

**Rebuttal to Proposition 62, allowing exemption for release of “sterilized”  
domesticated cats (*Felis catus*) into the wild**

The irresponsible advocates of this program invariably misrepresent the facts concerning it, because none of the facts are in accord with their desires. Interestingly, their misinformation mantra never changes—it’s as if they consider repetition sufficient to make their case. Simply repeating a lie doesn’t make it the truth.

One of the oft-repeated lies promulgated by “Trap-Neuter-Release” advocates is that killing doesn’t work because of the “vacuum effect”:

Per proposal 62: “Cats are trapped, brought to a shelter, and because most are not socialized to people and are unadoptable, killed. Any remaining cats quickly breed to capacity, or new cats move in to take advantage of the newly-available resources. This is a well-documented phenomenon known as ‘the vacuum-effect’.”

The flaws with this claim are considerable:

- (1) Domesticated cats—even feral ones—are far less territorial than wild felines—even their own wild ancestor the Old World wild cat (*F. sylvestris* subspecies).
- (2) The vacuum effect doesn’t apply to animals subsidized by human feeding. Be they pigeons, carp, deer, cats, or bears, such animals congregate to take advantage of the subsidy, and will repeatedly return to it as long as it’s available. Bears are far more territorial than domesticated cats, but we see them in numbers in the spring and summer, along the banks of streams with salmon runs. As long as the fish are there, the bears will be, too.
- (3) If “territoriality” was a significant factor with respect to cat-colonies, there would be no cat-colonies in the first place.
- (4) If we’re talking about releasing sterilized cats into the wild, they shouldn’t be “breeding to capacity” in any event—they shouldn’t be breeding at all. To even achieve “stabilization” of the population—i.e. no net increase—75%-91% of ALL cats within a thirty-mile radius of the colony must be sterilized. In the six-decade history of TNR this has never been achieved anywhere in the world.
- (5) Similarly, there has never been a single quantitatively documented case of unconfined feral cat colony attrition via TNR anywhere in the world since the advent of this fraudulent program. Even the alleged “studies” referenced by the proponent of proposal 62 don’t support any claim of TNR efficacy—hence only their abstracts are appended. Levy, Gale & Gale et al, JAVMA 2003 claimed a 66% population reduction in 11 years—in actuality it was a 2% reduction, which even then Levy couldn’t substantiate because she provided no counts for her subject colony. Of that 66%, 47% were feral kittens “adopted” to local households. Adoption is not at issue, here, and Levy’s study didn’t even adequately support adoption efficacy because she did no follow-up. She euthanized an additional 11% of her subjects. Again, the efficacy of euthanasia is not at issue here. An additional 6% were either killed by cars, or wandered away from the study site and not accounted for. But TNR sure took care of the remaining 2%! It only took 11 years. Unfortunately, feral cat populations increase by 38% annually. The preceding is a minor snapshot of the inescapable reality of TNR—population reduction thereby is a mathematical impossibility.

- (6) As for Spehar and Wolf, (Animals, 2017) referenced by the proponent of proposal 62, neither individual is an accredited biologist. Mr. Wolf is a paid “blogger” for Best Friends Animal Society who has for several years tried to get pro-TNR papers published in scientific journals, all of which have refused his submissions. An example of why this was the case could be that the authors admitted 58 times in the text of the currently referenced study that they had no quantitative data to back their claims. It was predicated entirely on interviewing “cat-colony caretakers”, often about events which occurred a quarter-century ago. Levy’s study is grievously flawed. This one should never have been published.
- (7) TNR advocates only invoke the so-called “vacuum effect” in the context of trapping and euthanasia. What they omit is that if the process actually *applied* to feral cat colonies, it would come into play when a colony cat was hit by a car, taken by an eagle, or was frozen to death—i.e. what our “humane” TNR advocates refer to as “natural attrition”. Unaltered feral cats would move in to replace the “TNR colony casualty” just as they would if a cat was euthanized in a shelter.
- (8) Hence in terms of the vacuum effect TNR makes no difference. What you end up with is a park, playground, neighborhood or game habitat full of invasive zoonotic disease-vectors.
- (9) In most cases, the presence of such a colony becomes a favored dumping ground for other irresponsible people who wish to abandon their cats, for the same reason the cats themselves seek out colonies—they know someone will probably feed them. Thus TNR doesn’t reduce feral cat problems at any given locale, it usually exacerbates them.
- (10) It’s also been demonstrated that intact cats are not driven away by neutered cats—quite the opposite. Intact cats move in to take advantage of unaltered females and drive out neutered males, at least to the periphery of the colony. And breeding by unaltered cats will of course continue apace.

TNR is merely a means of hoarding cats outdoors, and as such poses a deadly threat to both public health and wildlife conservation.

Sincerely,

Frederick H. Minshall

Proponent of Proposal 63, opponent of Proposal 62