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Aug. 5, 2013

Best Friends decries study calling for eradication of community cats

KANAB, Utah — National animal welfare organization Best Friends Animal Society is demanding answers following the recent publication of an article calling for the wholesale eradication of free-roaming cats.

The issue revolves around animal welfare organizations trying to save the lives and care for free-roaming cats by sterilizing, vaccinating, and returning them to where they were originally captured, a method known as trap-neuter-return (TNR). Meanwhile, opponents imply that these cats need to be eliminated – no questions asked.

In a paper recently published online in *Zoonoses and Public Health*, representatives of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Department of Agriculture draw a sharp distinction between America's "popular and beloved pets" and the millions of unowned cats in the U.S., arguing that the latter "must be reduced and eliminated to manage the public health risk of rabies transmission." Also contributing to the article, "[Rabies Prevention and Management of Cats in the Context of Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Release Programmes](#)," were officials from the American Bird Conservancy.

"No community has killed its way out of the so-called 'feral cat problem,'" said Peter J. Wolf, Best Friends' cat initiatives analyst. "To imply that lethal roundups are the answer is not only irresponsible, it ignores reality."

"The choice implied by the paper's authors, who are opposed to TNR, is a false one," said Wolf. "Sterilized and vaccinated cats are far better for public health than the alternative."

"Every year, TNR groups vaccinate tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of cats, providing a tremendous public health benefit to their communities," said Wolf. "Such efforts not only reduce the risk of disease transmission from domestic animals to humans, but also serve as a barrier between wildlife and humans."

Regarding the rabies claim, the CDC's own data reveal how rarely humans contract rabies from cats. Since 1960, only one such case has been confirmed in the U.S.¹

"It's a mystery how such work gets published," said Wolf. "The authors misrepresent the very research they cite, contradict themselves and various CDC reports, and resort to the kind of scaremongering we typically see from those unfamiliar with the science. The American public expects and deserves better."

Wolf points out the irony in all of this. "If the authors had their way, TNR would be outlawed, thereby increasing the number of unsterilized, unvaccinated cats in our communities. Yet these folks would have us believe that's actually good for public health."

For more information on this topic, or to schedule an interview with Peter Wolf, Best Friends Animal Society's cat initiatives expert, contact Barbara Williamson, 435-644-4408, barbara@bestfriends.org.

¹ CDC, "Recovery of a Patient from Clinical Rabies — California, 2011." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. 2012. 61(4): p. 61–64.

About Best Friends Animal Society®

[Best Friends Animal Society](#) is the only national animal welfare organization focused exclusively on ending the killing of dogs and cats in America's shelters. An authority and leader in the no-kill movement since its founding in 1984, Best Friends runs the nation's largest no-kill sanctuary for companion animals, as well as life-saving programs in partnership with rescue groups and shelters across the country. Since its founding, Best Friends has helped reduce the number of animals killed in shelters from 17 million per year to 4 million. No other animal welfare organization has the knowledge, technical expertise and on-the-ground network to end the killing and Save Them All™.

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