

Lee County Animal Services and P.A.W.S Lee County Partner to Offer Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Programs for Feral Cats

Fort Myers, Florida, 4/17/09—On March 24, 2009 the Lee County Board of County Commissioners approved a new Animal Control Ordinance. One of the most significant changes in the ordinance that will affect pet overpopulation is the approval for feral cats to be trapped, sterilized and returned to the community from which they were found.

With the new ordinance now in effect Lee County Animal Services is partnering with P.A.W.S. Lee County, a new low-cost veterinary clinic in N. Fort Myers, to officially begin a formal TNR program. The new program provides sterilization, vaccination and microchipping of feral community cats to reduce unwanted litters. The two agencies are asking the community to support this program by sterilizing feral community cats they may be feeding or for which they are providing care. Some private veterinary clinics are also providing TNR programs. Residents are encouraged to contact their own veterinarians for information about possible TNR programs they may offer.

Prior methods to reduce the population of feral cats have been unsuccessful. Approximately 98,000 feral or community cats currently reside in Lee County according to Dr. Julie Levy of the University of Florida's Shelter Medicine Program. Dr. Levy is also the founder of two feral cat spay/neuter programs that have sterilized more than 40,000 cats. She recently presented a public forum in Fort Myers to discuss the pros and cons of TNR and how to operate an effective program to reduce the stray cat population and end needless euthanasia.

For more information about Lee County Animal Services' and P.A.W.S. Lee County's TNR Program or to schedule an appointment, please contact P.A.W.S. Lee County at (239) 652-6722. The clinic is located at 13410 N. Cleveland Ave., N. Fort Myers. P.A.W.S. Lee County also offers special discounts to Lee County

residents receiving public assistance (workers or unemployment compensation, WIC checks, food stamps, etc.) for sterilization services for owned pets.