

Trap, Neuter, Release

A Cat Welfare Organisation's Perspective

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Trap, Neuter, Release

- 🐱 **The debate we have to have**
- 🐱 **Holistic cat management programs essential, TNR addresses an endpoint**
- 🐱 **Effectiveness needs to be objectively measured cf other techniques**
- 🐱 **Best use of limited resources (labor and time intensive technique involving skilled personnel)?**
- 🐱 **The ethical and emotional issues**
 - life vs death and the quality of life

CPS Involvement in TNR

- 🐱 **Until 1996, with the introduction of the DAA, cats had no legal status ie there was no link between the cat and its owner and considerable legal difficulty in addressing cat issues**
- 🐱 **There was no impounding system nor support facilities, meaning that CPS carried out much of the unowned cat management to address cat welfare issues in the community. There was no legal framework within which this could occur – much relied on negotiation**

1987 - 1995

 **1989, the Social Development Committee inquiry found that:**

 **1n 1988 Councils handled 2857 cats**

 **Approx 50% of Councils take no action re cats or claim there are no complaints**

 **61 out of 212 Councils acknowledged an increasing cat problem**

 **1992 CPS survey of 56 Councils:**

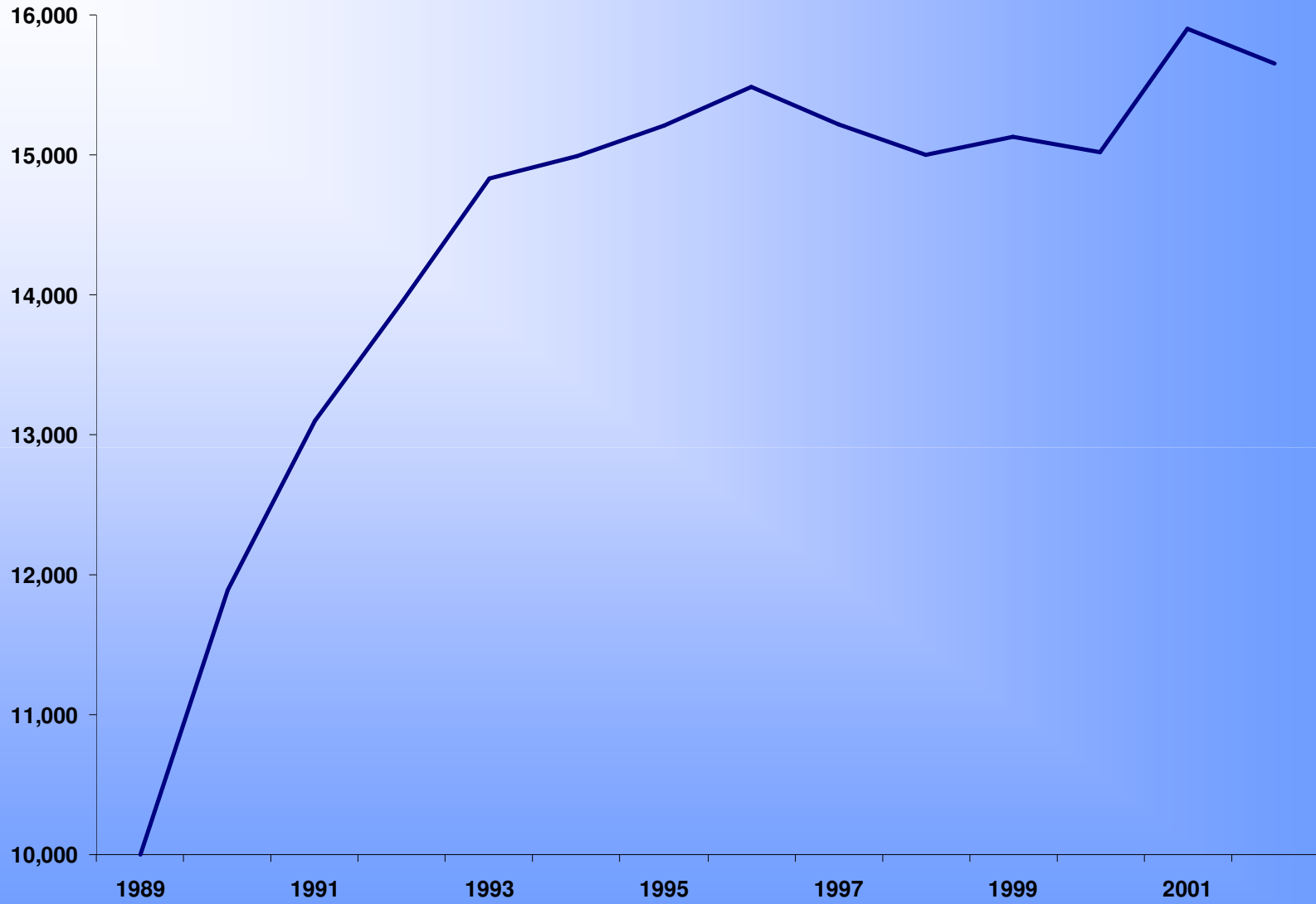
 **No Council could help with a cat problem**

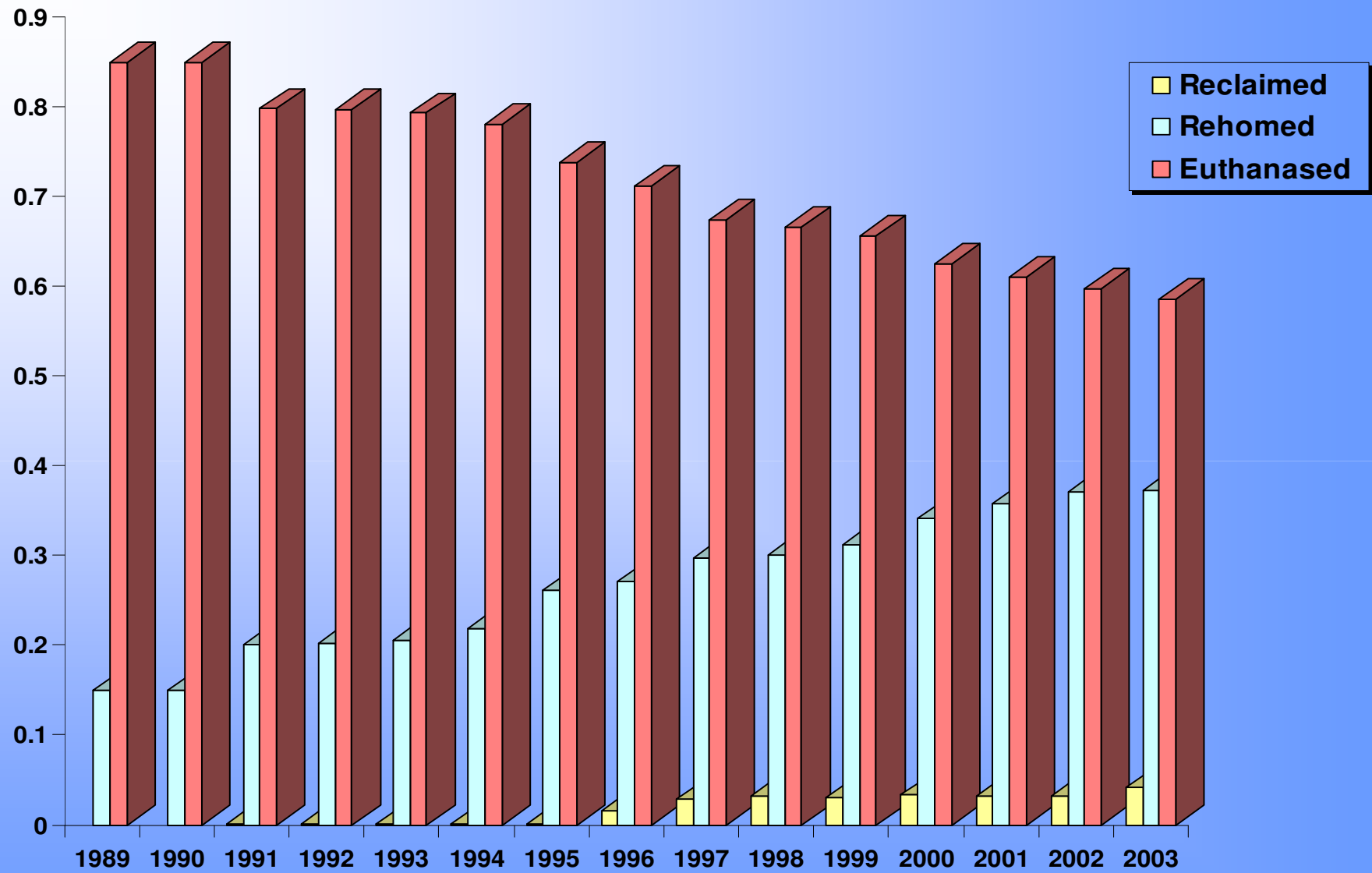
30 referred to CPS

18 referred to RSPCA who referred to CPS

8 referred to Lost Dogs Home

Total No. Cats Received





CAT STATISTICS

AVERAGE INTAKE STATISTICS FOR CPS

1996 – 2003 (per annum basis)


Total Number of Cats Received = 15,000 per year


Category of Cat	Number Received	% Desexed
Unowned wild cats	9000	0.01
Owned lost cats (reclaimed)	500	92.00
Stray/unwanted cats	5500	22.00
Euthanised	10500	4.00
Rehoused	4000	100.00

% Females = 52%

% Males = 48%

Results

 **CPS handled some 9000 “unowned” cats each year, most were trapped and euthanased – these do not make suitable pets and holding in the shelter for any length of time results in high stress levels and inevitable illness.**

 **In order to address issues at some locations, TNR programs were implemented in order to engage and maintain cooperation of the feeder and to minimise interference and legal ramifications – average 30 colonies/year**

Reason for Involvement

Complaint – cats were causing nuisance:

 **Noise/fighting**

 **Spraying/garden damage**

 **Disease/fighting issue for owned cats**

 **Welfare concern for unowned cats**

 **Wildlife threat/concern**

In these cases, cats were generally trapped and removed as the complainant simply wanted the problem addressed


🐱 Victorian DAMIC Benchmarking Survey showed that there are 6.11 complaints per 1000 households for cats

🐱 The majority of cat complaints relate to trespass (3.81% of the registered cat population)

🐱 82% of the complaints relate to undesexed cat behavior and 84% of the cats causing the complaint are not desexed (CPS figures – 10,291 comp)


Reason for Involvement

Request for assistance:

 Colony was wanted eg hospital, nursing home as benefit for patients, rodent control mechanism

 Cat numbers had increased to a point where the feeders could not rehouse the kittens/disease incidence had increased/complaints from neighbours received

 Feeders wanted to prevent further increase in numbers by desexing, but did not want original cats euthanased

 If tried to address problem without feeder cooperation, interference with traps/feeding regime would occur, issue became very emotional

In these cases, with negotiated conditions, TNR was deployed to engage feeder cooperation

TNR Process

🐱 Feeder able to identify cats individually, female cats with young kittens not done until kittens weaned

🐱 Cats were trapped, transported to CPS, desexed, held generally 24 hours, then released back into area. All received a vaccination, defleaing, deworming and health check under GA. Dissolvable sutures used, tattoo placed in ear

🐱 Any kittens of suitable age (8 weeks or older) were removed and rehoused through CPS

🐱 Generally colonies of 15 – 20 adult cats, on average 4-5 adults done in one session (limited by ability to catch) – trapping generally at dusk

🐱 Cats usually needed to be held overnight to “fast” for GA as food used to catch them


🐱 Special handling facilities and skilled personnel required as cats generally wild


🐱 Those with serious underlying issues PTS – agreed with the feeder in the field so no misunderstanding.

🐱 Feeder assumed responsibility for ongoing colony maintenance – in long term rarely occurred – OUR MAIN ISSUE

CPS Experience

POSITIVE

 Deploying TNR enabled access to colonies otherwise inaccessible – engaged feeder so reduced interference and provided voluntary labor

 Kittens rehoused were desexed, microchipped beforehand so didn't add to the problem - prior to CPS involvement they either died of disease or were given away not desexed nor identified, so potentially were adding to the problem

POSITIVE

- 🐱 **The colony was retained for the benefit of residents of nursing homes, rodent control for factories etc though many were not suitable as “pets”**
- 🐱 **Desexing the cats reduced some of the nuisance behaviours eg spraying, fighting**
- 🐱 **There were no issues/concerns with desexing procedures and post op complications – cats recovered very well - supported by recent article by Julie Levy in Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery:**

🐾 *103,643 feral cats involved in TNR in the USA were studied:*

🐾 *Overall, 53.4% were females, 2.3% already desexed*

🐾 *15.9% of females were pregnant at capture*

🐾 *Average litter size 4.1*

🐾 *0.4% euthanased because of debilitating disease*

🐾 *0.4% died during TNR clinics*




🐾 *Ears generally “tipped” to signify desexing*

🐾 *FIV/FeLV positive cats euthanased – not all were tested*

CPS Experience

NEGATIVE

Stressors for cats involved

-  Transport – cats needed to be taken to the clinic for desexing, cages covered in dark area helped reduce injury from trying to escape
-  Handling for desexing – done using restraint cages, need experienced and brave handlers
-  High incidence of endemic respiratory viruses which activate under stress – so often disease occurred after return

CPS Experience

NEGATIVE

- 🐱 **Ongoing colony health/inability to recapture**
 - 🐱 At desexing, cats were given a complete health check – vaccinated for feline enteritis and feline respiratory viruses, dewormed and defleaed (very high incidence of parasites, primarily fleas), however two vaccines are required to give a complete course, and worming and defleaing need to be done on an ongoing basis – difficult as can't recapture and cats very fussy re products placed in food
 - 🐱 Diet and frequency of feeding
 - 🐱 Injury/disease and the inability to treat

CPS Experience

NEGATIVE


- 🐱 **Cats still present in the area – still generated complaints/threat to wildlife/cruelty if issue unresolved/still susceptible to injury/disease/attack**
- 🐱 **Continual input of resources dt replenishment**
 - 🐱 **New cats migrated to colony as reliable food source and as these were generally entire, fighting occurred. Regular monitoring required to desex these as well**
 - 🐱 **Knowledge of the colony spread – irresponsible cat owners dumped their unwanted cats in preference to taking to a shelter as these would not be euthanased**

CPS Experience

NEGATIVE

 From a broad perspective, TNR still focused on the endpoint

MAJOR PROBLEM – FEEDER LEFT

 This now left cats used to a regular food source without one, and because of previous trapping, generally these were trap-shy so very difficult to recapture.

CPS Experience

OUTCOME

- 🐱 **In 1996, the Domestic Animals Act was enacted**
 - 🐱 **restrictions on numbers of cats**
 - 🐱 **Orders re places/times cats allowed in some municipalities**
 - 🐱 **requires all cats to be registered**
 - 🐱 **legal ability to address nuisance**
- 🐱 **From the experience and welfare issues that arose, TNR no longer used and phased out. No colonies from 1996 currently exist**

The Future

NATIONAL SUMMIT TO END PET OVERPOPULATION OUTCOMES

- 🐱 **Formation of a National Coalition**
- 🐱 **Working Group to examine issues relating to Free-Roaming Cats**
- 🐱 **Desexing/Identification prior to sale a key solution**
- 🐱 **National statistics to enable informed decisions and evaluations**
- 🐱 **Research and education**

Factors to Consider


 **Holistic cat management program essential**

Need to look at source of the problem:

 **Unowned self sustaining colonies**


 **Dumped cats which quickly become wild**

 **Food sources which encourage breeding**


 **Important to understand that TNR or trap and euthanase address the end point and in many cases TNR is an emotionally driven decision – requires objective assessment to quantify effectiveness ie TNR is a tool not a solution**

The Gap

 **88% of the Owned Cat Population is Desexed**

 **Only 36% of cats under 12 months of age are desexed**

 **Only 22% of Stray cats are desexed**

 **18% of female cats have had at least one litter before being desexed**

Factors to Consider


- 🐱 Majority of complaints due to cat trespass or concern re wildlife, TNR does not remove the cats from the area
- 🐱 Assessment of case on an individual basis
 - 🐱 Area – impact on wildlife/owned cats/amenity
 - 🐱 Feeder reliability
 - 🐱 Resources available

Factors to Consider

 **Legislation – currently in Victoria, all cats would need to be registered and a permit obtained for the numbers involved**

Resources

 **Labor/time intensive**


 **Best use of resources? To have any effect TNR must be done on a large scale or in an isolated area**

Public Support & Understanding

Code of Practice

 If TNR to be used, a COP is required and should include:

 Responsible guardian must be identified and the legal aspects of registration etc identified and addressed

 SOP to ensure welfare in trapping, transport, desexing, selection of only suitable cats to be returned – method of identification of desexed cats to be addressed and humane, length of time spent in “trapping” cages specified

 SOP for rehousing of kittens – requiring desexing, identification, vaccination etc beforehand

 Ongoing support must be available ie feeders 7 days per week, proper diet

Factors to Consider

- 🐱 **Ongoing monitoring of the colony documented:**
 - 🐱 **Identification and desexing of new cats**
 - 🐱 **Overall health program looking at FIV incidence/level of disease risk to owned cats/parasite control/treatment of disease eg endemic flu etc**
- 🐱 **Need for skilled personnel in handling the cats for the TNR process – veterinarians should be skilled in restraint, desexing of pregnant animals, early age desexing**
- 🐱 **Contingency plan in place if feeder no longer able to care for colony – notification of responsible authority, ability for recapture**

Estimated Cost/Labor

for TNR for 150,000 unowned cats in Melbourne (conservative estimate)

<u>INITIAL EXPENDITURE</u> To trap and desex - approx 1/2 hr/cat x 2 people →	= 75,000 hrs of time x 2 people = 3125 days x 2 people = 10 years (24 hrs/day) x 2 people
If no reproduction in the meantime →	= 2 x 30 people x 1 yr (8hrs/day) = \$3,000,000.00
<u>MAINTENANCE - ONGOING COST</u> Cost to feed @ \$5/cat per week →	= \$750,000.00 per week = \$39 million per year
If 20 cats per colony → 1 feeder per colony per week →	= 7500 colonies = 7500 people x 7 days per week