

Helping Feral Cats

Three years ago a feral mother cat showed up on my back deck with her litter of six kittens! I always expected that this day would come. You see, I am involved with cat rescue and it was simply a matter of time before any ferals figured out that I would be a sucker and help them out. For those of you who may not be aware of the term, feral cats are wild cats who have had none or minimal contact with humans. They usually cannot be domesticated, but with a caring, educated community they can live full and happy lives.

The number one thing to do with feral cats is to perform TNR. TNR stands for Trap, Neuter, and Release. This allows the cats to be fixed so that they will not reproduce. They will also be given a rabies vaccination and have their left ear tipped. Tipping the left ear is a universally accepted sign that indicates the cat has been fixed and has been given a rabies vaccination. After their surgery, they are released where they were trapped. TNR will also control the feral population by preventing continuous breeding.

A great source of information is Alley Cat Allies (www.alleycat.org). They are the United States national organization for feral cats and are a wealth of useful information and links to local assistance in your state.

So what did I do with this newly arrived feline family in my backyard? I went to the Alley Cat Allies web site and found the local organization in my area. I borrowed some traps and I was able to trap the mama, four of the surviving kittens (two disappeared and were never seen again), and one of the fathers. The other father was an older cat who knew about traps and never tripped any of mine. He simply ate the food and then left the area, never to be seen again. Because the kittens were still young and the mama started trusting me, I was able to bring the kittens inside. I tamed them and found them all wonderful homes. The mama insisted in moving in with me. Gracie has been a member of our household for over three years now. The one father who was TNR'd, still stops by nearly every day for dinner.

And just a few months ago, three years after Gracie and her kittens showed up, another mama has arrived with her five kittens. These ferals are much more skittish than Gracie and her kittens were. Therefore, I do not expect to be able to tame them. But I am planning on performing TNR on as many as I am able to trap. Wish me luck!