



Sunshine Keeps Feral Cats Babies and Rabies Free

Project #

21-637

County: Anne Arundel, Howard

Number of Cats Spayed: 137

Number of Dogs Spayed: 0

Number of Cats Neutered: 116

Number of Dogs Neutered: 0

Amount Received: \$11,820.00

Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0.00

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 250 feral cats at 6 colonies (4 in Anne Arundel and 2 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 2020 to August 2021, sought to spay/neuter 250 community cats living in 6 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 and a transportation component to bring the animals from the targeted colonies to our partner vets' clinics.

Summary of Approach:

Long before the grant award we began outreach to 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 we trap, any cats with eartips 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 continue outreach for follow-up to round up stragglers/newcomers. We partner with four vet clinics to who provide substantially discounted rates. We cover costs of extra vaccines, medical care, and flea treatment.

Accomplishments:

In just over 10 months of the planned one-year project, we managed to spay/neuter 253 feral cats living in 6 colonies in 2 counties. This number is in addition to the projects we run via our normal in-house programs. We brought all 6 colonies under control, preventing future kitten population explosions and reducing intake/euthanasia at 2 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 6 colony caregivers in community cat colony management, all of whom were very relieved that 100% of their cats are now spayed/neutered and vaccinated. When the grant funds were expended, we provided the money for the last few cats in order to complete 100% of the colony.



Lessons Learned:

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we switched to meeting with colony caregivers virtually. Restrictions on spay/neuter activities during the early phases of COVID-19 caused severe backlogs for veterinary services, but our vet partners believe strongly in TNR. We were able to work with them to ensure they could accommodate about 15 trapped cats at once, even if they had to work longer hours.

For More Information Contact:

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