



Why feeding bans don't work to eliminate stray and feral cats

IndyFeral opposes feeding bans for stray and 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 wholly ineffective. The logic behind feeding bans or instructing people to stop feeding stray and feral cats is that if there is no food available, the cats will go away. This is not true and in fact only makes the problem worse.

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

- Attempts to eradicate stray and feral cats by starvation fail because often times there are other food sources that are a by-product of urban and suburban environments. Some stray and feral cat populations are not always 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 unsecured garbage cans, dumpsters or they will feed on rodents, insects or moles.

Feeding bans are inherently cruel and discourages compassionate care.

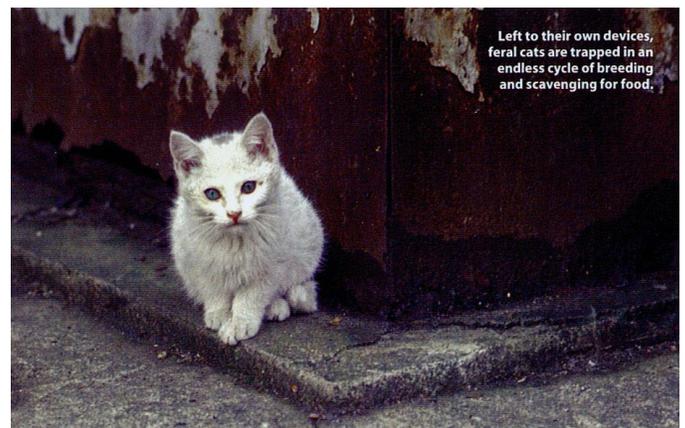
- In certain situations, stray and feral cats who have been fed on a consistent schedule can become dependent on their caregivers for food, and in these cases, to abruptly discontinue their food source is cruel and can lead to the visible deaths of the cats and kittens. The cats will not disappear simply because compassionate people can no longer legally feed them.
- Malnourished cats are more susceptible to disease and parasitic infections, such as fleas which makes the situation worse.
- Feeding an animal in need is a natural human emotion. 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

stray and 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 (TNR) 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 or discourage them from implementing TNR.

- Repeated experience has shown that people who care for the cats will go to great lengths to feed starving animals.

Feeding bans are not an effective form of birth control

- Left to their own devices, feral cats are trapped in an endless cycle of breeding despite the effort to “starve them out”. Withholding food is not a form of birth control as it merely perpetuates a cycle of misery and suffering. There is no connection in regards to withholding food and thinking the cats are going to stop breeding. It doesn’t work that way.



Left to their own devices, feral cats are trapped in an endless cycle of breeding and scavenging for food.

Feeding bans can increase nuisance complaints to animal control.

- Withholding food encourages the cats to roam and become more visible as they search for food
- As cats grow hungrier and more desperate for food they will encroach closer to human habitats in an effort not to starve to death
- Without an organized feeding schedule, TNR is impossible to implement which allows the colony to breed unchecked and expand.
- Feeding bans are impossible to enforce, complaint-driven, and rapidly deteriorate into a situation of extreme cruelty, with no net benefit to the community.

Feeding bans work against Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

- Feeding bans discourage the practice of TNR, the only effective course of action for stabilizing the feral cat population. Scientific studies as well as decades of hands-on experience show that TNR 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, TNR is impossible to carry out.



Instructing people not to feed or water stray and feral cats works against TNR

- Managing a colony with a program that includes TNR and consistent, organized feeding discourages nuisance mating behaviors. Neutered cats are no longer roaming for mates, fighting is reduced and endless litters of kittens is discontinued.⁴
- Cats that 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.

- Well managed colonies serve as a safety net for any new cats that have been lost or abandoned. New cats that may join a colony can be evaluated for TNR or adoption in an effort to stabilize or reduce the size of the colony.

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 and policies, like feeding bans, are a waste of taxpayer dollars.
- Understanding the source of the cats: abandonment, loss of pet cats and intact owned cats that roam freely are the major source of the stray and feral cat population. Prevention strategies and education that address these issues should be encouraged rather than punish the people that seek to help them.

IndyFeral along with Alley Cat Allies encourages communities to reject cruel, punitive, and ineffective feeding ban ordinances and instead to embrace humane non-lethal programs like TNR and low-cost spay and neuter programs for all cats.



For more information
email IndyFeral at
contact@indyferal.org
or call (317) 596-2300

Resources:

(Adapted from Alley Cat Allies' Feeding Ban Position Statement)

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