

Community Cat Program (CCP) Webinar – Unanswered Q & A

Thanks for all the questions after our recent webinar. We have focused our responses on topics that directly pertain to the content of the webinar and that we weren't able to answer during the live presentation. For general questions about the development and operation of community cat programs (sometimes also called "Return to Field" programs) there are a number of good general resources you can find on the internet. And review the webinar, which will be available on the CalAnimals website, and the San Francisco SPCA Shelter PALS for answers to most questions.

Kate, Julianna & Bruce

1. How can non-veterinary TNR advocates best support these programs (CCPs)?

- **Be the neighborhood educator.** Door-knock or flyer the block before trapping, share lost-pet resources, and collect caregiver contact info so people have someone to call if questions arise.
 - **Volunteer.** You can work with your local shelter to volunteer to return cats after they've received their medical exam and surgery, or in any other way that helps promote the program success.
 - **Fundraise for the hard work.** In most CA shelters there is a real need for pediatric S/N capacity and field microchip scanners; covering a surgery day or buying universal scanners has outsized impact.
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2. Our municipal shelter does no TNR and also refuses healthy cats—are they compliant with CA law? We don't have enough facts to respond to this question. If you join SF SPCA's Shelter PALS program as a client, you can get this information analyzed by a lawyer. Apply here:

<https://www.sfspca.org/shelter-pals-registration-form/>

3. Where can I read SDHS's CCP SOP?

We have provided San Diego Humane Society's SOP to CalAnimals. They are posted in the resource section on the CalAnimals website.

4. Does micro-chipping a returned cat make the shelter its legal owner? No.

5. How precise should the return location be?

Generally, you are aiming to return as close to the exact found location as possible, but you can learn more about detailed considerations in some of the guides online or by contacting others experienced in the practice.

6. What if a returned cat later becomes sick or injured?

Sick and injured cats are subject to requirements under California law outside the scope of Community Cat Programs. Consult a lawyer for specifics on your specific situations.

7. Where can I find the most current CCP definition? In the webinar, in Dr. Hurley's segment.

8. Was the SDHS case a jury trial? No.

9. Can you please share your thoughts on this...About 5 years ago we started microchipping our Community Cats to make sure they were returned to the actual property they came from. We do not recommend microchipping as part of a CCP.

10. Did you learn anything about your stakeholder engagement from this experience? Why were the plaintiffs so against the program? Why couldn't you get them on the team so to speak?

Some of the plaintiffs who were originally involved in the lawsuit dropped out over time. We can't say for certain whether our communications externally explaining the reasons for our program was a factor in those requests or not, but it suggests that, at some point, they decided that they did not continue supporting the remaining plaintiffs' position.

11. How young does SDHS spay/neuter?

For community cats, healthy kittens ≥ 2 lbs (≈ 8 wks) are routinely altered. The latest guidance for shelter kittens is 6 weeks and 1.5 lbs.

12. Does SDHS ask the public to return healthy neonatal kittens? Does this ruling prevent them from doing that?

Yes. Here is a link to our found kitten flow chart with recommendations: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgicclefindmkaj/https://www.sdhumane.org/about-us/news-center/stories/images/kitten-flowchart.pdf>

No. The ruling does not prevent SDHS from making recommendations for returning healthy neonatal kittens to their found location.

13. What was the judge's rationale on the 12-week limitation for kittens? The court did not expressly state its opinion or rationale on this issue, and simply approved SDHS' decision to change its kitten protocols.

14. Do cats count as community cats only if brought in by a trapper/caregiver but not if picked up as a stray? Any free-roaming, unowned cat lacking indicia of ownership qualifies, regardless of who finds them.

15. What are your recommendations for communities without sufficient S/N resources to operate a CCP?

- Start with *targeted* days for high-volume clinics or mobile units.
 - Recruit private vets for one-day "Sniptember" events.
 - Pair every surgery slot with a volunteer trapper and transporter to maximize throughput.
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16. How would you recommend community advocates work to change shelter officials' minds in order to transition towards a CCP? My local shelter has been hostile even just to TNVR.

It often helps to understand why shelter leadership is hesitant – for instance, is it a lack of resources, concern about impact on wildlife, worry about community response, concern about legal issues? Once you know their concerns it can be easier to sort through the wealth of information to share what's most relevant. Also, it is sometimes easier for people to hear from someone else in a similar role – you could check around to find other shelters in your area with well-established CCPs and see if their staff would be willing to connect with the team at your local shelter. If there are concerns about the science and specifics of the programs, the shelter's leadership can always reach out to the team at the UC Davis Shelter Medicine Program, and

they can check with the San Francisco SPCA's Shelter PALS program with respect to legal issues.
<https://www.sfspca.org/about/advocacy/>

17. In a situation where a county shelter is not mandated and equipped to intake cats where there is a clear overpopulation, what would be the best education method for the public about TNR?

Anchor the message in shared community benefits:

Lead with a simple promise: "Fix, vaccinate, return = fewer kittens tomorrow."

People engage when they see that TNR reduces complaints, shelter crowding and tax burdens.

Use short statements backed by data or peer examples (e.g., Albuquerque cut feline euthanasia 84 % and intake 38 % after launching a CCP). Consult with the San Francisco SPCA's Shelter PALS program with respect to legal issues. Apply here: <https://www.sfspca.org/shelter-pals-registration-form/>

Meet people where they already gather

Channel	Why it works	Tactics
Digital	Reaches busy, mobile users	• 60-second captioned "Why TNR?" reels • Facebook & Nextdoor "kitten-season" ads
In-person	Builds trust & skills	• "TNR 101" workshops at libraries, churches, Spanish-language sessions (Cal4All model) • Pop-up Cat Help Desks at farmers' markets for on-the-spot coaching.
Print	Works for low-bandwidth areas & older residents	• Door hangers the night before trapping • Bilingual mailbox postcards with QR codes to trap-loan form.
Traditional media	Lends credibility	• Op-eds on public-health savings • Morning-show trap-demo with local vet.

Back education with accessible resources

1. **Trap-loan program** run by volunteers or a rescue partner.
2. **TNR "scholarships"** (e.g., vouchers for private vets when the shelter clinic is full).
3. **24-hour voicemail/text line** that walks callers through the flow-chart options and books surgery slots.

4. **Online “micro-training” videos** (three minutes or less) on safe trapping, post-op care and colony monitoring. Maddie’s Fund and Neighborhood Cats provide free slide decks you can localize.

18. Does this mean that any cat with indicia of ownership MUST be taken in by the shelter, or is it that once it is taken in, it cannot be part of a CCP with indicia of ownership? This goes beyond the scope of just CCP issues and is really more about both community policies and state law with respect to intake protocols. Consult with your lawyers for a fact-based, legal explanation, or contact the San Francisco SPCA’s Shelter PALS program. Apply here: <https://www.sfspca.org/shelter-pals-registration-form/>