



Alley Cat Allies

# ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR HUMANE LAWS AND POLICIES FOR CATS IN YOUR COMMUNITY



Alley Cat Allies is the global engine of change for cats. We protect and improve cats' lives through our innovative, cutting-edge programs. We are seen around the world as a champion for the humane treatment of all cats. Founded in 1990, today Alley Cat Allies has grown into a powerful force with more than 650,000 supporters. Together, we've helped and inspired countless individuals, communities, and organizations save and improve the lives of millions of cats and kittens worldwide. We work with lawmakers, animal shelters, and the public to change attitudes and advance lifesaving policies that best serve the interests of cats. Learn more about our work at [alleycat.org](http://alleycat.org). Connect with us on Facebook ([facebook.com/AlleyCatAllies](https://facebook.com/AlleyCatAllies)). Join us on Twitter ([@AlleyCatAllies](https://twitter.com/AlleyCatAllies)). Follow us on Instagram ([@AlleyCatAllies](https://instagram.com/AlleyCatAllies)).

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# ALLEY CAT ALLIES' ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR HUMANE LAWS AND POLICIES FOR CATS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The Alley Cat Allies' Advocacy Toolkit will arm you with the basics in citizen lobbying and prepare you to advocate for humane laws and policies for cats.

## ADVOCATING FOR CATS

You can become the cats' most powerful advocate in your community! Your elected officials, animal control officers, and animal shelter staff make decisions that affect the lives of cats every day. That is why your voice will help them know that you and other community members support humane laws and policies.

In some cities and counties, compassionate citizens defend their right to perform Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) for community cats (also known as feral cats). In others, people must urge their officials to reject proposed laws that put community cats' lives in danger, and encourage their animal control agencies and animal shelters to implement policies that protect cats.

Alley Cat Allies' Advocacy Toolkit will prepare you to speak out about the laws and policies that impact cats and help rally your community through grassroots organizing to do the same. Improving local ordinances and policies will ultimately give all cats a greater level of protection than a TNR organization, feline rescue group, or individual can provide alone. We are here to help you become an effective advocate for cats and create meaningful changes in your community.



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# PHASE ONE: EDUCATE YOURSELF

## GATHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT COMMUNITY CATS AND TNR:

### The History of Cats

Understanding cats' natural history reveals just how recently cats came indoors and how community cats continue to live healthy lives outdoors—as all domestic cats are biologically adapted to do. Only since 1947, with the invention of kitty litter, has it become common for cats to live indoors as they do today. In fact, cats have lived primarily outdoors alongside humans, sharing the environment with birds and wildlife, for over 10,000 years. It's important to be familiar with the history of cat domestication, as those who oppose TNR often think community cats are homeless and don't belong outdoors. The truth is that community cats have always lived outdoors and have a place in the natural landscape.

➤ Learn more about The Natural History of the Cat at [alleycat.org/CatHistory](https://alleycat.org/CatHistory).



### The Community Cat Movement: Then and Now

Prior to the 1990s, trapping cats to get them spayed or neutered and vaccinated was considered an eccentric, even suspect, activity that most people did not know how to undertake and were reluctant to even talk about. Finding a veterinary clinic that was willing and able to treat community cats was next to impossible, and the costs, borne by caregivers alone, were staggering. In those early days, TNR was an expensive, solitary endeavor. Eventually, early caregivers found each other and started working together. Organizing as a group provided shared resources and a safety net for both cats and caregivers. Small groups formed over time, and some evolved into 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations with a structure and funding.



Slowly at first, but with growing momentum, members of the veterinary profession began recognizing community cats as an underserved population. They grew to understand the urgent need to help caregivers care for cats while curbing reproduction and improving cats' lives at the same time. Volunteers organized community cat spay days and full-time, subsidized clinics in an outpouring of community service. Humans have a compassionate nature, so it was inevitable that good Samaritans would take action once they knew outdoor cats needed help. That legacy of caring continues today.

## Building the Movement

There are two sources of power in the political process: money and people. The United States Constitution guarantees freedoms concerning religion, expression, assembly, and the right to petition in the First Amendment—so exercise those rights! Cat advocates must come together and garner power through recruiting, training, and mobilizing citizens to say “no” to killing cats and “yes” to improving their lives. Grassroots organizing is an inclusive American tradition that lives on in communities across the country. It’s in hometown newspapers all the time—residents working together to improve their neighborhood or draw attention to a worthy cause. And it works for cats too: it’s the most effective approach you can use to help improve the lives of cats and stop the killing in your local shelters.

Grassroots organizing can be done effectively with minimal resources. A casual conversation about cats with your neighbor can be the start of a community-wide change in policies for cats! Your actions have the potential to have a huge influence in your community. Email and the Internet make it cheaper and easier than ever to reach out to others who want to help animals. Everyone in this movement makes a valuable contribution to the honorable goal of ending the unnecessary killing in shelters and providing humane care. No matter what role you fill—whether you’re hands-on with cats or not—you are part of the movement if you simply stand up and say “no” to the killing. You can spread the word and build the movement by getting your friends, family, and neighbors involved.

## Understanding the Issues

The majority of animal control agencies and shelters in the United States continue to implement and enforce outdated laws and policies that kill over 70 percent of all cats who enter their facilities. Virtually every community cat who enters a shelter is killed there. Shelters are the number one documented cause of death for cats, nationwide.

Impractical ordinances like feeding bans and pet limit laws punish the very people who, at their own expense, are working to improve conditions for both cats and the community. Even while community cat groups have organized and grown, many individual caregivers have been harassed and cited for their community service. Some have even resorted to caring for the cats in secret for safety’s sake. Instead of capitalizing on the compassion and energy of the people who are part of the solution, punitive ordinances are counter-productive and ignore the true problem: the lack of subsidized spay and neuter surgeries and TNR programs. They also create a subculture of citizens who must hide in the shadows to save cats’ lives.

The good news is that you can help change these backwards policies and pave the way to a better community for cats *and* people. Hundreds of communities have already changed and are models for other communities nationwide. Changing local ordinances and policies will ultimately give cats far greater protection than any grassroots organization or individual can provide alone. **There is great legal, political, and moral strength in standing together to say that killing cats must stop.** Our government agencies must reform their policies. We, as voters and taxpayers, must leverage our democracy and demand it. After all, it is our tax dollars being spent to kill healthy cats.

## CONSTITUTION OF UNITED STATES OF AMERICA 1789 • AMENDMENT I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.



### UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

#### Local Government and Animal Control

Local governments provide animal control in various ways. It is important to understand how animal control is managed in your community so that you can effectively advocate for laws and policies that protect and improve the lives of cats. To launch a successful campaign, you need to identify your local government structure, research animal control contracts, laws, and statistics, and get to know your animal control and shelter providers.

➤ Learn more about Understanding Your Local Government and Animal Control at [alleycat.org/LocalGovernmentGuide](https://alleycat.org/LocalGovernmentGuide).

#### Community Resources

When investigating your community's approach to community cats, it's important to consider who can help you in your efforts to advocate—and who might be an obstacle to your advocacy work. Do some research. Look up news stories about community cats, contact local animal rescue organizations, and talk to community cat caregivers and veterinarians.

If there is already a person or group advocating for your community's cats, you might be able to join forces with them. If there is a person or group pushing for inhumane policies for cats, determine why they want these policies, and consider whether you might be able to work with them to develop a humane approach to cats that better meets the community's needs.

To help you get started, connect with members of the Alley Cat Allies Feral Friends Network. Feral Friends are advocates, experts, and veterinary professionals working across the country—and around the world—to help cats and the people who care for them. Our members are experienced in caring and/or advocating for cats and joined our Network to become a resource for their community and save even more cats' lives.

➤ Learn more about our Feral Friends Network at [alleycat.org/FeralFriends](https://alleycat.org/FeralFriends).

#### *Identify your laws and policies that impact cats:*

#### Local and State Laws

If you care about cats and want to create change that saves their lives, it's vital that you know and understand the laws that impact them. Most laws regarding community cats and companion animals are passed at the local (city or county) level. Laws at the local level are generally called ordinances. But state laws can also affect cats—anti-cruelty and animal shelter laws exist in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia and vary between states. There may also be local laws that directly, or indirectly, impact the protection and humane treatment of cats. You must learn your area's specific laws to successfully interact with the public, deal with threats to cats, and push for humane policies and programs.

➤ Learn more about Finding and Understanding Your Local Laws at [alleycat.org/LocalLawsGuide](https://alleycat.org/LocalLawsGuide).

## REVIEW THE PROCESS OF HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW:

### Bill Approval Process

Legislation might seem overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be! All local governments have a unique lawmaking process. In addition to laws, local governments also pass resolutions, which create policies rather than law, and budgets (also called appropriations), which are large, complex bills that define how your tax dollars are distributed between different agencies and programs. It is important to monitor the budget approval process because the allocation of funds determines which programs—such as TNR programs—are available in your community. In other words, the people holding the purse strings have the power, so use the budget process to advocate for better policies!

These are the general steps that most communities follow to create a new law:

1. City councilmembers or county commissioners submit legislation. Sometimes government staff may also introduce laws. Citizens usually cannot propose legislation on their own, but they can request a meeting with an elected official and ask them to champion a law.
2. After the legislation is submitted, it's then sent to the legal department for review. Sometimes it is also analyzed to determine the financial impact of the proposed law.
3. Administrative staff, sometimes the clerk, formally prepares the ordinance for introduction and assigns it a number and a date to be introduced. At this point, you can submit letters or emails stating your stance on the bill to elected officials.
4. The bill is introduced at a council or commission meeting. At this time, the council or commission may hear from the public. This is your opportunity to testify on the issue. Legislators may also discuss or debate the merits of the bill. **For tips on preparing testimony, see the “Testimony and Hearings” section under “Phase Two: Make an Impact”.**
5. In some communities, the bill might be voted on the same day it is introduced. In other places, the bill is considered at multiple meetings before being voted on. Alternately, a bill could first be considered in a committee that is composed of a smaller number of councilmembers. The committee may then choose to pass the bill along to the full body, amend the bill, or recommend against its passage.

**Don't forget:** Bills can be amended at any step along the way to becoming a law. Therefore, it is important to follow every step of the process in case unfavorable language is proposed at some point.



### FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE TNR ORDINANCE DRAFTING PROCESS:

#### Ordinance Drafting Process

Alley Cat Allies has helped thousands of communities draft and implement successful TNR ordinances and policies. Many communities have successful TNR and Shelter-Neuter-Return (SNR) policies and practices that are not spelled out in their local laws, and that's ok! **You don't need a law to practice TNR or SNR.** In some communities, however, outdated ordinances are a barrier to TNR and need to be changed. In other cases, local lawmakers and advocates want to make their support of TNR official. The following resource provides the guidelines we follow when evaluating and drafting an ordinance to make sure it reflects good public policy and values the lives of cats.

➤ Learn more about How to Draft a Trap-Neuter-Return Ordinance at [alleycat.org/OrdinanceDraftingGuidelines](https://alleycat.org/OrdinanceDraftingGuidelines).





## COLLECT EVIDENCE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TNR:

### TNR Across the United States

Today, hundreds of communities have enacted TNR ordinances and policies, and new programs are being implemented every day around the nation. The ongoing growth of government-supported TNR programs is evidence that elected officials, animal control agencies, and shelters are realizing the need to change their policies to reflect the core values of our country. We are a nation of animal lovers who want humane solutions for cats. An overwhelming majority of Americans—81 percent—believe it is more humane to leave a stray cat outside to live out her life than to have her caught and killed, according to national survey conducted by Harris Interactive for Alley Cat Allies. Local governments are moving toward TNR because they recognize that it is the only humane and effective approach to community cat populations.

➤ Learn more about Trap-Neuter-Return Ordinances and Policies in the United States at [alleycat.org/TNR](https://alleycat.org/TNR).

Chu, K. & Anderson, W.M. (2007) U.S. public opinion on humane treatment of stray cats. Law and Policy Brief, Alley Cat Allies, Bethesda, MD.

### TNR Case Studies and Research

After decades of the cruel, costly method of catching and killing cats have failed to stabilize cat populations, local officials, animal control officers, and animal shelters are realizing that they need a completely different approach. Some TNR programs have been in place for as many as 25 years: a testament to how well they work. Scientific studies show that TNR is the only humane and effective approach to community cat populations. These studies, which have been conducted in multiple countries and have been published in a variety of peer-reviewed scientific journals, provide evidence for how TNR stabilizes community cat populations, improves the lives of individual cats, and helps cats become better neighbors. Reading about communities that have experienced firsthand the many benefits of TNR will be helpful to you as you explain why TNR needs to be implemented in your community.

➤ Learn more about the effectiveness of Trap-Neuter-Return at [alleycat.org/TNRResearch](https://alleycat.org/TNRResearch)

➤ For more information on the issues that create barriers to cats' safety and how you can join us to help fix these issues, visit [alleycat.org/Our-Work](https://alleycat.org/Our-Work).

## PHASE TWO: MAKE AN IMPACT

### MASTER YOUR TALKING POINTS AND ORGANIZE YOUR RESOURCES:

#### TNR Programs

TNR is the only humane and effective approach to community cat populations. TNR has been in practice for decades in the United States after being proven in Europe, and scientific studies show that it stabilizes community cat populations, improves cats' lives, and helps cats become better neighbors. These statements are just some of the key points you need to remember when discussing TNR with elected officials, animal control officers, and animal shelter staff. The following resource provides all the talking points for TNR you need to make your case.

➤ Learn more about Making the Case for Trap-Neuter-Return at [alleycat.org/CaseForTNR](https://alleycat.org/CaseForTNR).

#### Animal Control and Animal Shelter Policies

Nationally, nearly 70 percent of all cats who enter animal shelters are killed there. For community cats that number rises to virtually 100 percent. This is devastating for the cats and for the people working every day to help them. But change is underway in many communities. More animal control agencies and shelters have begun to embrace humane changes that decrease intake numbers, decrease euthanasia rates, and increase live releases. The following resources will help your animal control agency and shelter adopt humane policies, protect community cats, and save more lives.

➤ Learn more about Animal Shelter Transformation at [alleycat.org/ShelterTransformation](https://alleycat.org/ShelterTransformation).

#### TNR Ordinances

Well-intentioned ordinances, like those that claim to support TNR, can cause more harm than good if they create regulations and restrictions—and subsequently, penalties and liabilities against caregivers and TNR providers—where there were none. The most successful TNR ordinances are those that are simple. The most problematic TNR ordinances have mandatory registration. The following resource will help you determine whether your community could benefit from a TNR ordinance.

➤ Learn more about Trap-Neuter-Return Ordinances at [alleycat.org/TNROrdinances](https://alleycat.org/TNROrdinances).



## UNDERSTAND WHY THE FOLLOWING LAWS ARE HARMFUL TO CATS:

### Leash Laws

**What to look for:** Laws mandating that cats be kept either indoors or on leashes (i.e., prohibit cats from being “at large”).

**Why they harm cats:** Leash laws are dangerous because any cat who is outdoors—whether she is someone’s pet who is outside for a period of time, either intentionally or by accident, or a community cat—is subject to impoundment. Virtually 100 percent of all community cats impounded are killed, and 70 percent of all cats in shelters are killed. Leash laws originated to protect people and property from damages caused by dogs. Cats and dogs are unique species, and treating them the same simply doesn’t work. Furthermore, unowned cats such as community cats have no owners or indoor homes.

➤ Learn more about Cat Leash Laws at [alleycat.org/LeashLaws](https://alleycat.org/LeashLaws).

### Licensing Requirements

**What to look for:** Laws that require all cats to be licensed or registered with a government agency, which usually requires payment of annual fees and a tag attached to the cat’s collar.

**Why they harm cats:** Licensing ultimately results in more cats being impounded in animal shelters, where 70 percent of all cats are killed. Licensing is particularly misleading and harmful because it fails to achieve any of its stated goals. Furthermore, good Samaritans who are caring for community cats might be unfairly treated as owners and be cited or bullied into stopping care.

➤ Learn more about Cat Licensing at [alleycat.org/Licensing](https://alleycat.org/Licensing).

### Feeding Bans

**What to look for:** Laws that prohibit residents from putting food outside for animals, such as cats.

**Why they harm cats:** Feeding bans are ineffective, lack scientific support, are inherently cruel, and do not come close to achieving their intended goals. They do not stabilize community cat populations, and they undermine and discourage the TNR programs that do. With a feeding ban in place, TNR is impossible to carry out. If a community is concerned about its community cat population, TNR is the only answer.

➤ Learn more about Feeding Bans at [alleycat.org/FeedingBans](https://alleycat.org/FeedingBans).

### Mandatory Spay and Neuter

**What to look for:** Laws that require all cats to be spayed and neutered.

**Why they harm cats:** Mandatory spay and neuter laws ignore community cats, who represent the vast majority of intact cats—only three percent of these cats are neutered, as opposed to 82 percent of all pet cats. Further complicating the issue is that in homes earning less than \$35,000 annually, only 51 percent of pet cats are neutered. The root of the problem is the lack of affordable spay and neuter services for pet owners and community cat caregivers.

➤ Learn more about Mandatory Spay and Neuter Legislation at [alleycat.org/MandatorySpayNeuter](https://alleycat.org/MandatorySpayNeuter).

### UNDERSTAND WHY THE FOLLOWING LAWS ARE HARMFUL TO CATS:

#### Pet Limit Laws

**What to look for:** Laws that limit the number of pets a person can own.

**Why they harm cats:** Pet limit laws are intended to protect the community from unsafe or unsanitary conditions and to protect animals from inhumane treatment. Some limit laws are aimed at preventing hoarding: a psychological disorder where someone maintains more animals than he or she can adequately care for in an enclosed space. The reality is that limit laws increase the number of animals killed in shelters by deterring people from adding another member to their family. Potential adopters should be encouraged to adopt the number of animals that they can provide a loving home for, and should not be restricted by an arbitrary number.

Limit laws become problematic for community cat caregivers when the number of cats they care for exceeds the number of animals that a person may “own.” Limit laws should be written so that there is an exemption for community cats and community cat caregivers. Caregivers are not the owners of these cats and should be treated accordingly. The right way to protect the welfare of animals and public health is to address specific problematic behaviors—not to pass punitive and arbitrary laws.



### BE PREPARED TO RESPOND TO COMMON ARGUMENTS AGAINST TNR:

**Opposition:** Community cats should be removed (i.e., trapped and killed).

**Response:** The Vacuum Effect: Why Catch and Kill Doesn't Work [alleycat.org/VacuumEffect](http://alleycat.org/VacuumEffect).

**Opposition:** Community cats should be brought to shelters for adoption.

**Response:** Why it's Trap-Neuter-Return, Not Trap-Neuter-Adopt [alleycat.org/TNRnotTNA](http://alleycat.org/TNRnotTNA).

**Opposition:** Community cats should be put in sanctuaries.

**Response:** Sanctuaries: Not an Easy Fix [alleycat.org/Sanctuaries](http://alleycat.org/Sanctuaries).

**Opposition:** Community cats should be moved to a different place.

**Response:** Relocation: The Last Resort [alleycat.org/Relocation](http://alleycat.org/Relocation).

**Opposition:** Community cats should be killed because they kill birds and wildlife.

**Response:** Cats and Wildlife [alleycat.org/CatsAndWildlife](http://alleycat.org/CatsAndWildlife).

**Opposition:** Community cats should be killed because they are a public health risk.

**Response:** Community Cats and the Public—A Healthy Relationship [alleycat.org/CommunityHealth](http://alleycat.org/CommunityHealth).

## REACH OUT TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS:

### Lobbying Your Legislators

The most important thing you can do for cats is to be their voice in the legislative process. Whether you prefer to communicate with elected officials via phone calls, emails, letters, or office visits, you must communicate your support (or disagreement) of laws and policies that affect cats. The top priority of most elected officials is being re-elected. If they are aware that many of their constituents are paying attention to their stance on animal welfare, they are more likely to vote as their constituents wish. Remember to be polite and professional in all your communications, even if the legislator does not agree with you. Being rude and disrespectful will not help save cats' lives.

### Emails and Letters

Be sure to personalize your letter or email to include the legislator's full name and title. If available, also include the name or number of the proposed ordinance. If that information is not available, clearly identify the issue in the first paragraph. Remember to send a letter to every elected official. For example, if there are six councilmembers, you should send six personalized letters.

Check out the following sample letter templates to get started:

- **Sample letter on Trap-Neuter-Return: [alleycat.org/Letter-TNR](https://alleycat.org/Letter-TNR).**
- **Sample letter on Leash Laws: [alleycat.org/Letter-LeashLaws](https://alleycat.org/Letter-LeashLaws).**
- **Sample letter on Licensing: [alleycat.org/Letter-Licensing](https://alleycat.org/Letter-Licensing).**
- **Sample letter on Feeding Bans: [alleycat.org/Letter-FeedingBan](https://alleycat.org/Letter-FeedingBan).**
- **Sample letter on Mandatory Spay and Neuter: [alleycat.org/Letter-MandatorySpayNeuter](https://alleycat.org/Letter-MandatorySpayNeuter).**



### SCHEDULE FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS WITH KEY DECISION MAKERS:

#### Meeting Your Legislators

Many legislators are willing to meet with their constituents. Call ahead to schedule an appointment. If the legislator is unavailable to meet, it is still helpful to meet with a legislative aide or assistant. Their job is to take notes and report back to the legislator.

➤ See our meeting tips under “Negotiating with Decision Makers” in *Organizing Your Community for Strategic Change for Cats* at [alleycat.org/Negotiating](https://alleycat.org/Negotiating).



#### Meeting Your Animal Control Officers and Shelter Staff

Call or email the agency or shelter to request a meeting with the director or other staff members. Be sure to introduce yourself, including who you are, your title (such as your occupation or your position within an animal advocacy organization), why you care about these issues, and any experience you have with TNR or caring for outdoor cats. If you go with a group, make sure everyone is on the same page about what policy and program changes you’re recommending.

➤ See our meeting tips under “Approach Your Local Shelter” in *Transforming Shelters to Save More Cats: Activist Toolkit* at [alleycat.org/ChangeYourShelter](https://alleycat.org/ChangeYourShelter).

## SUBMIT WRITTEN TESTIMONY AND SPEAK AT A PUBLIC HEARING:

### Testimony and Hearings

Before a new local law is passed, the city council or county commission will hold a hearing to discuss its merits. This is your chance to speak out for cats and explain why you oppose or support the ordinance. You can send written testimony to the council or commission and/or you can present your testimony at the hearing. Please note the following tips before attending a hearing and providing testimony:

- Follow the city's or county's instructions about testifying, such as following a time limit and signing up beforehand. You can call the city clerk or look online to find out the procedure in your area.
- Dress professionally at the hearing, unless you are with a large crowd wearing a matching article of clothing (like a teal T-shirt) to signify support for cats. Be sure to alert the council during your testimony why all these people are dressed a certain way. You could also ask everyone there in support to stand up so the council can see how many people are on your side.
- Your testimony should be short, clear, and to the point. Start by introducing yourself and stating where you live, which shows that you are a constituent with a personal stake in their decisions. Next, state your affiliations with any groups, or whether you are a caregiver of community cats or an owner of an adopted animal.
- List the three main reasons to support or oppose the ordinance. Tell a short, relevant story about the good work you do or why you care about the issue. End by summarizing your main points and thanking the legislators for listening. You can write out bullet points or the entirety of your testimony depending on your comfort level with public speaking.
- Whether you have been to several hearings or it is your first time, we recommend you practice reading your testimony aloud as much as possible before the hearing. Practice will boost your confidence and help prepare you for potential questions from elected officials or attendees. Ask a family member or friend who is not familiar with community cats or TNR to be your practice audience. Remember, providing testimony at a hearing is an opportunity for you to make your case and educate the public about the issues.

Check out our sample public testimony template to get started:

➤ **Sample Public Testimony:** [alleycat.org/Sample-Testimony](https://alleycat.org/Sample-Testimony).



## PHASE THREE: GROW THE MOVEMENT

### ORGANIZE YOUR COMMUNITY TO GROW YOUR NETWORK:

#### Grassroots Advocacy

It's important that your legislators, animal control officers, and animal shelter staff know that many people in their community want humane policies for cats. There is great political strength in standing together—with one voice—to say that we need laws and policies that protect the lives of cats.

Start out by networking with other people who have done similar campaigns or other undertakings. Check out the Alley Cat Allies Feral Friends Network to find and connect with other advocates and organizations in your area. Feral Friends are advocates, experts, and veterinary professionals working across the country—and around the world—to help cats and the people who care for them. Our members are experienced in caring and/or advocating for cats and joined our Network to become a resource for their community and save even more cats' lives.

➤ Learn more about the Alley Cat Allies Feral Friends Network at [alleycat.org/FeralFriends](https://alleycat.org/FeralFriends) and request a list of Feral Friends near you at [alleycat.org/FindFeralFriends](https://alleycat.org/FindFeralFriends).

You might also approach leaders of other local community groups that do not focus on animal issues and ask them about the best ways to get things done in your community. They may also be able to help you set up appointments with the decision makers who you will need to meet with to effect change in your area.

➤ Learn more about Organizing Your Community for Strategic Change for Cats at [alleycat.org/Organizing](https://alleycat.org/Organizing).



#### Action Alerts

After you've sent your own email or letter to your elected officials, reach out to like-minded residents by sending an "action alert," which is an email or social media post asking others to join you in helping cats in your community. Reach out to your friends and family, and ask them to forward the action alert on to their own contacts. If you are already part of a local animal welfare organization, ask the organization to send the message to its supporters alerting them to the proposed legislation and asking them to contact their legislators.

Check out our sample action alert template to get started:

➤ **Sample Action Alert:**  
[alleycat.org/Sample-ActionAlert](https://alleycat.org/Sample-ActionAlert).



## REACH OUT TO THE MEDIA TO MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD:

### Talking to the Media

Media coverage is one of the best ways to draw attention and support to your efforts to secure humane policies for cats in your community. Unlike advertising, you have limited control in a news story over how you or your organization is portrayed—but the coverage and recognition are free. There are steps you can take to manage all your interactions with the media to generate the best outcomes and coverage possible. You can control the message. The key is to be prepared.

➤ Learn more about Working with the Media at [alleycat.org/MediaGuide](https://alleycat.org/MediaGuide).

## WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR AND/OR A PRESS RELEASE TO GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT:

### Letters to the Editor (LTEs) and Press Releases

Op-eds and LTEs are great advocacy tools to help get the word out to your community. When writing opinion pieces, make sure to follow the local paper's guidelines, including word count, deadlines, and where to send it. In your writing, focus on the issues that really matter and the compelling information that might change minds. Stay positive and not overly emotional, and use statistics when available.

➤ Learn more about How to Write a Letter to the Editor & Press Release at [alleycat.org/PublicityGuide](https://alleycat.org/PublicityGuide).

➤ Check out our sample LTE templates to get started:  
**Sample Letters to the Editor:** [alleycat.org/Sample-LTE](https://alleycat.org/Sample-LTE).

## UTILIZE SOCIAL MEDIA TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT ABOUT CATS:

### Get the Word Out on Social Media

Misinformation costs millions of cats their lives every year. Cats have been wrongly portrayed as a major threat to wildlife, public health, and more. By educating people on the truth about community cats and combating the false claims, we can help stop the killing. Social media provides an excellent opportunity for you to shape the public's understanding of cats. For example, you can use social media to protect and improve the lives of cats by:

- Posting information about individuals or organizations that provide local TNR services
- Encouraging others to support local laws or policies that help cats and oppose those that harm cats
- Sharing educational materials about TNR and cats

To help you get started, we have designed several “Share the Truth About Cats” infographics that you can share on Facebook and Twitter today!

➤ Learn more about Sharing the Truth About Cats at [alleycat.org/ShareTheTruth](https://alleycat.org/ShareTheTruth).

## PHASE THREE: GROW THE MOVEMENT *(continued)*

### GET INVOLVED TO BECOME A RESOURCE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY:

#### Start Your Own Organization

Organizing as a group provides shared resources, a safety net for both cats and caregivers, and a protected legal identity.

➤ Learn more about Starting Your Own Organization to Help Cats at [alleycat.org/StartAnOrg](https://alleycat.org/StartAnOrg).

#### Start Your Own TNR Program

Because every community faces different circumstances when it comes to implementing a TNR program, there is no single formula for success—though there are some basic elements that are in most programs.

➤ Learn more about How to Implement an Organizational Trap-Neuter-Return Program at [alleycat.org/OrganizationalTNR](https://alleycat.org/OrganizationalTNR).

#### Be a Good Neighbor

When you conduct TNR or colony care, it's important that you communicate with your neighbors. Educating your neighbors and community members about cats will start a helpful dialogue with them, which can only benefit your neighborhood cats. Neighbors will know not to be concerned about the cats or your TNR and feeding efforts, and they will know who “speaks for the cats” if a problem arises. Our community relations resources will help you educate your neighbors, find humane deterrents, and learn how to navigate potential concerns about cats.

➤ Learn more about Community Relations at [alleycat.org/CommunityRelations](https://alleycat.org/CommunityRelations).

Check out our sample community relations materials to help you explain TNR and the work you are doing on behalf of cats to your community:

➤ **Sample Community Relations Materials:** [alleycat.org/Sample-CommunityRelations](https://alleycat.org/Sample-CommunityRelations).

#### Join the Feral Friends Network

Alley Cat Allies is working hard to make the world a better place for cats, but we can't do it without you! We need the support of experienced caregivers and advocates to grow our Feral Friends Network and offer critical support to neighbors and concerned citizens throughout the country; support that can save more cats' lives.



➤ Learn more about joining the Alley Cat Allies Feral Friends Network [alleycat.org/JoinFFN](https://alleycat.org/JoinFFN).

## STAY CONNECTED WITH ALLEY CAT ALLIES:

### Sign Up for Email Alerts

Sign up for our mailing list to receive important updates from Alley Cat Allies, such as events in your area, news about cats, and opportunities for you to get involved in the cat protection movement.

➤ Sign-up today at [alleycat.org/SignUp](https://alleycat.org/SignUp).

### Connect on Social Media

Connect with Alley Cat Allies on social media and be part of a community of cat lovers all working to protect and improve the lives of cats! From breaking news, tips on cat care, and adorable cat photos to calls to action that make real and lasting change for cats, you can learn more and join the conversation to save cats' lives.

➤ Join our social networks today at: [alleycat.org/SocialNetworking](https://alleycat.org/SocialNetworking).

 [facebook.com/AlleyCatAllies](https://facebook.com/AlleyCatAllies)

 [instagram.com/AlleyCatAllies](https://instagram.com/AlleyCatAllies)

 [twitter.com/AlleyCatAllies](https://twitter.com/AlleyCatAllies)

 [youtube.com/AlleyCatAllies](https://youtube.com/AlleyCatAllies)



### Take Action

Visit Alley Cat Allies' Action Center to take action on critical issues facing cats by sending letters and petitions directly to elected officials, decision makers, and others.

➤ Take action today at [alleycat.org/ActionCenter](https://alleycat.org/ActionCenter).

### Support Our Work

Help Alley Cat Allies continue our lifesaving work by making a gift donation, becoming a monthly supporter, and more!

➤ Support our work today at [alleycat.org/WaysToGive](https://alleycat.org/WaysToGive).

### Visit Our Store

Check out the Alley Cat Allies Shop for T-shirts, educational resources, and advocacy materials.

➤ Shop Alley Cat Allies today at [alleycat.org/Shop](https://alleycat.org/Shop).



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