

Austin Humane Society Offers Free Spay and Neuter Clinic

The Austin humane society recently opened a weekly free clinic that spays and neuters feral cats from the Austin, Texas, area as part of the ASPCA's Mission: Orange campaign.

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A feral cat waits to be sterilized at the Austin Humane Society. (Photo by Jennifer Hayes, courtesy of AHS) In February of this year, Austin, Texas, became one of the first target areas in the ASPCA's Mission: Orange campaign, which is an initiative launched in January of this year to create a country of "humane communities." As part of the effort to reduce the number of adoptable animals that are euthanized, the Austin Humane Society (AHS) has started a free weekly spay and neuter clinic for the feral cats in the Austin area. Feral cats account for most of the animals euthanized in Austin each year, and animal welfare workers plan to reduce those numbers.

Made possible in part by grants from the ASPCA Mission: Orange campaign and PetSmart Charities, the AHS free spay and neuter clinic allows volunteers to bring in feral cats they have trapped for sterilization, ear-tipping and some basic medical treatment. Each cat receives a medical exam, a rabies vaccination and certificate, flea control, a penicillin injection and medication for parasite control.

"There are thousands of cats who will benefit from this program, and people will too," said Julia Hilder, a volunteer who has been trapping and sterilizing a colony of feral cats for four years. "Now is a critical time to start this program."

The first clinic was held March 2, and has proven to be a great success, according to shelter staff. Volunteers involved with trap-neuter-release (TNR) programs in the Austin area and Travis County have stepped up their efforts to manage feral cat colonies.

AHS personnel estimate that they have altered approximately 40 cats each week since the clinic opened and credit feral cat volunteers for their hard work in bringing the cats to the clinic. The AHS hopes to sterilize 1,500 cats in 2007, raising that goal to 5,000 cats in 2008 and 2009.

"AHS is committed to lead efforts in Austin to address this critical and life-threatening issue by launching our TNR program, the largest feral cat sterilization program in Central Texas," said Frances Jonon, AHS executive director.

For more information about the spay and neuter clinic, visit the AHS website. In February of this year, Austin, Texas, became one of the first target communities in the ASPCA's Mission: Orange campaign. As part of the effort to create a humane community where adoptable animals are not euthanized, the Austin Humane Society (AHS) has started a free weekly spay and neuter clinic for the feral cats in the Austin area. Feral cats account for most of the animals euthanized in Austin each year, and animal welfare workers plan to reduce those numbers.

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