



Friends of Feral Felines CAT'S TALE

Spring 2007



Our Own Feral Angel

It's kitten season, and our hotline is extremely busy this time of year. Sometimes there are in excess of 15 calls a day to answer. You know how it is when someone leaves you a voice mail at work or a message on your answering machine at home - sometimes the person talks a little too fast or you didn't quite understand what they were saying, so you listen to it again to get the message right. Well, when Lisa Steffy was on "phone duty" a few weeks ago, she had a similar experience...



FFF volunteers with Joan

There were several calls for Lisa to retrieve one night. There was nothing unusual about the number or content of the calls, except for one. She listened to it, then listened to it again, looked at the phone and said, "Did I hear this person correctly?" Instead of the usual "I need help with a colony of feral cats!" the person who left the message said "I want to take a colony of feral cats." Lisa was completely taken off guard!

To make a long story short, the caller was Joan, who lives on several acres of land with her pets - a beautiful indoor cat, Rocky (yes, she is female!), and two adorable dogs, a Jack Russell Terrier named Ernie and a Husky mix named Sadie. She has a barn a short distance from her house and thought it would be nice to get some feral cats and give them the opportunity to have a great place to live. As you can see in the pictures, the barn is a perfect size! Joan and her friends are planning to install shelves along the inside walls so the cats will have an extra place to walk and lounge. Doors will also be put up when the weather turns colder again. There are many acres for the cats to explore and play and to catch some rodents along the way.

A few volunteers recently drove to Joan's house to set up several recovery cages for cats that were expected to arrive within a week or two. One cat, a reclaim from Animal Control, was the first 'tenant'. She won't be alone for long, though!

Joan's request was a blessing in disguise! Up to twenty cats were headed for Animal Control when we received her call. It is going to take a while to trap them all, as relocation of cats is not an easy process. It is preferable not to relocate



The cats' new barn home

feral cats, and it should be done only when other options are not available. Relocation involves lots of time, work and commitment. For their safety, the cats need to stay in the cages for a minimum of 3-4 weeks before being released so they can become familiar with their new territory. Releasing them sooner than that presents a huge risk of them trying to find their way back to their "original" location. They may be lost, injured, or killed in the process. Also, they can lose their food and shelter source. Before you attempt a relocation project, please contact us.



Joan's first feral "tenant"



Feral cats must be confined in a relocation cage for 3-4 weeks

Joan, you are truly a "Feral Angel". We know the cats will live out their lives in a wonderful environment, exploring, hunting and living the life of luxury!

Donations Needed for Ferals!

It is with great pride that we think of all the feral cats helped through FFF, but subsidizing spay/neuter of cats puts a tremendous strain on our treasury, particularly during the months when we have no large scale fundraisers planned. As a charitable organization, FFF is run entirely through the dedication of our volunteers and the generous donations of our supporters.

At this time, our treasury is running dangerously low, with the risk we may be forced to discontinue subsidies until we can replenish our funds. Please consider using the enclosed envelope to send a tax-deductible contribution to FFF in any amount you are able to donate at this time. 100% of your funds will go toward helping local feral cats.



Our organization could not be successful without the support of our community. We offer our sincere thanks to those who have helped FFF accomplish our goals and will help us continue working toward our future goals!

Letter From Ann Gross, Co-director of Friends of Feral Felines



Dear Friends,

As spring blooms, kitten season is also upon us. Spay/neuter of all community cats and dogs is of utmost importance. Our task is to communicate this with our fellow citizens and facilitate it happening. Our particular focus - spay/neuter/rabies vaccination/left ear clip - is the single most important thing to do for unowned community feral cats.

Low-cost spay/neuter, rabies vaccination and left ear clip for feral cats is available Monday through Friday for the low rate of \$40 per cat through the joint venture program with the Humane Society of Charlotte. Also, Humane Society & FFF held high volume clinics on March 22nd and April 26th, with future monthly clinics to be scheduled. As long as our treasury permits, FFF will offer a subsidy to help further offset the cost for those feral cat caretakers who qualify.

Also, our excellent veterinary network of over 15 veterinarians in Charlotte and surrounding areas continues to provide (Monday through Friday) the low-cost spay/neuter/rabies vaccination. Prices vary according to the veterinarian. Again, FFF will provide subsidies as needed to offset the cost to caretakers for as long as our treasury permits.

We urge you to inform people in the community to contact us (hotline: 348-1578) to set up appointments, loan them equipment and when needed, get them started on this important adventure. To leave even one feral cat unsterilized brings a likelihood of 4 to 6 unowned kittens to our community and your doorstep.

Note of importance: Humane Society/Friends of Feral Felines Programs must be prepaid to Friends of Feral Felines and if you are not successful in trapping, you must contact the appointed clinic, either Toomey Rd (704-333-4130) or Byrum Dr (704-426-1053) on their answering machine before or by 8 a.m. of the appointed day or your fee will be forfeited.

For spay/neuter of tame cats/kittens, please contact:

- ◆ CMPD Animal Control - 704-336-4424
- ◆ Humane Society of Charlotte - 704-333-4130
- ◆ SPCA Alliance - 704-714-4288
- ◆ Our excellent veterinarians in Charlotte and surrounding areas.

Your efforts in this important area will make our community a more humane environment for our animals. Preventing the birth of more homeless kittens and puppies is of vital importance. Each animal has the need to be loved and wanted - not discarded, abused or euthanized because it exists.

As always, we look forward to working with you.



Feral Feature: Ms. Puss

By Laura Gibowski

Ms. Puss arrived two years ago during an ice storm. I found her eating bird seed and looking quite frozen and exhausted. I soon learned about TNR programs and the ear tipping process. She's had at least one round of shots and is no longer a queen (able to breed).

After months of food, water, shelter, patience and interaction, she still trusts only me. Lately, she's started to rub up against my legs and makes the equivalent of purring noises. Hands are OFF LIMITS though, and I have several scars to prove it...

Last summer, she was bitten by a venomous spider or copperhead snake seen near our pond and garden. Her paw swelled up like crazy and the pad tissue became necrotic. Thank goodness our neighbor, a veterinarian, showed us how to feed her food containing antibiotics inside "pill pockets". They literally saved her life.

The last thing I do at night is visit her in the shed. When temperatures got down to 15 degrees with a wind chill factor bringing it down to near 0 degrees, the heated cat bed in our shed really helped keep Ms. Puss from freezing to death.



Ms. Puss thinks snow is overrated

I am content to let her live in the back yard, which is fenced in, with several escape routes. She never wanders too far, but loves to chase moles and voles and toss them in the air for entertainment.

Feral cats like Ms. Puss do not want to be domesticated; they just want to co-exist with us humans. The rewards over the last two years can be summed up by the look in her eyes - as the photo reveals.

I love Ms Puss, and in her own way, she loves me too!



Ms. Puss

We recently discovered and purchased a cat house for Ms. Puss. It should arrive in a few weeks. Until then, we have a shed she goes into at night. Inside, we placed a round heated cat bed, and she loves it.

Ms. Puss is thriving! She has put on weight and faithfully trots to our back door each morning, ready for breakfast.

Cat's Tale is a quarterly publication of Friends of Feral Felines

For newsletter submissions, mailing address changes, or to be removed from the FFF mailing list, please email feralnews@yahoo.com

Layout & Design: Michelle Nedopak
Newsletter Committee: Beverly Sammarco, Ann Gross, Mary Ralston, Terri McGirt, Michelle Nedopak, Race & Valerie Farlow, Cindy Henderson

Feral FAQ: Feral Kittens

We're not going to answer an inquiry in this issue, instead we will deal with the issue at hand - it's kitten season!

Even before our most recent clinic in February, caretakers reported to us the ferals they took to the vet were pregnant. Almost one-half of the cats at the February clinic were female and pregnant. It's a major and overwhelming concern for everyone involved. Our hotline is already flooded with 'urgent' calls from people asking to borrow equipment because there are females that need to get to the vet.

FFF exists to offer the public low cost spay/neuter services for feral cats. It is obvious by how busy we are on the phones, making vet appointments and loaning out equipment that many people know about us, but we need to reach out to those who don't. If you receive our newsletter or have used our services currently or in the past, please spread the word to anyone you know who feeds ferals or maintains colonies not to wait until a cat is ready to give birth. At that point, callers on the hotline claim "it's an emergency" (usually the call is on the weekend when no appointments can be made) and expect immediate assistance. Unfortunately, we can't help you right away. And, it is not necessary to place multiple calls to our hotline. The volunteers who answer the calls do their best to stay on top of them. Also, please remember we are not able to take kittens, do the trapping for you or take your cat because you are moving. Please contact rescue groups listed on our website, but remember that they are usually overwhelmed with kittens and cats from last season in addition to those from this kitten season.

Please try to plan ahead and trap NOW to eliminate kittens from being born unnecessarily. In the end, it will mean less mouths to feed and less cats to spay or neuter.

Together, we can help reduce the feral cat population. One cat at a time may not seem like much, but it does make a difference!

FFF Wish List

- ◆ Monetary donations are greatly needed right now
- ◆ **Urgent need** for landowners or farm owners willing to accept one or more feral cats in need of relocation
- ◆ Volunteers for feral cat trapping teams in all parts of Charlotte and the surrounding areas
- ◆ Light colored towels for use at our Feral Angel spay/neuter clinics
- ◆ Medium or large pet carriers for post-surgery recovery of feral cats
- ◆ Donations of dry or canned cat food
- ◆ Donations of items for our eBay fundraiser
- ◆ Volunteers!

What to do with Feral Kittens

By Michelle Nedopak, FFF Volunteer

By this time, we are well into "kitten season" when there is an explosion of feral kitten births. Caretakers can easily become overwhelmed when dealing with the situation. The best solution is, of course, to spay/neuter cats BEFORE any more kittens are born, but there are times when a cat is too trapshy to catch before giving birth, or a new unsterilized female shows up at the colony.



Mama & newborn kittens

If trapped and taken to a veterinarian, a pregnant female can be spayed and returned to her original location. If she is near term, some people may want to let her have the kittens. Before making that decision, it is important to realize that there are already more cats and kittens than available homes.

There are two strategies to use when allowing a feral to have kittens. Either the mama can be trapped while pregnant and kept inside until her kittens are weaned, or the kittens can be born outside and trapped later for socialization. It places a lot of stress on a feral mama cat to be kept inside, so this is normally not recommended. It is best to let the mama care for her kittens outside and try trapping the kittens to socialize them when they are 5-8 weeks old.



If the kittens are taken away from their mama when they are still nursing, or if the mama is killed, it is necessary to bottle feed the kittens for them to survive. Be sure to contact your veterinarian or a rescue organization for advice before taking in such young kittens.

Although we hope to have volunteers available to socialize feral kittens at some point, right now we are not able to take feral kittens under any circumstances. If a caretaker chooses to allow the kittens to be born, they will either need to find homes for the kittens themselves or contact a local rescue group for help. Most groups already have their hands full, so help is not guaranteed.



Mama & kitten trapped together

When the kittens are 5-6 weeks old, it is time to trap the mama cat to have her spayed before you end up with another litter of kittens on your hands. Occasionally you may trap a kitten at the same time as the mama cat. In this case, do not try to separate them. They will be separated at the vet after the mama has been anesthetized.

Although kittens are cute, the goal of every caretaker should be NOT to have any more kittens born into their colony. Actively working to spay/neuter all cats in the colony is the best way to accomplish this goal.

Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace



- Albert Schweitzer



Volunteer Update & Opportunities

Thank you to each and every one of the volunteers who worked the Crafty Cat show March 31 & April 1 at the Charlotte Merchandise Mart. The cat shows are excellent fundraisers for FFF, and we greatly appreciate you taking your weekend to help the feral cats. It is a lot of fun seeing the other vendors, chatting with people and seeing all the cats of course!

Thank you to Lisa Steffy, Meredith Berger, Meredith McBride, Linda Beal, Beverly Sammarco, Cheryl Chenu, and Linda Middleton for working at our information table. Thank you, also, to all those who took the time to bake items for our bake sale at the show. Everyone attending the shows knows to look for the FFF table and our wonderful homemade goodies!

Our next cat show will be the Southeast Regional ACFA cat show on July 21-22 at the Cabarrus Events Center and Arena. Volunteers are needed to work at our table, and of course, bakers are also needed. We are also running low on cat crafts and other cat-related items, so donations of your new or gently used items are always appreciated.

Volunteers will be needed to work a beer booth at Food Lion Speed Street on Thursday, May 24 through Saturday, May 26, in uptown Charlotte. Festival hours will run from 11 am - midnight. A portion of the proceeds for sales at the booth will go to FFF.

We are still in need of donated t-shirts with any type of cat design on them for our t-shirt quilt. Charlotte Harkey of Quilt Patch Fabrics in Matthews has kindly donated her time to create a quilt for FFF to raffle as a fundraiser.

Please continue to check our volunteer website for future opportunities and upcoming events:

www.geocities.com/fffvolunteer

You can also add your name to our email list to receive email notices when volunteers are needed. Please send an email to **fffvolunteer@excite.com**.

Thanks for all you do! We couldn't do it without you.

Yard Sale Benefits Feral Cats

It was chilly when we started out at 6:30 A.M. on Saturday, April 21st, but by mid-morning, the sun was out and it was warming up by the minute! We had a perfect yard sale day.

Thanks to all of you who donated items for FFF to sell - we couldn't have done as well without them. Also, thank you to our volunteers: Bill Laudati, Ann Gross, Cathy Van Hoet, Michelle Nedopak, Beverly Sammarco, and especially to Mary and Len Ralston, who offered the use of their yard for the sale and gave up space in two garages for several weeks!

Yard sales that start off with what you think is a fair amount of "stuff" end up being lots of work and take many hours to price all the items. The work was worth it, though, and many cats will be helped as a result of the money collected.



Feral Angel Clinics Continue in 2007

Our first Feral Angel Clinic of 2007 was held on Saturday, March 27. Dr. Miller of Miller Veterinary Hospital graciously offered the use of his facility to spay/neuter the 35 cats brought to the clinic that day. Of those, 15 were females, and almost all of them were pregnant or in heat. This clinic alone prevented the birth of dozens of feral kittens.



Spay surgery at Miller clinic

In addition to Dr. Jack Miller, veterinarian Dr. Angie DiLillo also volunteered her time at the clinic. Vet techs Ellen Thomas, Liz Grainger, Jenny Moesta, Debbie Pugh, Lynne Bunker, and Kenzo Tochiki helped to ensure that the clinic ran smoothly. Thank you to the vets and vet techs for volunteering your time and expertise!

Many FFF volunteers worked at the clinic to process the cats coming through, give all cats a thorough flea combing and ear cleaning, and keep a watchful eye on cats in the recovery room after surgery. Thank you to Annette Collins, Al Rich, Kathy Williams, Cindy Henderson, Mary Ralston, Donna Yankoglu, Christy Watson, Ann-Marie Gearhart, Michelle Nedopak, Bill Laudati, Beverly Sammarco, Ann Gross, and Lisa Steffy.



Ear cleaning and flea combing

The Humane Society of Charlotte, in partnership with FFF, held their first high-volume clinic for feral cats on March 22, during which 17 feral cats were spayed or neutered. A second clinic was held in April, and the HSC anticipates holding several more clinics throughout 2007.

Thank you to the Humane Society of Charlotte for taking this progressive step to help even more feral cats in the Charlotte area through spay/neuter as a humane way to manage the population. FFF is excited to partner with them on this important venture.

Thank You to FFF Veterinary Network

We would like offer our sincere thanks to the dedicated veterinary offices participating in our network: Animal Healthcare Center of Charlotte, Archdale Animal Hospital, Buckley Animal Hospital, Carolina Place Animal Hospital, Carolinas Veterinary Clinic, Curtsinger Animal Hospital, Eastridge Veterinary Clinic, Freedom Animal Hospital, Gaffney Animal Hospital, Matthews Animal Clinic, Miller Animal Hospital, Mercy Animal Hospital, Monroe Road Animal Hospital, Park Cedar Animal Hospital, Total Bond Veterinary Hospital at Paw Creek, Triangle Veterinary Clinic (Union, SC), and Waxhaw Animal Hospital.

FFF would not be effective in reducing the population of unowned feral cats without the help of the kind veterinarians who work with us on a regular basis. Please consider taking your own pets to these veterinary clinics for the wonderful care they provide.



Volunteer Spotlight: Annette Collins

Thanks to the great work of Annette Collins, all feral cats going through our spay/neuter clinics leave with the cleanest ears in town. The cats will most likely never have their ears cleaned again, but she makes sure each and every ear is done right. After learning from a professor at the NC State Veterinary School, Annette guesses that she has probably cleaned over 2,000 sets of ears!

As a little girl, she always loved cats. She has been helping feral cats for the past 4 years. She carried food and water in her car for years to feed any strays she found, not knowing that they were called feral cats at first, but thinking they were just scared, hungry cats.

She has what is called the Purfect Fence so the ferals cannot get out of her back yard. Her goal is to provide ongoing care that is manageable and give the ferals a place to live out their lives. They have lots of room to play, shade, bedding, shelter from the weather and have become quite comfortable. She has several, and they all get along well.

Her personal cats run when they see her with q-tips, since they know it is ear cleaning time. They can run, but they can't hide! Her cats have the cleanest ears in town. When she's cleaning ears at the FFF clinic, she makes sure they are clean and not just wiped out. It only takes a minute to do it right. The worst thing a person can do while cleaning is to not look down at what you are doing because one hard slip can hit the ear drum.

She feeds 11 places, loading up with 4 gallons of water from home and refilling at one of her favorite places. The workers there have been great about letting her trap cats. Several workers told her that they would start their equipment up in the mornings and kill the kittens under the hoods, but since there are no kittens any longer, they don't have to worry about it. Belmont merchants are on the lookout for ferals so that she may get them trapped and sterilized to stop the explosion of kittens. Right now, she is helping a doctor with a backyard feral. After she gave him some educational matters, he is happy to finally have a plan in place.

In addition to all her work with cats, Annette likes working with flowers. She took several horticulture classes at Central Piedmont Community College, so she knows a lot about plant disease and pests. Her green thumb is on display in her front yard, which is filled with colorful flowers. She enjoys planting bulbs and cutting grass. She'll never be good at botanical names of these plants, even though she had to know them for tests at



Annette Collins cleaning a cat's ears

school. Every year, she plants a garden, but decided not to this year.

She doesn't look for gratitude or pats on the back, but is just good at what she does - feeding all 11 places as if on autopilot. She has helped other people with TNR and loaned her traps out so they, too, can make a difference in the life of a feral.

Thank you, Annette, for all you do to help feral cats!

Not so Feral Anymore

By Ellen Thomas

My life used to be my own
Until I met these kittens now fully grown
I fed them all with loving care,
Groucho, Tommy, Tux, Gabbie, Lacie and even Spare
Groucho the Matriarch with her black mustache and white beard
Stayed for awhile and then disappeared
I may never know where she went
But I cherish the time with her, the hours we spent
Tommy the Patriarch, big, black and sweet
Tux her own spirit, always there to greet
Gabbie is so loving and really fat
I nicknamed her "Chubby Bunny" not fat cat
"Better late than never" Lacie comes when she wants
Showing up with a purr and a cute little flaunt
Spare came late
He was not going until he ate
He did not belong with the original bunch
And sure wasn't leaving until he had lunch
So, trap, neuter, and release I did here
Only to find him gone for a year
The next February out of nowhere, yes he was back
That sassy black cat was on the attack
He wanted to live with me
How could that be?
My colony was perfect with just the four
Could there be room for maybe one more?
Acclimating him to the colony isn't a breeze
I'm taking it slow, introducing him with ease
I wanted to help others, so I volunteer for them all
Some how this seems to be my big call
Little do they know, I need them as much as they need me
Thank you for the gift, I love cats you see
Nearly four years have past
God I hope it will last
With love and attention
And a lot of time not to mention
I see them all as my special pets
And as for me I have no regrets

Events Calendar



Tuesday, June 5, and Tuesday, Aug 7 - General Meeting, 7:00 pm (networking 6:30 - 7 pm) at Morrison Regional Library, Colony Road, South Park. Dates subject to change, depending on room availability. Call our hotline or check website for confirmation. *New members always welcome!*

July 21 & 22 - American Cat Fanciers Association Regional Cat Show at Cabarrus Arena and Events Center (4751 Highway 49, Concord, NC)

May 24 - 26 - Food Lion Speed Street - FFF volunteers will work at a vendor booth to raise funds. Volunteers needed!

Please check our website or call our hotline for more details and confirmation of all event dates and locations.

In Memory of Hungry Jack

3-3-77 to 6-4-97

By Mary Ann Goodie

He wasn't just another cat;

No one could even call him that.

In his very special way,

He brightened each and every day.

He wore a coat of orange gold,

Complete with tabby stripes so bold;

His golden eyes so keen and bright,

Unlocked the secrets of the night.

With graceful moves he walked along,

Each movement rhythmic as a song.

He was an angel in a coat of fur,

Who showed his love with every purr.

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A Cat's Tale
Friends of Feral Felines
P O Box 473385
Charlotte, NC 28247
704-348-1578
www.friendsofferalfelines.org



In Memory Of



Carl Walls, father of Carolyn Laudati, from her friends at FFF

Michael Pendry, brother of Reita Pendry, from her friends at FFF

Jane Blue Trent, from her cousin, Patricia Marsh Banks

Liz Marrett, from her daughter Betty Marrett and her friends at the Cato Corporation

Rachel Giblin, from Ellen and Wendell Moore

Buddy & Charlie, precious furbabies of Karen McLaughlin

Dusty, Brandy, & Lizzie, our feline "children", from Ray & Patsy Ledford

In Memory of Izzy Wilson, and In Honor of Kim Wilson, by Kimberley Balco



In Honor Of
Steve McGirt, from D. E. McGinn

If you care to have your loved ones honored, please consider making a donation to Friends of Feral Felines in honor of or in memory of their name.

Register Your Ferals With FFF

Attention residents of Mecklenburg County: If you have not yet registered your feral cats with FFF, please contact our hotline at 704-348-1578 to register the cats as soon as possible. FFF will not share your personal information. It will be used for our database only.

If one of your feral cats is missing, please contact FFF, as well as Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Control, to find out if your cat was taken to Animal Control and needs to be reclaimed. You could be saving the cat's life!

Feral Update



Since 1998, over 5,200 cats sterilized and vaccinated