

User Interview #1

Capstone 1 - Cat Collab

Participant Info

Age: 34

Occupation: Data Analyst

Active in TNR: 9 months

Hobbies: Gardening

Beginnings

1. What got you inspired to become a cat activist?

Mostly was working with dogs and rescues before.

Had a missing cat that someone said they may have found, and when she checked she saw a bunch of hungry cats. Started feeding them and reached out to a couple people in the area who helped TNR the cats.

a. Was there a pivotal event that led to this?

See above

2. What steps did you take to get started?

Saw someone post something in a group and reached out to the person. She showed her what to do, what traps to use, how it works, how to trap, locations for places to spay or neuter cheap, and just the overall process. This contact is participant #2.

Then they tried trapping a sick one and could not. She came from a city nearby and helped TNR.

Were able to trap 7 cats and she kept them for a couple days and brought them back.

Other people involved with this contact came and helped with the remaining cats. Some people trapped, others kept them overnight and took to a vet, and others returned the cats.

Were able to raise \$700 to pay for it.

New cats started to show up. They never lower in size, but TNR keeps it level and not growing.

What was that process like?

See above

a. What tools or resources did you use?

All done through Facebook

A group, then through group chats in Messenger

Funds raised on Fb, and posts were made and shared.

Some donated via Fb and other via Paypal.

3. How long have you been involved with feral cats and TNR?

9months

a. Has anything changed over that time?

Not really.

Collaboration

4. Do you partner up with any individuals, organizations, or groups?

Yes, see above

a. What was the process like to become a volunteer?

See above.

b. Can you tell me about the organizations or groups you are in?

Not really in organizations, but in a lot of Facebook Groups, some local, some regional, some state level, and others national.

i. Are you active with any social media groups?

See above.

5. What is it like collaborating with others?

It's like collaborating with anyone on anything else. All of these people volunteer their time and money for this and some are more active than others. There are different kinds of people, and can be exhausting. Hard for her to keep up with one colony.

a. What are some frustrations or obstacles?

It's hard to get people to actually participate. People have come from all over but no one in her town. People are more willing to donate, but hard to get people to care about the cats.

People keep getting more cats and not fixing them.

The process itself is pretty easy.

b. What would make this easier?

More active helpers and cat owners spayed, neutered, or asked for help.

6. Have you ever organized a group or organization?

Hasn't yet but wants to for getting help.

Knows someone that takes care of other colonies and wants to contact her. While sometimes it feels easier to do it on her own, she really does need help.

a. What steps would you take to start one now?

Started a lost and found pets group, but not a TNR group.

Hasn't been used a lot but she could use that and get help from the city Fb page with sharing, and maybe even animal control.

Just needs to make the time to do it.

i. What tools or resources would you use?

Facebook

Sometimes neighborhood pages help on things like NextDoor.

Process

7. How would someone not involved in TNR go about reporting a feral cat or colony?

Go on Facebook and make a post, and it will get re-posted all over different pages. Any page you can find that says cat or dog, and ask for help.

Some people go to rescue sites but it's hard for them to help due to space and it's hit or miss.

a. What are common methods of reporting?

See above

b. What kind of resources are used?

See above

8. How are you currently notified about stray or feral cats and colonies?

Facebook notifications

a. Can you elaborate on what works well?

It's pretty fast and you can get the info, money, or help.

Said some random person sent \$400 to help.

- Saves this for helping Brittany (1st contact) other groups

b. What doesn't work so well?

Having to be a member to and post in so many groups.

Would be easier if there was just one place where people involved could go, or maybe one master group on Fb associated with that site.

People would still visit other pages, but would help streamline

9. What are the steps involved in performing a TNR?

- 1) Raise funds based on #of animals
- 2) Get safe traps
 - a) Some are drop traps for mass trapping
 - b) Some are unsafe
- 3) Puppy pads

- 4) Towels
- 5) Plates, spoons
- 6) A lot of extra equipment that you can buy
- 7) Have a plan in place for who will perform the different roles
Could be the same person or a mix of people.
 - a) Trapping
 - b) Taking to vet
 - c) Picking up from vet
 - d) Who will house the animals overnight
 - e) Releasing
- 8) Trap
 - a) Sometimes you just can't
 - b) Try not to feed for 2 days before so they are hungry
- 9) Hold them overnight
- 10) Take to vet
 - a) Some are appointments
 - b) Some are drop-ins
 - c) Some places have limits of 2 at a time
- 11) Pick up and take home overnight
 - a) Check for bleeding and not messing up their stitches
- 12) Release

Hardest part is the planning and the trapping, the rest is pretty easy.

Hard for her because the closest clinics are far for her.

a. What should people know to safely perform a TNR?

See above

Pains & Gains

10. What is the biggest frustration you face within the entire process?

The number of cats that need to be fixed.

There are so many that were owned and just dropped off because they know someone is feeding them.

She knows there are a lot of cats and colonies. On her drive to work she focuses on the road and has to remind herself that she can't do it all and can only do so much or she would go crazy.

a. Can you elaborate a little more about it?

See above

b. What could help make it easier?

Fix your pets, don't drop them off, or ask for help!

11. What is the most effective aspect of the entire process?

Fundraising seems to be the easiest thing for people to do and it's easy with all the tools available:

Facebook

Venmo

CashApp

PayPal

Etc.

a. Can you elaborate a bit more?

See above

12. Do you have any final thoughts on what would make this process more efficient?

More places that do low-cost spaying and neutering and not so clustered into one area.

Could TNR more cats if she had something in her area, but there just aren't any, and she has to drive far. Local vets are expensive.

User Interview #2

Capstone 1 - Cat Collab

Participant Info

Age: 28

Occupation: Administrative Assistant

Active in TNR: 1 year

Hobbies: Crochet

Beginnings

1. What got you inspired to become a cat activist?

Always loved cats. One day there was an injured cat in her yard, missing an eye. Caught with bare hands and got him treated. Her friend she knew in rescue taught her the ropes and connected her to people. Realized there was a network of cat people out there.

a. Was there a pivotal event that led to this?

See above

2. What steps did you take to get started?

Networking on Facebook, with rescues, fostering. Realized it doesn't help the population and made the jump into TNR.

a. What was that process like?

See above

b. What tools or resources did you use?

Facebook and email. Some people use TikTok, Instagram.

Best thing to do is connect on FB and get phone numbers for different contacts. A lot of networking.

3. How long have you been involved with feral cats and TNR?

1 year

a. Has anything changed in that time?

Texas Litter Control imposed a limit on walk-ins of 2, any more needs appointments.

Collaboration

4. Do you partner up with any individuals, organizations, or groups?

Individuals, Team Feral, Best Friends, Save Rescue Coalition, A Life to Live

She volunteers with A Life to Live

a. What was the process like to become a volunteer?

Application online

Met with the founder on Zoom and they wanted to narrow it down

She does admin and TNR work with them

Sent a training video but no questions or quiz

Some organizations will do house checks if fostering and check with landlords for approval.

b. Can you tell me about the organizations or groups you are in?

A Life to Live - small org and don't assist a lot with TNR but do their own TNR and call in individuals to help.

Team Feral - will back you if you start a fundraiser

Best Friends - partner with local organizations

All work a bit differently, but depend on each other to an extent and collaborating.

i. Are you active with any social media groups?

Member to a lot of groups

5. What is it like collaborating with others?

With individuals, it's different from person to person, and it can be really frustrating because there can be a lot of miscommunication. It's why she likes to use messenger for the log.

Working with organizations is a lot smoother.

Ex: Team Feral

This is all before having cats:

Always has a plan in place before trapping, unless there is an injured cat.

- She sends an email
- They have her give the info
- They reach out to a clinic to set up a date
- She will be CC'd when it's setup
- She can reply to reschedule or add on more

Sometimes they will let her speak on their behalf, varies by organization.

Not uncommon for different organizations to coordinate with info.

a. What are some frustrations or obstacles?

Biggest obstacle is money.

Frustrations are scheduling, transportation, and housing of recovering cats.

b. What would make this easier?

Reliable transportation in place, because it's the hardest part to coordinate due to schedules. A nonprofit that focused just on transporting would be a big help.

Knows someone who drives to opposite ends of Houston every day to get cats to clinics.

6. Have you ever organized a group or organization?

Baytown TNR Efforts

Baytown Cats and Kittens Rescue Only

a. What was that process like?

TNR group came about because she was helping on a project with 30 cats needing TNR, partnering with a different group that didn't work out.

Decided to start her own and received a lot of help with fundraising. She wanted to make a group so people could be up to date on what was happening with the funding given to her.

Did all of it through Facebook and made a separate bank account for the group later on.

b. What steps would you take to start one now?

N/A

i. What tools or resources would you use?

N/A

Process

7. How would someone not involved in TNR go about reporting a feral cat or colony?

Most people want to call Animal Control, but the rescue community doesn't want that due to high euthanization rates of cats. If they do know about TNR they can look for rescues in the area and ask about TNR.

So many people just don't know about TNR so educational outreach is important.

a. What is Animal Control's role in this and do they ever assist?

Depends on the laws of the city, county, and state. Independent rescuers don't microchip animals, but organizations do. Animal control will scan for a microchip and reach out to organizations to claim the animal and keep from euthanization. Animals not microchipped are just processed into the shelters and almost always euthanized.

BARC in Houston partners with rescues and TNR groups, and they don't pick up ear tipped cats.

Varies widely

b. What are common methods of reporting?

Facebook or reaching out to organizations.

Network with people you already know

People will send messages asking for help to her group, and she has helped groups outside of her area.

c. What kind of resources are used?

See above

8. How are you currently notified about stray or feral cats and colonies?

Facebook groups and emails.

Big group chats take care of issues that don't make it to Fb walls.

People she knows calling or texting.

Most emails come from individuals because she put her email on the FB group page. *Some people don't like to use Messenger.*

a. Can you elaborate on what works well?

Fb works pretty well because it is text focused so you can state "HELP NEEDED" and people are less likely to scroll past it.

b. What doesn't work so well?

People get confused and are misinformed and ask to adopt feral cats. Inbox and messages can tend to get flooded, making it harder because you have to weed it out.

Constant triage between those ignorant and regulars who help all the time.

9. What are the steps involved in performing a TNR?

Identify a colony in need

Get fundraising or finding a backing organization

Set up fundraiser

Plan out:

Schedule date for spay/neuter

Where to take cats

Who will take them

Trap date (2-3 days before spay/neuter)

Have enough wet food

- Water is a mess with ferals
- Puppy pads contain the messes

Where they will be held for recovery

a. What should people know to safely perform a TNR?

They need to know about hold times and ensure cats are eating and drinking normally. No bleeding before release.

Pregnant cats need to be held longer due to potential complications.

Pains & Gains

10. What is the biggest frustration you face within the entire process?

Besides communication issues that arise, transportation.

a. Can you elaborate a little more about it?

Answered previously

b. What could help make it easier?

Answered previously

11. What is the most effective aspect of the entire process?

Facebook easily

a. Can you elaborate a bit more?

Already elaborated previously

12. Do you have any final thoughts on what would make this process more efficient?

If rescues would work together with TNR, instead of within themselves.

If more collaborated together, like Best Friends, it would make a huge difference.

Opinion on the name “Feral”.

Can see how it might be mistaken since community cats aren't necessarily feral, just unwanted. They become accustomed to living outdoors but are mostly friendly.

“Feral” and “community cats” are synonymous terms.

Those within the community will get more detailed and vet if truly feral, semi-feral, etc.

User Interview #3

Capstone 1 - Cat Collab

Participant Info

Age: 30

Occupation: Non-profit employee

Active in TNR: 8 years

Hobbies: Mother, animal foster

Beginnings

1. What got you inspired to become a cat activist?

As a nanny in college, she got ringworm from a kid. Austin Pets Alive needed people in their ringworm ward and she wasn't afraid to help, so she volunteered. It snow-balled from there and she worked with them for 5-6 years. Moved back to Houston and joined Friends 4 Life.

a. Was there a pivotal event that led to this?

See above

2. What steps did you take to get started?

Went online and filled out a volunteer application, started orientation, trained, and jumped right into it.

a. What was that process like?

They made it easy to learn different departments and she developed a passion for it as a career. The transition was easy. It was pretty easy and she felt welcomed (Austin Pets Alive and Friends 4 Life). They kept it honest on expectations.

b. What tools or resources did you use?

Through their website.

3. How long have you been involved with feral cats and TNR?

10 years with animal activism.

8 years with TNR

Did TNR as an individual before professionally with Friends 4 Life and heading up the Fix Houston TNR program there.

a. Has anything changed in that time?

It's become more mainstream to TNR, but some places it is still illegal and considered abandonment. Just recently became legal in Harris Count (Houston Area).

They have been able to change minds with data proving that it works, even at the government level.

Collaborations

4. Do you partner up with any individuals, organizations, or groups?

Mostly individuals who have colonies they feed or know of.

Emancipet Clinic

- Get a rescue rate

Have used Texas Litter Control and SNAP in the past as well.

Work with the BARC city program on:

- TNR
- Sponsorships
- Block walking to get the word out
- Events working with strays and pet animals for free

a. What was the process like to become a volunteer?

See #2

b. Can you tell me about the organizations or groups you are in?

Emancipet

- Started in Austin but now in Houston
- Non-profit spay/neuter group
- Low cost wellness
- Partner with them and the city for Healthy Pets Healthy Streets.
 - free spay/neuter and wellness services to pet owners in neighborhoods with a large number of stray animals and dog bite complaints in the City

i. Are you active with any social media groups?

- Friends 4 Life page
- NextDoor

She personally keeps an eye out for other groups and pages.

They collab mostly with individuals and groups for actual trapping, not so much organizations. They also feed, point out where animals are. Willing to sponsor surgeries or need help with transportation.

They will do any part of the process to fill in any gaps in the process.

Will get permission from owners and never trespass.

5. What is it like collaborating with others?

It's usually great and most people genuinely care about the cats. They are quite friendly and grateful.

a. What are some frustrations or obstacles?

Some people aren't fully sold on the return aspect of TNR.

They will explain why removal doesn't fix the problem.

- Vacuum effect - removing animals just creates a new power grab with new cats.
- Removal and traditional kill shelters and don't work.
- Provide humane alternatives to keep cats off their property, like citrus sprays, plastic garden spikes, etc.

b. What would make this easier?

They have thought about having an interactive map so that people can report cats and colonies, or that they are helping cats in certain locations. Fed into a database to visualize the problem areas. Currently they are walking streets by zipcode with door-hangers to identify the area in need.

Ability to drop a pin onto an interactive map similar to Google maps and have tied to a database.

6. Have you ever organized a group or organization?

No, but occasionally a few people in a neighborhood, but usually people who are already involved in TNR and they just lead the effort.

a. What was that process like?

N/A

b. What steps would you take to start one now?

- Gauge community interest, since a lot of no-kill groups don't have TNR focus, which is mostly done by individuals
- Finding individuals who would do TNR focus

i. What tools or resources would you use?

- NextDoor and Facebook

Process

7. How would someone not involved in TNR go about reporting a feral cat or colony?

Online TNR request form

Other programs > Fix Houston

Currently booked into May so it's offline for now

Questions:

- Where are the cats?
- How many?
- Any injuries?
- Is there food and shelter?
- Are there kittens?
- Report general health and wellness of the colony

From here they will communicate what they can do and what the organization will help to do.

Have had to downsize a bit for safety concerns with Covid.

Main phone line and email.

a. What are common methods of reporting?

See above

b. What kind of resources are used?

See above

8. How are you currently notified about stray or feral cats and colonies?

See above

Also Block - walks door-to-door with boots on the ground and spotting cats in person

Goal is to focus zipcodes 77008 and 77009 since it would have the most impact, but will help anyone, anywhere.

a. Can you elaborate on what works well?

Form works well, but it's time-consuming to do extra research, if it's a business, who the owner is, do they have the spots, when are they fed, and scheduling it out. If they don't have resources or means to help, they send other resources and ask to get back

Having that map and list would allow them to easily see where the hotspots are and would be less sifting through a lot of emails. Also people don't usually get back to them but if they had already provided a location on the map, Fix Houston would be able to reach back to them if they were working in that area.

What doesn't work so well?

Flooded with email and it's a lot of manual work. Only 2 people on staff focused with TNR, and most of it is in the field. Admin work tends to be pushed to the backburner.

9. What are the steps involved in performing a TNR?

Notify about the colony

Get in touch with the feeder

- Are they the property owner?
- If not, who is the owner?

Gain permission to trap on the property from the owner and tell them up front that it's a requirement to be returned. Will work to convince them to allow returning.

- Don't really do relocations or have a barn cat program

Set up the appointment for the trapping

- Provide info on what to do for preparation

Perform the trapping

- Don't leave the traps
- Usually 1 hr but can be longer

Take cats to their facility overnight

Take them to the clinics for surgery

- Have preset appointment with Emancipet

Take them to the facility for recovery and monitoring

- 24 - 48 hrs

Return them to their exact location where they were found

a. What should people know to safely perform a TNR?

- Most important part is knowing that cats need to be taken to the same exact location since they are territorial
- Relocation is a lengthy, uncertain, and involved process
- Cats must be recovered for at least 24 hrs to make sure they are healed and anesthesia is out of their system

Pains & Gains

10. What is the biggest frustration you face within the entire process?

When trapping isn't successful. Can spend a few hours and not get any trapped cats.

a. Can you elaborate a little more about it?

N/A

b. What could help make it easier?

- Colony managers need to follow no-feed instructions so cats are hungry and will go into the traps
- It is often just luck of the draw
- Sometimes you get rained out

11. What is the most effective aspect of the entire process?

Once cats are trapped, safety and cleaning, transportation, surgery, post-op monitoring, are all very fluid and efficient for them to help with.

Conversely, finding, gaining permission, and trapping are the hard and more time-consuming parts.

1. Can you elaborate a bit more?

N/A

12. Do you have any final thoughts on what would make this process more efficient?

“I WANT THAT MAP, JEREMY. I WANT THAT MAP SO BAD!”

Education and outreach about TNR for those unaware and reduces friction. Confirm with people where it is legal. This would be better than blind-siding people at their doorstep, asking if they could help with their cats.

By what means would you do this?

Most people find out by finding their own cats or colonies, or know someone else already involved.

They have done flyers, mailers, and robocalls, but nothing is as effective as the face-to-face block walking with boots on the ground.

Do you run campaigns for fundraising?

They are free of charge but ask for donations.

Majority of people helped are low-income.

They have a Christmas fundraiser called “Jingle Balls”, since TNR is about removing balls from cats.

Grants are a big part, like the PetSmart charities.

Do you have sponsorships or philanthropists who help?

Not at the moment, and the majority comes from grants and whatever they get from individual donations.