

Mass Cat Sterilization Drive Planned

Volunteers plan to fix at least 50 strays during three-day period.

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Many homeless cats in Santa Clara County, Calif., will receive spay or neuter surgeries. The Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV) and the South Bay Homeless Cat Coalition say they hope to trap and sterilize 50 stray cats that live along the Lafayette Corridor in the California town of Santa Clara during a "mass cat trapping and sterilization marathon" from January 13 to 15.

Veterinarians from the HSSV and Peninsula Fix Our Ferals will perform the spay/neuter surgeries in the humane society's medical clinic.

The effort is being funded by a \$2,500 grant from PETCO.

Mass trapping and sterilization is a method that involves humanely trapping and sterilizing entire feral cat colonies all at once. Under the South Bay Homeless Cat Coalition's trap-neuter-return — or TNR — program, homeless cats are trapped and taken to HSSV, where they are evaluated, vaccinated, sterilized and ear-notched for identification.

Kittens and tame cats are adopted into homes, while healthy adult cats too wild to be adopted are returned to their outdoor homes under the care of volunteers. No more kittens are born and the feral cat population declines naturally.

The HSSV President Christine Benninger says that TNR programs save money. It cost Santa Clara County taxpayers \$2.4 million in 2005 to have animal control agencies round-up, shelter and eventually euthanize 14,000 homeless cats, according to Benninger.

"TNR is the most cost-effective, humane method of reducing homeless cat populations. Rounding up colonies of homeless cats and euthanizing them does not solve the problem and in fact creates a void for new cats to fill and continue the breeding cycle," Benninger said.

The South Bay Homeless Cat Coalition estimates that there are 125,000 homeless cats roaming Santa Clara County.

Individuals or groups interested in helping with the mass trapping and sterilization effort can call a feral cat information line at (408) 727-3383 ext. 762.