

Volunteers Look After Campus Cats

Students and staff at Utah State University formed an association to look after feral felines.

Employees and students at Utah State University formed a group to care for the welfare of dozens of feral cats that roam the schools northern Utah campus.

The group of volunteers, called Aggie Cat Services, organized last year to nurture, protect and manage the vast feral-cat population at the Logan, Utah, university.

Theres an estimated more than 50 feral cats in three colonies at USU, and ACS provides supervised daily feedings and shelter from the elements. Twice a year, the group captures and treats many of the cats.

Once trapped, the cats are taken to a veterinarian to be spayed or neutered and vaccinated. Their ears are also clipped to mark them. After recovery, they're returned to the campus.

Studies have shown that trap-neuter-release can be a successful method for stabilizing and maintaining healthy feral-cat colonies, with the least possible cost to local governments and residents, while providing the best life for the animals.

Not all reaction on campus has been positive some student editorials in the school newspaper, the Utah Statesman, over the past month have criticized the effort, saying the feral-cat colonies are problematic to people and devastating to bird populations.

But volunteers say the benefits outweigh the negatives, and point out that the program relies on donations to operate and uses no university or tax resources. Posted: April 18, 2006, 5:00 a.m. EST