

Feeding Ban Position Statement

Alley Cat Allies



Alley Cat Allies opposes feeding bans for feral cats. These bans are inherently cruel and do not come close to achieving their intended goals. Feeding ban laws, ordinances, and policies are misguided policy and are wholly ineffective.

Feeding bans do not work, and are not scientifically supported.

Attempts to eradicate feral cats by starvation fail because there are other food sources that are a by-product of urban and suburban environments. Feral cat populations' density and locations are not contingent on individuals intentionally providing food for the cats.^{1, 2} Studies have shown that other sources of food are always available – including food scraps in household trash and municipal garbage facilities.³ Cats are territorial and bond to their surroundings. As scavengers, they can find food in garbage cans and dumpsters.

In certain situations, feral cats who have been fed on a consistent schedule can become dependent on their caregivers for food, and in these cases, to abruptly discontinue care is cruel and can lead to the death of some cats. But cats will not disappear simply because compassionate people can no longer legally feed them.

Feeding bans encourage cats to roam further to find food, making them more visible, which can actually increase calls to animal control. Managing a colony with a program that includes Trap-Neuter-Return and consistent, organized feeding discourages roaming because neutered males are no longer searching for mates, and there is decreased competition for dominance rank.⁴ Cats who are fed on a regular schedule tend to stay in close proximity to their feeding stations. Feeders can also exercise control over the behavior of feral cats, by gradually moving their feeding stations into less-trafficked areas.

Feeding bans discourage the practice of Trap-Neuter-Return, the only effective course of action for stabilizing the feral cat population. Scientific studies as well as decades of hands-on experience show that Trap-Neuter-Return programs work to end the breeding cycle, improve the cats' health, and make them better neighbors by ending mating behaviors.⁵

With a feeding ban in place, Trap-Neuter-Return is impossible to carry out, and the cats continue to have new litters of kittens.

Feeding bans punish the very people who are working to improve conditions for the cats and for the community. In the last 20 years, the number of local nonprofit organizations dedicated to helping feral cats in the community has grown to over 250 nationwide. Hundreds of thousands of Americans, spending their own time and money, organize low-cost spay/neuter clinics, carry out Trap-Neuter-Return programs and organize foster programs for adoptable cats and kittens. These Good Samaritans are an asset to the community. Feeding bans force their work into secrecy.

Feeding bans are difficult to enforce; compassionate people will continue to help the cats. They are also complaint-driven, and rapidly deteriorate into a situation of extreme cruelty, with no net benefit to the community.

Feeding bans ignore the real problem—the lack of affordable spay/neuter services in the community. Feeding bans are punitive and tend to direct resources towards administrative tasks like enforcement and away from incentive-based programs that encourage spay/neuter. Ineffective ordinances, like feeding bans, are a waste of taxpayer dollars.

Alley Cat Allies encourages communities to reject cruel, punitive, and ineffective ordinances and instead to embrace humane programs that really work to stabilize the population and keep cats out of animal shelters, including Trap-Neuter-Return for feral cats and subsidized and low-cost spay/neuter for all cats.

[1] Haspel and Calhoun, Home Ranges of Free-Ranging Cats (*Felis catus*) in Brooklyn, New York. *Canadian Journal of Zoology* Vol 178, 1989.

[2] Liberg, Olaf, Mikael Sandell, Dominique Pontier, and Eugenia Natoli. "Density, Spatial Organization and Reproductive Tactics in the Domestic Cat and Other Felids." In *The Domestic Cat: The Biology of its Behaviour*, Second Edition, edited by Dennis C. Turner and Patrick Bateson, 119-148. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

[3] United States Environmental Protection Agency. "Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Facts and Figures for 2008." Environmental Protection Agency Web Site. <http://www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/msw2008rpt.pdf> (accessed May 13, 2010).

[4] Brown, Sarah Louise. "The Social Behaviour of Neutered Domestic Cats (*Felis Catus*)." PhD Diss., University of Southampton, 1993.

[5] Alley Cat Allies, Key Scientific Studies on Trap-Neuter-Return, <http://alleycat.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=667> (last visited May 24 2010).