) in action: Seven days a week, let it rain or shine, this dedicated angel travels to nearly 30 feeding stations where the little creatures people once affectionately called pets wait in anticipation of a meal and her labor of love.

Only a video recording can capture for public sharing the joy of these little guys who recognize the approaching car and come running for their daily meal and a loving caress. The latter is reserved for a unique few, those who were once sharing a home with people and a small number whose feral state has waned through the compassionate hands and affection of the cat lady.

Why must there be cruel people?

Let me share with you the ugly side of living The Golden Rule — Do unto others as you want others do unto you.

Every time someone steps into the pass of a cat lady shouting, "Stop feeding the cats," and worse, ignorance and lack of understanding how our world occupied by man and domesticated by cats works for the benefit of both.

Cruelty must be documented so those who live with love in their heart and tolerance in their veins will understand and come to the aid of those who help the cats, you, and your neighborhood.

The following encounters with a "cat lady" making her daily rounds give testimony of the dedication and love caring for and caring about stray and feral cats in our neighborhood.

This cat lady wants no public recognition for her good deeds, but goes home every day with wonderful feelings in her heart when neighbors express their gratitude.

An especially gratifying day ends her route if not a single person expresses disdain for the stray cats and her work of love. "Let us hope they will learn and understand," the cat lady's compassion counters.

Sentenced to death with forethought. Is it malice?



The immorality of the minority: Destroying the home of stray cats — abandoned pets or born wild.

Four stray cats, already neutered, received their daily meal at their home in the bushes of a vacant property from the compassionate volunteer, the cat lady.

The property owner living on the left, a retired teacher, removed the bushes in hopes of driving the cats away. Was he as cruel to the children he taught?

These cats were there. They did not ask to be there.

Does he further his profession's devotion to public service and to the public good?

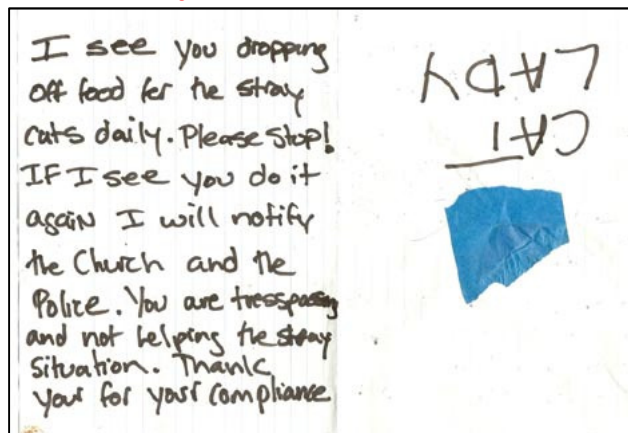
A boarded up house across the street from an attorney's home gave shelter to about five stray cats and served as their feeding station where every afternoon a nourishing meal was awaiting them. It's also here where traps began the successful effort to neuter all at the veterinary clinic thanks to Cat Network and the generosity of the "cat lady." It was a peaceful existence and the neighbors expressed their appreciation to the dedicated volunteer — except for one.

"Move these cats," the officer of the court and servant of the public demanded (he works for City Hall).

Thus began the saga of relocating the unwanted creatures that stood accused of crimes they did not commit. A large empty lot nearby seemed the perfect solution.

What is helping the "stray situation" in our community?

The tireless volunteer, not wanting to offend anyone, found yet a new home for the homeless wanderers.



Obsession will neither help the neighborhood nor solve the problem

For several years, their home was in the bushes at the end of an apartment building's parking lot until one cruel tenant issued threats to both the cats and the tireless volunteers.

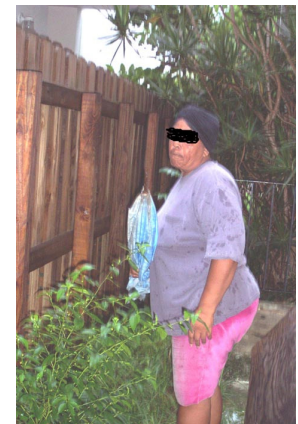
With catnip and the smell of canned tuna, a new home was established in the backyard of a home now belonging to a bank, a victim of a foreclosure.

That irked a neighbor across the street. With umbrella in hand she took it upon herself to chase the "cat lady" and deprive the four felines of their daily meal.

Yet another effort of relocation was undertaken.

Why is it not possible ...

to let compassion step to the plate and help our feline friends? We are the ones who brought them into our midst by domesticating the cat and making them the most popular pet in the world.



There are two means of refuge from the miseries of life: music and cats.

Albert Schweitzer

WARNING

The Florida Statutes Prohibit Acts of Cruelty to Animals

Those convicted of animal cruelty are subject to a fine up to \$10,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

F.S. 828.08 penalty for exposing poison
828.12 acts of cruelty to animals
828.13 abandonment of animals



*Once facing an uncertain future
because they were abandoned
when their owner lost his home,
Chichi and Cha-cha share their love today
with their new owner in their new home.*

Cats of our neighborhood have been cruelly and deliberately tortured and killed.

Whoever has performed these horrible acts, please be advised:

WE ARE ON THE ALERT!

If you are caught committing an act of cruelty to animals, you will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Our animals need protection. Detectives from the Investigation Unit of the Miami-Dade Animal Services Department are also alerted about your acts of cruelty.

The Cat — An Introduction



Willie, a feral inhabitant of Coconut Grove, Miami and mascot of www.FelineEden.org, speaks for his brethren: Help us live in peace.

The **cat** (*Felis catus*), also known as the **domestic cat** or **housecat** to distinguish it from other felines and felids, is a small furry domesticated carnivorous mammal that is valued by humans for its companionship and for its ability to hunt vermin and household pests. Cats have been associated with humans for at least 9,500 years, and are currently the most popular pet in the world. Owing to their close association with humans, cats are now found almost everywhere on Earth.

Cats are similar in anatomy to the other felids, with strong, flexible bodies, quick reflexes, sharp retractable claws, and teeth adapted to killing small prey. As nocturnal predators, cats use their acute hearing and ability to see in near darkness to locate prey. Not only can cats hear sounds too faint for human ears, they can also hear sounds higher in frequency than humans can perceive. This is because cats' usual prey (particularly rodents such as mice) make high frequency noises, so cats' hearing has evolved to pinpoint these faint high-pitched sounds. Cats rely more on smell than taste, and have a vastly better sense of smell than humans.

Despite being solitary hunters, cats are a social species and use a variety of vocalizations, pheromones and types of body language for communication. These include meowing, purring, trilling, hissing, growling, and grunting.

Cats have a rapid breeding rate. Under controlled breeding, they can be bred and shown as registered pedigree pets, a hobby known as cat fancy. Failure to control the breeding of pet cats by spaying and neutering and the abandonment of former household pets has resulted in problems caused by large numbers of feral cats worldwide, with a population of up to 60 million of these animals in the United States alone.

As *The New York Times* wrote in 2007, "Until recently the cat was commonly believed to have been domesticated in ancient Egypt, where it was a cult animal", but a study that year revealed that the lines of descent of all house cats probably run through as few as five self-domesticating African Wildcats (*Felis silvestris lybica*) circa 8000 BC, in the Near East. The earliest direct evidence of cat domestication is a kitten that was buried alongside a human 9,500 years ago in Cyprus.



Tommy, an abandoned heart warmer, enjoys the daily meal that gives him nourishment brought by the volunteer who has a heart of gold.



Food and water are on their way.

Feline Eden™
The Miami Sanctuary

www.FelineEden.org

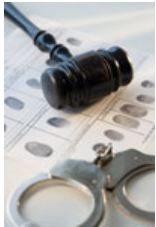
Help Us Help (1) the Cats, (2) You and (3) Your Neighborhood

We are committed to advocating for an end to the killing of cats, leading the movement for change, and protecting the lives of cats—and the people who care for them. Get informed about the issues impacting cats and what you can do to make a difference.



Cat Fatalities in U.S. Pounds & Shelters

“Euthanasia” in animal control pounds and shelters is the number one documented cause of death of all cats in the U.S. The most comprehensive study to date indicates that 72% of all cats entering these facilities are killed. Just 23% are adopted, and only 2% are reunited with their owners.



Anti-Cruelty Laws Protect All Cats

Intentionally killing a cat is a criminal offense in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, regardless of ownership. Anti-cruelty laws apply to all cats—companion, abandoned, lost, and feral.



Human Destruction of Wildlife and the Environment

Some people mistakenly think killing cats will save declining bird populations, but destructive human activities are the real threat to American wildlife.



The Trap-Neuter-Return Program

We can improve the lives of outdoor cats with *Trap-Neuter-Return*, the humane and effective approach for feral cats. To successfully trap, neuter, vaccinate, eartip, and return feral cats, you need a plan. The humane trapping guidelines from Alley Cat Allies, the organization that helped introduce TNR to the United States, will get you on your way.

Every day, compassionate people across the country are providing care to stray and feral cats.

They're following the simple steps of *Trap-Neuter-Return*. They are improving the quality of life

for cats. Successfully trapping, sterilizing, vaccinating, and returning feral cats begins with a plan. There are basic steps necessary to prepare for trapping — and you can help.

WHY IT IS TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN NOT TRAP-NEUTER-ADOPT

Felis Catus, the domestic cat that plays a pivotal role in our lives, is born and lives in a broad range of circumstances, from pampered house cat to outdoor feral cats. Because cats in different environments all look so similar, it is easy to imagine that a feral cat is, or wants to be, a creature much like the cat curled up on your sofa. In truth, feral cats are very different from the cats we easily share our homes with. Feral cats are unsocialized to humans.

Caregivers invest all available resources to provide indoor homes for the feral cats they manage in an attempt to tame them. It is, unfortunately, a time-consuming project with a very low rate of success. And even if a feral cat does “tame up,” he bonds only to the caregiver who brought him in—almost never to other humans or homes.

Feral Cats Belong Outside

Why do humans feel compelled to provide indoor homes for feral cats, and why do the cats resist these good intentions? It is inherent in human nature to want to nurture and care for those we perceive to be in need—to make them warmer, cozier, safer, and therefore happier. It is an admirable trait, but not always appropriate. The impulse to bring every feral cat “in from the cold” reflects our human needs, but it isn't best for the cat or what the cat wants. Feral cats have lived their entire lives without direct human contact other than, perhaps, daily feeding and monitoring by a caregiver. Their arsenal of survival instincts includes wariness of humans in general and a sharp fear of confinement.

Let Us Help You Neuter Your Cat

- with financial assistance if you are qualified to receive aid.
- with transportation to the veterinary clinic if you are unable to do so.

For detailed information, please call Dr. Heinz Dinter at 305-600-4655 or email info@FelineEden.org.
www.FelineEden.org

Even if you have fed a feral cat for a long time and he has come to trust you in an outdoor setting, he will lose that trust when confined and it may never be regained. Being forced into a house or other structure can be the most frightening experience possible for a feral cat. He may appear to acclimate, or at least may stop hissing and cringing, but he is never at ease and never stops looking for a way to escape. The stress of such confinement can harm the cat's physical and mental health.

A feral cat's home is where he has spent his entire life. Feral cats form strong bonds with one another and with their home territory, bonds that define their daily existence. It may be difficult to accept that, despite the strong human-animal bond you have formed with the cats, their animal-animal bonds and animal-territory bonds are stronger and more relevant to their well-being. They are content outdoors.

Another factor that inspires some people to want to tame the feral cats they care for is the misperception that feral cats live short, miserable lives.

The truth is that the well-being of feral cats is most compromised by behaviors associated with mating and giving birth to endless litters of kittens. Spaying and neutering significantly changes the picture. Male cats no longer fight and roam. Female cats no longer bear kittens. Feral cats frequently live 10 years and longer and have the same rates of disease as pet cats.

Nurturing through Fostering and Trap-Neuter-Return

How can a caregiver's desire to nurture best be expressed? By carrying out *Trap-Neuter-Return*. A major and critically important component of *Trap-Neuter-Return* is socializing and adopting kittens and adult stray cats. When given individual love and attention, young feral kittens can usually be fully socialized to become household cats. Neonatal kittens separated from their mothers require bottle-feeding to survive. Adult strays—cats that for one reason or another lost their homes—can often be re-socialized and re-homed. Fostering kittens and strays is a valuable contribution to the process. It is also a better use of resources.

The Greatest Possible Good for the Greatest Number of Cats

The goals of the feral cat movement are:

- To change the way feral cats are routinely treated in this country;
- To recognize their right to live; and
- To improve the quality of their lives through spay and neuter.

In other words: to save and improve the lives of as many feral cats as we can.

Managing populations through adoption is not possible. Even if adoption were the desirable course, resources do not exist to socialize and adopt the tens of millions of feral cats in this country. And yet, with the time and energy that goes into trying to socialize one adult feral cat, dozens of cats could be spayed or neutered and dozens of friendly stray cats and kittens could be placed for adoption, thereby having a real impact on saving cats and improving their lives.

It is time to frankly examine our reasons for working on behalf of feral cats. Even caregivers who are involved only with the cats they feed on a daily basis are, nevertheless, part of the big picture, of the dynamic movement to help cats that began some 20 years ago in the United States.

If the goal truly is to bring the greatest good to the greatest number of cats, then the best way to reach that goal is through *Trap-Neuter-Return*.

We are dedicated to humanely reducing cat overpopulation by educating the public about the need to sterilize their pets and strays; providing access to low-cost spay/neuter services for stray, homeless and abandoned cats; helping good Samaritans in their efforts to place adoptable cats in loving homes; and advocating non-lethal population control and humane public policy

Additional Information is Available from

The Cat Network www.thecatnetwork.org 305-255-3482 • **Alley Cat Allies** www.alleycat.org

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) www.aspc.org

Feline Eden www.FelineEden.org **Supports**

Help Us Help the Cats

Your donation will help us neuter and care for the felines in the neighborhood they call home or in a sanctuary where they can live a life of tranquility and offer serenity to many like our seniors.



We also seek volunteers and financial support

WORLD
GRAND-
LIFESTYLE

Compliments of

TaN  **ROS**
Trap and Neuter • Return or Sanctuary

Helping You and Our Feline Friends: TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN



It is a non-lethal method to reduce the number of feral and stray cats in our community both immediately and for the long-term. TNR is a comprehensive, ongoing program, in which stray and feral cats already living outdoors in cities, woods, parks, and rural areas are humanely trapped, then evaluated, vaccinated, and sterilized by veterinarians. They are returned to their original location to live out their lives under the watch of voluntary caregivers who provide food, water, and shelter daily. Kittens and tame (stray) cats are adopted into good homes. Healthy adult cats too wild (feral) to be adopted are returned to their familiar habitat under the lifelong care of volunteers. Cats that are ill or injured beyond recovery are not returned to the environment.

TNR is a solution that reduces feral and stray cat populations. The traditional approach to reduce the feral cat numbers has been to round them up and remove them. But bringing feral cats to shelters is the same as a death sentence. They are wild, not adoptable, and end up being killed. So do their healthy kittens who, if trapped by 10 weeks of age, can be socialized and adopted.

TNR was brought to the United States from Europe and the United Kingdom in the late '80s. The practice of TNR grew rapidly in the '90s when Alley Cat Allies began providing information and assistance to people caring for feral cats who recognized that their numbers must be controlled and reduced through sterilization. In communities where TNR is widely embraced, feral cat numbers have dropped.

TNR programs operate largely or entirely through the dedicated efforts of committed volunteers. TNR works because it breaks the cycle of reproduction. In general, the cost of sterilizing and returning a feral cat is less than half the cost of trapping, holding, killing, and disposing of a feral cat. TNR protects public health and advances the goal of reducing the numbers of feral cats in the environment. The public supports humane, nonlethal TNR as the long-term solution to feral cat overpopulation.

Eradication does not work.

Shelters have been trapping cats for years but this method has not solved the problem. In fact, it has made it worse. Once you remove a feral cat, other cats move in to take advantage of the newly available resources such as food, shelter and water and they breed prolifically, quickly forming a new colony. This vacuum-effect is well documented. If trap and remove worked, we would have seen a decline in the feral cat population. In fact, the number of feral cats continues to rise in locations not practicing TNR.

Trap-Neuter-Return works!

The breeding stops. Cat populations are gradually reduced. The annoying behaviors of breeding cats, like yowling, fighting, or spraying stops. The cats are vaccinated against disease, and they are fed on a regular schedule so they are healthier under a TNR program than if they had to struggle to find food every day. This ongoing care allows the cat to live, yet reduces their population naturally through attrition. TNR is reflective of a caring society.

Do YOU want to help feral and stray cats in YOUR neighborhood?
Call or visit the websites of the following to find out how



www.thecatnetwork.org

305-255-3482



www.humanesociety.org

202-452-1100



www.alleycat.org

240-482-1980



www.aspc.org

212-876-7700

Courtesy of 

Dedicated to protecting and improving the lives of our nation's cats.