

Spring 2011

Feral Focus

IndyFeral offers Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) and colony management assistance for stray & feral cats in Central Indiana

Showcasing how your gifts are improving the lives of outdoor, homeless cats

IACC and IndyFeral team up to save lives

IACC manages its own feral colony

Indianapolis Animal Care and Control (IACC), the city-funded shelter for stray and homeless animals, has always had free-roaming cats on its grounds – just due to the nature of its mission. Cats are abandoned by their owners, escape from the shelter, or even escape the animal control vans. They scavenge for food in the shelter dumpster, sneak into the 40-bay garage, or seek shelter under parked cars. New kittens arrive every spring and fall and breeding goes unchecked, just like with any unmanaged colony.

Now, all that is changing. Last spring Teri Kendrick, IACC administrator, recognized the severity of the problem and gave IndyFeral permission to implement TNR on the IACC grounds.

IACC staff formed a feeding team to get the cats on a regular feeding schedule. This helped prepare for trapping. Feeding stations and cat shelters were built by Habitat for Catmanity. Two mass trappings have been completed; a total of 33 cats have been spayed or neutered. Each cat received a three-year rabies vaccination, flea treatment, medical exam and eartip. Fifteen of the cats or kittens were friendly and transferred to the Humane Society of Indianapolis where they were all adopted. Four of the cats were put down due to severe injuries or illness. The remaining healthy feral cats were released back outdoors to the home they know on the grounds of

IACC. The cats are now monitored daily by staff, feeders, and volunteers.

We interviewed Teri Kendrick about her experience with IndyFeral and the TNR process:

Q. Why is managing the free-roaming cat population important to IACC?

A. “Cats are frequently abandoned on our grounds, so managing our free-roaming cat population is essential to prevent it from becoming a nuisance. Management through TNR (with rehoming of the friendly cats) rather than euthanasia is more humane and consistent with our mission of reducing the number of animal deaths at our shelter.”

Q. Why is TNR important for feral cats?

A. “Because it improves their quality of life. They have a reliable food source, shelter and any sick or injured colony cat can get medical care through IndyFeral. TNR provides a safety net for all cats that find themselves on the street.”

Q. Have there been any challenges managing a colony at the shelter?

A. “Employees were concerned about cats sitting on their cars in our employee parking lot or getting into our dumpster and food storage areas. So we’ve moved the feeding stations to the edge of



IACC colony cat



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IndyFeral is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization dedicated to helping stray and feral cats in the Indianapolis area by creating resources to provide food, shelter, spay/neuter, and medical care. Our mission is to reduce the stray and feral cat overpopulation through the non-lethal method of trap-neuter-return (TNR), not trap and kill.

Lisa Tudor, executive director

Direct questions or change of address to contact@indyferal.org or call 317.596.2300.

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our grounds so that the cats don't have any reason to be in our parking lot, and we're partnering with IndyFeral to trap regularly since we know our population is being added to all the time. Because we will always have free-roaming cats here, our goal is to keep the population under control by rehoming the friendly ones and preventing the ferals from reproducing."

Q. Why is a community-wide TNR important to the city?

A. "Because it's both an effective and a humane way to manage our city's free-roaming cat population. The alternative — constant trapping, removal and euthanasia by Animal Control officers — is costlier and less effective because the remaining cats continue to breed, and other abandoned stray cats just move in and take advantage of available resources. I would encourage other city shelters and municipalities to support TNR."

Q. What other ways do you support TNR?

A. "IndyFeral receives a \$15,000 grant from the city in support of their TNR efforts. Those dollars are used in the neighborhoods with the highest cat impoundment rates. Additionally, animal control officers are encouraged to distribute IndyFeral information to residents who are feeding homeless cats, and qualified caretakers can get food assistance for their colonies from our food bank."

Q. Are there any other benefits TNR provides the shelter?

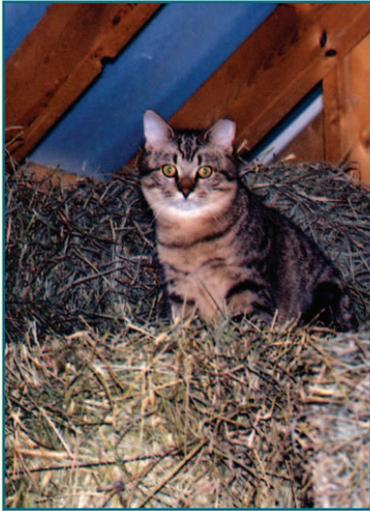
A. "According to Darcie Kurtz, IACC's assistant administrator, shelter operations, TNR also helps with feral cats that have been impounded here. IndyFeral offers the only hope for feral cats we receive. We can't adopt these cats and rescue groups won't take them because they are not socialized."

When a feral cat is brought to our shelter, we note the address where the cat was found and then contact IndyFeral. If there is a managed colony match, we transfer the cat to IndyFeral where the cat is fixed, vaccinated, eartipped, and returned to its colony. We transferred over 450 ferals to IndyFeral in 2010; all would have been euthanized if we could not have given them to IndyFeral. This new partnership is based on the Feral Freedom program based in Jacksonville, Florida. An additional 100 eartipped cats we received were returned to their colonies or rehomed (friendly cats). Transferring feral cats out also opens up valuable kennel space here for the friendly adoptable cats we receive every day.



IndyFeral and IndyHumane create the city's first Barn Cat program

Groups seeking safe locations for cats



There are over 2,500 feral cat colonies in Indianapolis. And those are just the ones IndyFeral knows about.

“These colonies contain feral cats, the ones who were born outside and prefer to stay there,” said Lisa Tudor, executive director, IndyFeral. “But they are also home to friendly cats, those that have been lost or abandoned by their previous owners. They don’t necessarily want to live outdoors, but they join these colonies because they provide their only means of survival.”



In 2010, the Humane Society of Indianapolis (IndyHumane) received over 250

friendly colony cats and kittens and placed them in their new forever homes. Fifty cats were transferred out of the shelter – right back outside where they prefer to live and thrive. In the past, these 50 transferred cats, who just would not make suitable house pets, would have been euthanized. But the Barn Cat program, a joint effort between IndyHumane and IndyFeral, is designed to help cats that may not make the best house pets find forever homes in not-so-traditional outdoor settings.

“This partnership looks at the big picture and what is truly in the best interest of each individual cat,” said Christine Jeschke, director of shelter operations for IndyHumane. “We do not euthanize cats for space, length of stay, or for behavior concerns, so the Barn Cat program gives shelter

cats that previously had no options a chance at a wonderful life.”

The Barn Cat program finds safe and appropriate placement options for shelter cats that have behavior or personality quirks that don’t make them ideal as indoor pets, such as extremely poor litter box habits or shyness/fear of people.

“We don’t place cats who are suitable to live indoors as outdoor pets,” said Jeschke. “And any cat who becomes a member of the Barn Cat program is spayed/neutered, rabies vaccinated, gets a left ear tip to identify she/he as a feral, and is registered with IndyFeral.”

What are these alternative living options? Working barns, riding and boarding stables, landscape nurseries, warehouses, safe heated outbuildings or managed colonies that have caretakers who may be able to add a cat in need. For owners of these facilities, having a “barn” cat is a win-win because the cat can keep down the rodent population and the cat – or cats – has a safe place to live. And because the cats are sterilized, there will be no new litters of kittens.

Property owners interested in having barn cats must agree to give the cats the following:

- Shelter in a safe barn, building, stable, etc.
- Daily food and water (cats can’t live on mousing alone!)
- Long-term medical care as needed (cats are fixed at adoption)
- A secure place to keep them for the first two or three weeks while they acclimate to their new surroundings. IndyHumane can lend an introduction cage if no secure area is available.

The Barn Cat program is in need of safe locations. If you are interested, please contact Christine Jeschke at 317.872-5650 x.160 or email cjeschke@indyhumane.org. You may also contact Lisa Tudor at lisa@indyferal.org.

Food Bank moving to IACC Food donations needed

Effective January 1, the IndyFeral food bank merged with the food pantry operated by Friends of Indianapolis Dogs Outside (FIDO) and is now located at IACC, 2600 S. Harding Street. Food bank hours are the first and third Saturday of each month from noon to 4 p.m. The pantry will be open to dog and cat owners and colony caretakers.



stabilize a cat's health. IndyFeral distributes 30,000 pounds of food a year through its food banks to assist caretakers in feeding the over 2,500 colonies in Indianapolis.

Volunteers are always needed to help at the food bank to collect donated food or to "adopt" a colony in need. If you are interested in volunteering or supporting a colony, contact FIDO at (317) 592-9616 (ask for Jessica).

On behalf of IndyFeral and the thousands of homeless animals on the streets in Marion County, thank you.

Nutrition for feral cats is extremely important given the rigors of their outdoor lives. Providing daily food and water is the single most important consistent action one can take to

Success Stories



Bunny

Bunny's family moved – but decided to leave Bunny behind. She sat on the porch for a long time awaiting their return but it never happened. So, in order to survive, she eventually joined a nearby feral colony for food and water – and attention from people she so desperately missed. She wanted back inside and to be an indoor cat once again. Her colony's caretaker, Pam, recognized she was not a feral cat. She got her spayed and medical attention through IndyFeral, and then took her to the Humane Society so she had a chance at finding a new forever home. She was adopted quickly and her new owner Kris just loves her and can't imagine why anyone would have abandoned such a sweet cat.



Bob

Bob was trapped and impounded at IACC in 2010. He was identified as a feral and transferred to IndyFeral to see if an alternate outdoor placement could be found for him. Bob was not an adoption candidate and IACC would have to put him down without the help of IndyFeral. A caretaker could not be identified near the area where Bob was trapped so a relocation site was sought for him. Stephanie, a long-time colony caretaker agreed to take Bob and add him to her colony. Bob was neutered, vaccinated, and eartipped and on his way to his new colony. As one can see from his photo, this handsome guy is thriving and back in an outdoor home that better suits his needs. He enjoys hanging out with Stephanie in the backyard and assisting with gardening and other outdoor chores.

And speaking of success, here are IndyFeral stats near the end of 2010:

- Cats spayed or neutered: 3200
- Medical care: 750 cats
- Eartipped cats returned to their colonies or rehomed: 100
- Friendly cats and kittens removed from colonies for adoption: 500
- Food distributed: 30,000 pounds
- Shelters distributed: 300
- Launched a partnership with Habitat for Catmanity to help construct shelters and feeding stations
- Launched the Barn Cat program in partnership with IndyHumane
- Launched the Feral Freedom program with ACC: 450 ferals were returned to their colonies

And more success:

- Our annual fall mum sale raised over \$1,500 to fund spay/neuter surgeries. Thanks once again to Soules Garden and Broad Ripple "Pet Supplies Plus."
- We want to again thank "Pet Supplies Plus" for supporting IndyFeral during October and National Feral Cat Month. PSP raised over \$3,000 through in-store customer donations.