



County: Baltimore County

Number of Cats Spayed:	1070	Number of Dogs Spayed:	0
Number of Cats Neutered:	918	Number of Dogs Neutered:	0

Amount Received: \$80,000	Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0
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Project Synopsis:

This project provided 1988 spay/neuter surgeries for community cats within Baltimore County where we have been tracking the results of cat colonies since 2016 through our successful TNR (Trap, Neuter and Return) program.



Project Description:

Created in 1924, the mission of the Baltimore County Animal Services, Communicable Disease and Environmental Health (ACE) is to promote health and prevent disease through education, advocacy, linkage to resources and treatment to improve the quality of life for Baltimore County residents. Its vision is healthy people living, working and playing in Baltimore County. We employ approximately 625 staff that provide services across three bureaus: (1) Communicable Disease and Environmental Health; (2) Behavioral and Community Services; and (3) Clinical and School Based Services. Key responsibilities are to provide investigative, regulatory and oversight functions in a number of areas including communicable disease outbreaks, rabies exposures, and animal nuisance complaints; act as the lead agency in public health emergency events such as bioterrorism; administer entitlement and benefit programs; provide clinical and case management services to at-risk populations; and provide outreach and education to promote healthy lifestyles, detect diseases, and encourage appropriate treatment where applicable. The Animal Services Division was centralized at its current location in 1981. It is responsible for enforcing the laws that protect animals, shelter lost cats and dogs, spay and neuter pets, issue pet licenses, microchip pets, administer rabies vaccinations, provide TNR, low cost adoptions to the public, etc.

Project 19-418 was started in November 2019 and completed in March 2021. Our proposal for targeted TNR established a spay/neuter goal of 1988 community cats. The grant focused on the entire county because we receive complaints and impoundments from all over our jurisdiction. We focused the bulk of our trapping support in the lower income neighborhoods where we've previously focused our pet spay/neuter grant efforts to help



make a larger impact in the number of cats sterilized overall. Our intention is to continue sterilizing community cats all over our county until 100% of colonies have been completed.

Summary of Approach:

This grant was complaint-driven. This means we focused on locations where complaints were received from the public regarding cats creating a nuisance on private or public property. As a direct result, an immediate reduction in the overpopulation of community cats is being seen, as well as a reduction in shelter intake and euthanasia rates of stray cats and kittens from these communities.

We targeted all of Baltimore County, with a special focus on serving those in our lower income neighborhoods, where we receive the most cat related complaints and impoundments. We completed the grant by doing weekly (Friday) Walk-in TNR clinics with no limit to the number of cats accepted, as well as staff trapping (until that was discontinued). We started the walk-in clinics September 2020 and received a high volume of support from the public. We offer free trap loans to the public, as well as guidance to help them trap on their own, with our support.

Our TNR Coordinator handles the bulk of the program: from providing trap loans and training to the public, to mediating nuisance complaint calls, scheduling surgeries, intaking cats on our walk-in clinic day, educating the public, evaluating cats in the shelter population for return to field, finding adoption outcomes for cats not eligible to be returned outdoors (who need placement through our Alternative Placement Program), etc. Our in-house vet team provides all veterinary care, surgery services, ongoing medical care, etc. Our Animal Services Officers provide transportation, as needed, to and from the shelter. They help with returning the cats to their outdoor homes, as well as getting permission forms completed, as required. The Officers are often our first contact with new clients who are trapping for the first time-they provide in the field/boots on the ground education to the public in regards to colony care and management and humane trapping best practices. They also provide humane deterrent information to complainants who do not want the cats on their property.

Accomplishments:

In 2019, BCAS was awarded our first TNRP grant by the Department of Agriculture. This grant was focused on providing free TNR surgeries to community cats throughout Baltimore County. Our barriers included: low staffing, extensive paperwork being required by the county office of law, a change in our TNR program structure (losing two TNR Assistant positions and ceasing staff trapping in the community altogether), permanent closing of one of our surgical clinics (Southwest Area Park), as well as administration changes (twice) and the COVID pandemic (which resulted in closing of our Dundalk clinic, until further notice). We also shut down our Baldwin spay/neuter clinic multiple times, due to covid outbreaks among staff, as well as low staffing, due to the pandemic. In 2020, the Baldwin location was closed for surgeries for 3 months, and then only operated at 50% capacity for another 2 months. So far in 2021, we're still re-building our clinic capacity and only our Baldwin location is currently open.

Our 2019 TNRP Grant received several extensions and was finally completed 3/31/2021. Through completion of that grant, we have learned and adapted our program to what suites the community that we serve. Alternatives have been established to allow easier access for clients to bring in community cats. We now offer same day surgery at our Baldwin clinic, to TNR clients. They can come to our weekly walk-in TNR clinic on Fridays, or they can make an appointment for another day of the week, if they prefer. Our walk-in clinic has become very popular, since it began on September 11, 2020. We're averaging 20-40 cats per week, and hope to increase this number over the course of this year, as we shift our focus to more community engagement now that it is slowly becoming safer to do so, with the COVID pandemic.

We continue to offer trap loans to members of the community who have cats on their property (regardless of whether they're a caregiver or complainant), as well as volunteer trappers who act as a third party, assisting those who cannot trap or transport for themselves.

Our Animal Services Officers provide transportation, as requested, to/from colony locations, for the purpose of getting cats to our clinic for TNR surgery, as well as providing trap loans to customers who do not have transportation.



Even with the pandemic, our total number of TNR surgeries actually increased in 2020, over 2019! In 2019, we completed a total of 711 TNR surgeries. In 2020, we completed a total of 894 TNR surgeries. So far, in the first quarter of 2021, we're already 71 TNR surgeries above the first quarter of 2020, which we're really excited about!

In conclusion, even though our overall surgery numbers (including pets) are lower than in years past, we're consistently seeing higher TNR surgery numbers than in prior years, as well as a greater interest from the public in actively participating in our TNR Program.

Lessons Learned:

During the period of the grant we provided a lot of boots on the ground education to the public: block walking (literally going door to door) in low income neighborhoods, attending neighborhood association meetings (pre-covid), passing out flyers, mailing information, talking to clients in our shelter and spay/neuter centers. We even shared information through a Health Department staff email, more than once, asking all county staff to share with anyone who may be interested. We put out a local newspaper ad twice during the grant-unfortunately they were both right before covid hit and we did not see much response from this effort.

When we started this grant we had three TNR staff members who went trapping multiple times a week. By the end of the grant, we only had our TNR Coordinator and no longer were able to provide staff trapping assistance. We had to get creative with how we got cats into our program. Eventually, during the COVID pandemic, we started a TNR Walk-in clinic on Fridays, where we would accept as many cats as show up to our doors. This has been a huge success, and continues to help our program grow, even after the grant's completion.

Attachments:

Photo 1-TNR Cat being returned to field.

Photo 2-Mathias as he wakes up from anesthesia, post TNR surgery.

Photo 3-cats waiting for surgery on a walk-in TNR clinic day (there were more than could fit in one photo).

For More Information Contact:

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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SPAY AND NEUTER GRANTS PROGRAM

