

Humane Society of Manatee County

For the Love of Cats... Under the Cover of Darkness

By Rick Yocum, Executive Director,
Humane Society of Manatee County

After the sun sets across Manatee County, a dedicated group of animal advocates hits the streets. Crossing the county in a loosely organized effort to provide care for the thousands of feral/free roaming community cats, these caretakers and trappers are dedicated to their mission. Hundreds of caretakers provide food and water to cat colonies ranging from one cat to populations as high as fifty cats.

In addition to the caretakers, there are a number of "trappers" that regularly trap cats to be taken to area veterinary facilities for spay/neuter surgery, vaccines and ear tipping.

TNR (trap, neuter and return) is the humane solution to controlling the population of feral/free roaming cats in Manatee County. The tipped ear lets future trappers know that a cat already has been spayed or neutered. Each cat also receives a Rabies vaccine, which ensures a healthier cat and human population. TNR programs have

and bring them back to their respective colonies.

Complete with a lock box, the feral cat porch at the rear of the clinic is the holding area for the cats. This contained outdoor area replicates the cat's natural surroundings and keeps stress levels at a minimum.

Manatee County provides some funding each year towards the TNR efforts, and small grants have helped to continue the program.

If you are interested in helping,



Rick Yocum, Executive Director of the Humane Society of Manatee County. Photo by Ezekiel Photography



From left to right: The temperature-controlled feral cat porch at the Humane Society of Manatee County Veterinary Clinic replicates a feral cat's natural surroundings to minimize stress; trapped feral cats await surgery on the porch; spay/neuter procedures are performed in the clinic's surgical suite.

been highly successful in controlling overpopulation through attrition for well-managed colonies.

There are a small number of trappers, including representatives from Manatee County Animal Services, who regularly respond to areas of concern where cat populations are adversely affecting human quality of life. Obviously, the activities of the trappers and caretakers are limited by financial constraints.

Humane Society of Manatee County has supported the TNR program by providing low cost or no cost spay/neuter services, ear tipping and vaccines. The Humane Society of Manatee County Veterinary Clinic performed 1,327 spay/neuter surgeries in 2018 for feral/free roaming cats.

A single unaltered female cat and her unaltered offspring can easily produce more than 30,000 kittens in the span of 6 years.

Neighborhood groups are increasingly getting involved with TNR and regularly stop at the Humane Society of Manatee County to borrow live traps and bring the neighborhood cats to the clinic on "Trapper Tuesday," when surgeries are performed. After the surgery on Tuesday, the trappers return on Wednesday to pick up the cats

you can contact the Humane Society of Manatee County Veterinary Clinic at clinic@humanesocietymanatee.org or by calling 941-747-8808, Option #1.

In addition, donations for the TNR program can be made online at www.humanemanatee.org, or by mailing a check to HSMC, 2515 14th Street W. Bradenton, Florida 34205. Please note "TNR" on your check. 🐾

Humane Society of Manatee County is located at 2515 14th Street West in Bradenton and can be reached by calling 941-747-8808. The Adoption Center is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For additional information, visit www.humanemanatee.org, or send an e-mail to info@humanesocietymanatee.org.

Open to the public, Humane Society of Manatee County Veterinary Clinic is located at 2415 14th Street West in Bradenton and can be reached by calling 941-747-8088, Option #1. The veterinary clinic is open by appointment Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Saturday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For additional information about the clinic, visit www.humanemanatee.org. To schedule an appointment, call 1-941-747-8808, Option #1, or send an e-mail to clinic@humanesocietymanatee.org.