



Altering the Future of Sunshine's Feral Friends

Project #

23-8050

County: Anne Arundel

Number of Cats Spayed: 159

Number of Dogs Spayed:

Number of Cats Neutered: 141

Number of Dogs Neutered:

Amount Received: \$15,000

Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0

Project Synopsis:

This project funded part of our multi-year efforts to control the feral cat population living in colonies in parts of Anne Arundel and Howard counties. We proposed to perform targeted Trap Neuter Return (TNR), spaying/neutering/vaccinating 300 feral cats at 8 colonies (4 in Anne Arundel and 4 in Howard) in order to reduce the intake and euthanasia rates at both of those county animal control facilities.



Maryland Department of Agriculture
Spay and Neuter Grants Program



Project Description:

Sunshine's Friends Cat and Dog Rescue (www.sunshinesfriends.org) has been a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity since 2014 operating within 20 miles of our main location in Jessup, MD. The target area is a mix of light industry, warehouses, and residential neighborhoods, and the zones along the US Route 1 corridor and southern Baltimore beltway have a higher concentration of unaltered strays and feral cat colonies than other parts of the counties. This project, which ran from October 2022 to June 2023, sought to spay/neuter 300 community cats living in 8 known colonies, and then transition them to managed colonies. As part of a multi-year project, we are steadily reducing the number of feral cats taken in at local county animal shelters. The project funded the cost of the spay/neuter surgeries and rabies vaccines for the cats. Transportation, outreach, vaccines other than rabies, and surgeries beyond spay/neuter were covered by our normal operating budget.

Summary of Approach:

Long before the grant award, we began outreach to colony caregivers and property managers to determine the scope of the problem and prioritize. We take on one colony at a time until it is 100% complete, then move to the next. Before working at a site, our coordinator lines up resources and schedules vet clinics. We establish a rhythm of TNR two times per week to optimize people/equipment resources and keep regular schedules. When trapping, any ear-tipped cats that were already spayed/neutered are released if in good health; all others we take to our vet the next morning. Following surgery, we recuperate and evaluate them for potential rehoming through adoption. Truly feral cats are returned to the site to reintegrate with the colony. We trap at each site until complete, then follow up with outreach to catch stragglers/newcomers. This year we partnered with 7 vet clinics who provide substantially discounted rates. We cover the costs of extra vaccines, medical care, and flea treatment.

Accomplishments:

In just 9 months of the planned one-year project, we managed to spay/neuter 300 feral cats living in 8 colonies in 2 local counties. This number is in addition to the regular projects we run via our standing in-house programs. We brought all 8 colonies under control, preventing future kitten population explosions and reducing intake/euthanasia at both county-run shelters. We also provided additional treatment and/or surgery to any cat that needed it and cared for them until fully recovered. We trained the caregivers at each colony in best practices for community cat colony management. Every one expressed how grateful they were that this program exists and that all the cats in their colonies are now spayed/neutered and vaccinated. Once the grant funds were expended, we provided our own funding to cover any stragglers or newcomers at the colonies to ensure we maintain 100% spay/neuter of the colonies.



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Lessons Learned:

Demand for programs like these outstrips the available supply due to the macro-economic downturn in the country. A shortage of veterinarians is limiting the availability of appointments. We devoted extra time and effort into coordinating and scheduling vet appointments and used multiple vets to optimize the available spay/neuter slots. We managed to avoid the typical 3 - 4 month wait for appointments through close coordination with our partner vets.

For More Information Contact:

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