



Spring 2008

Mews & Views

Stray cats knock on doors to find their *own* purrfect homes



We all know how independent cats are. But, did you know, that they're so independent, most of them even find their own homes — or find a Samaritan to find one for them? The latest APPMA survey reports that 76% of pet cats simply showed up at their guardian's door — or

came from a friend or relative who had the cat show at their door — or was the offspring of one that did. **Only 23 of every 100 pet cats were adopted from animal shelters!**

For the cats, this is especially fortunate since fewer than half of all cats that end up at shelters ever find homes — most are either euthanized (over 80,000 annually in Michigan shelters) or live out their lives in cages (at no-kill shelters). Clearly a cat's best strategy for a new home is through taking the adoption process into their own paws — and it's easy to understand how it happens:

When someone sees cats or kittens in their yard or barn — or at their work or school parking lot — or rummaging in a dumpster where they live or shop — they make eye contact. They may not do anything right away, but the sight haunts them and brings them back to check on the cats. Soon, observing turns into feeding, and feeding turns into bonding. (Most of you reading this have had that experience — *did you find your cats, or did they find you?*)

Farmers and homeowners may simply leave the cats outdoors — providing shelter and food. Apartment and mobile home residents usually bring the cats indoors as pets — or at least to foster while they find permanent homes with friends, neighbors or relatives. Just like cats adopted from shelters, most of these cats get fixed — *if their caregivers can afford to do so*. Their caregivers don't want a continual flow of kittens and find that the cats are easier to live with once they've been fixed — no more fighting, yowling or spraying. **85% of all pet cats are sterilized.**

For the other 15% whose caregivers can't pay to get them fixed — either because of sheer numbers or because of limited incomes — our programs are here to help. If they make a lifelong commitment to care for their cats, we'll pay to spay or neuter them. We know this simple act can ensure these homeless cats forever homes — and often ones of their own choosing.

Our Free Spay/Neuters Double In 2007 3,522 Cats Fixed for 1,388 Participants

2007 Spay/Neuter Summary				
Category	Managed Yard/Barn Cats	Lower-Income Pets	Total 2007 Spay/Neuters	Total Cats Fixed Thru 2007
Spays	1,225	731	1,956	4,864
Neuters	1,019	547	1,566	3,706
Total	2,244	1,278	3,522	8,570

To apply for vouchers, go to our web site and click on the appropriate program: **Outdoor Cat** barn, yard or feral (for property owners regardless of income) or **Indoor Pet Cat** (for families with incomes under \$40,000.)

We service all of Washtenaw County and parts of Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Monroe, Oakland and Wayne Counties. Since 2000, we've funded the spay/neuter of 8,570 cats.

2007 Participating Vet Clinics

Besides being free, we've found that a convenient driving distance is important to our participants (and encourages their participation). By using the many vet clinics in our service area, most cats can be fixed within 15 miles of their home.

Our special thanks to the clinics below, who each performed more than a dozen spay/neuters for our program during 2007 — the median number was 43.

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| Heritage Animal Hosp , Dundee | Kelly Veterinary , Adrian |
| MI Avenue Animal Hosp , Ypsilanti | Country Cat Clinic , Plymouth |
| Green Oak Veterinary , Whit Lake | Village Animal Clinic , Dexter |
| Salem Veterinary , Salem Twp | Grass Lake Animal Hosp , Grass Lake |
| Countryside Veterinary , Clinton | Companion Animal Hosp , Tecumseh |
| Chelsea Animal Hosp , Chelsea | Westarbor Animal Hosp , Ann Arbor |
| Fowlerville Veterinary , Fowlerville | Brighton Animal Hosp , Brighton |
| The Bridgewater Vet , Saline | Manchester Veterinary , Manchester |
| Adrian Animal Clinic , Adrian | Lyon Veterinary , South Lyon |
| Saline Vet Service , Saline | Fay Veterinary , Jackson |
| Easthaven Animal Hosp , Ann Arbor | Animal Clinic of Pinckney , Pinckney |
| Ypsilanti Animal Clinic , Ypsilanti | Columbia Veterinary , Brooklyn |
| Brookeside Anim Hosp , Ann Arbor | Tecumseh Animal Hosp , Tecumseh |
| Milan Veterinary , Milan | Cherry Hill Veterinary , Westland |
| Main Veterinary , Adrian | Brooklyn Road Veterinary , Brooklyn |
| Home Health Care for Pets , WL | Wayside Veterinary , Clinton |
| Lane Animal Hosp , Chelsea | Dexter Animal Clinic , Dexter |
| Noah's Ark , Willis | VCA Woodland , Ann Arbor |
| Affordable Vet Services , Ann Arbor | |



Zimmer Foundation
TLC/For The Love of Cats
PO Box 130944
Ann Arbor MI 48113
734.663.8000
TLConline.org

2007 Lower-Income Spay/Neuter Applicant Survey



During any conversation about cat overpopulation, someone invariably says, "If it weren't for the irresponsible cat owners that refuse to get their pets fixed, we wouldn't have this problem." Our experience challenges this notion — we're finding that *most* people truly *want* to sterilize their cats — but some simply can't afford it. Here's a profile of a typical Pet Cat applicant from our last 8 months of applications:

- 72% had annual incomes under \$25,000.
- 69% live in rentals or mobile home parks
- 22% live on government assistance

Even those earning \$25,000-\$40,000 had good reasons — large families, burdensome medical expenses, etc. It appears to us that *unaffordability* is a much bigger factor than *irresponsibility*.

LA Police Enlist Feral Cats for Station Rat & Mouse Patrol

An article from the 12/29/07 Los Angeles Times that we found interesting — and thought you might too. (In fairness to its writer, Carla Hall, we've extensively excerpted and summarized it.)

The **Working Cats Program** of the *Voice For The Animals* organization are placing feral cats in LA police stations with rodent problems — just as the group placed cats in the rat-plagued downtown flower district several years ago — to great effect. They take death-row feral cats from animal control shelters — sterilize, vaccinate, microchip and ear-tip them — cage them at the police stations for 30 days (to acclimate the cats to their new territory and prevent them from running back to their old home) — and then continue to provide them with daily food and water.

Interestingly, the cats generally don't solve the problem by killing the rodents (although they're game to do so if they catch them). Rather once the rodents get a whiff of the feline presence, they move on. Jane Garrison of *Voice For The Animals* was quoted, "It's the smell of the cat and the cat urine." Less grisly than glue traps — and usually more effective — the cats go about their "work" naturally: They eat and sleep — but mainly just hide and stay out of the officers' way. Commanding Officer Brennan was quoted as saying. "It sounds too easy a fix. But everywhere it's been done, it's worked. I think I'm convinced it's a viable program that will help us."

Our **Veterinary Scholarship Program**

is seeking applications from cat-focused veterinary students for our 2008 award. Deadline for applications is May 1st. Applications are available on our web site.

Dear Friends,

We've always known that most kittens come from the many stray and feral outdoor cats — and that many of them end up as pets in lower-income families. Our *Outdoor Cat Program* — helping property owners sterilize these cats — seems to be working. Where we have sterilized managed cats, the colonies have stabilized with no new kittens being born. But, since starting our *Pet Cat Program* — helping sterilize pet cats for lower-income families — we've learned that these pet cats are *also* a significant contributor to cat over-population.

In our applicant survey (above), **12% applied for a "family" of cats — created by a pregnant pet whose kittens could have easily been prevented.** How does this happen? People naively assume that brother-and-sister cats won't mate — or if they keep their females indoors and away from their males they won't get pregnant (which of course they can't — and it takes only one encounter) — or that their cats can't get pregnant while they're nursing — or that kittens can't reproduce before 6 months of age.

When the inevitable kittens are born, the caregivers attempt to find them homes — and many do — but the fear of more litters all too often results in giving them to a shelter (where most are euthanized) or abandoning them. Although we have no hard statistics on cat abandonment, we do know from our *Outdoor Cat Program* that **if cats are abandoned they are ones that were not sterilized. This is the collateral damage of unaffordable spay/neuter** — cats that had a chance at a good home are tossed away simply because their guardian could not afford to get them fixed. And, sadly, these cats then perpetuate the cycle of uncontrolled outdoor cat reproduction — or, in shelters, the senseless killing of healthy-but-homeless cats. This is what we're trying to prevent by providing free spay/neuter for these at-risk cats. You can help us by posting the enclosed flyer on a public bulletin board. The more people who know about our help, the better!

Kitty Zimmer