



Animal Protective Association of Socorro

# Barks and Mews

April 2022 Newsletter

## TNR: How It Works

TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return) is an incredibly productive way of helping to curb our local feral and stray cat population. There are various approaches to TNR, including different types of traps and situational differences depending on the cat and the environment. When you decide you want to attempt TNR, you must first call your vet and schedule the appointment. This is usually scheduled at least a week or two out, giving you plenty of time to prepare.

I spend a lot of time with the feral community in my area, so they are reasonably comfortable around me (some more than others). Van is a female cat that lives in my area. She is just over a year old and has had one litter of kittens, and I knew it was not going to be long before she would be pregnant again. On a spacy kitty scale from 1 to 10, she sits at about a 6. She will let me pet her if there is food but still runs away if someone she doesn't know approaches her or if I make a sudden or quick move or noise. I knew that she would be fairly easy to trap because of our relationship, so I chose not to use a typical feral trap and instead used a medium-sized dog crate.

The day before the appointment, the cat typically needs to start fasting at 3 pm (this can vary by vet). So I try and clear my schedule for the first half of the day, so I can keep an eye on who I want to trap and make sure they are fully fed before the 3 pm cutoff. Here I was able to give Van a can of food, which she gobbled right up.



Whatever trap or crate I decide to use, I like to keep it out in their space for awhile so they can smell it and become comfortable with it being there.

In this situation, I knew that I could get Van close enough to the crate to grab her and put her in quickly. I did wear leather gloves to protect my hands. Once she was close, I moved very quickly to get her in the crate before she even had time to realize what had happened! Of course, once she was in the crate, she was not happy and had a kitty freak out. It is hard to see them go through this, but it is temporary, and they must be sterilized for their long-term health.

Once I had Van secured in the crate, I brought her inside and shut her in a room away from my other cats. I placed a sheet over the crate to try and minimize her stress. She can no longer have any food but can still have water until midnight. I put a water bowl inside the crate for her.

I made sure to pull the water from the crate before going to bed. We needed to be at the vet by 8 am for her procedure the following day. I put some bedding in the crate so she would be comfortable post-surgery and again covered the crate for transport.

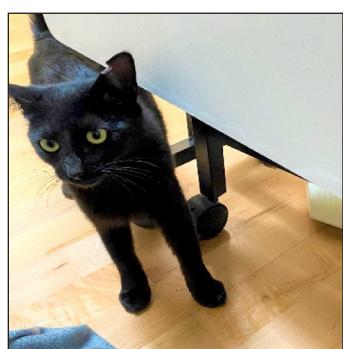


The surgery went just fine. In this situation, the vet did notify me after the procedure that she was indeed pregnant again. Unfortunately, in these situations, we have to terminate the pregnancy for the safety of the mama cat and the fact that there are just not enough homes for more kitties right now. This is why TNR is so important. I was able to bring her home that same afternoon. Female cats need to be kept inside for at least a week. This allows them to heal fully and safely. I had prepared a larger crate for her with lots of blankets and a small litter box. I put the two crates together for an easy transfer. Because she was on various medications from the vet, she still needed to fast for the rest of the day.

The following day I gave her some breakfast, which she was very excited about. Next, I added food and water bowls to the large crate. Van was allowing me to pet her in the crate, and she seemed pretty comfortable in the environment I had created for her, so I opened the door to the crate and let her have free range of the room to give her a little more space for the week while she healed.

Van has healed beautifully since her surgery. As seen in the bottom photo, I had the vet notch her left ear to indicate to others in the community that she has been fixed. Vets also administer a 1-year rabies vaccination during the typical feral cat neuter procedure because New Mexico law requires cats and dogs be vaccinated for rabies. For cats like Van, who are getting accustomed to people and may be adopted, I recommend asking the vet to give two additional shots, the combination FVRCP and leukemia vaccines. In this case, Van has decided she enjoys being inside! I attempted to let her back out, but she came right back. She gets along with my other cats and loves snuggling in blankets, playing with feather wands, and constant treats. She is still warming up to people. She allows me to pet her, and when people are over, she will investigate but does not want to be touched quite yet. So now I am looking for a forever home for this sweet girl.

—Leah Tevis



## Vaccines Protect Our Pet Community

Vaccines are the best way to avoid infections, long hospital stays, high medical bills, and possibly death. This is the message we've been hearing for more than a year, and it is as true for our pets as it is for us. Vaccinating at least 70%–75% of our pets (ideally 100%) will protect most of the pet population as well as our individual dogs and cats.

Veterinarians divide vaccines into those that are "core," which pets should receive and "elective" vaccines. The core vaccines for dogs are the rabies vaccine and the combination DA2PP vaccine. The DA2PP vaccinations, begun when a puppy is 6 weeks old, protect against the canine distemper virus, canine adenovirus types 1 and 2, canine parainfluenza virus, and canine parvovirus. Puppies should receive at least 3 doses given 3 weeks apart. Thereafter, an annual booster is recommended, depending on the animal's environment and the product used (see also APAS newsletter, October 2019).

At 14 weeks of age a puppy, by law, must receive a 1-year rabies vaccination. Depending on the state, a booster shot is given every year or every 3 years. Owner-vaccinated animals are not recognized as legally vaccinated in New Mexico and are treated as unvaccinated animals.

Any domestic or wild mammal (even a human) that is bitten by an infected animal or comes in contact with an infected animal's saliva can become infected and transmit rabies. If the infection is unrecognized and left untreated, rabies is always fatal for the unvaccinated. This spring a fox from Catron County, near Reserve, tested positive for rabies. In early April, at least 9 people were bitten by a fox on the Capitol Hill grounds in Washington, D.C. The "friendly" fox briefly became a mascot to the Hill employees and was named the Capitol Fox; however, it unexpectedly became aggressive. The fox's changed behavior warranted trapping, euthanasia, and testing. The test was positive for the rabies virus. Bats are the most common transmitter of the virus in the U.S. Surprisingly, the second most common transmitters of rabies to humans are large animals, typically cattle and horses.

Elective vaccinations for dogs include leptospirosis, a bacteria found in water, and *Bordetella* (kennel cough), recommended for dogs living in a kennel or shelter or exposed to a situation with high animal populations in small areas such as boarding facilities, groomers, and farming facilities. Elective vaccines are also available for rattlesnake bite (APAS newsletter, July 2014) and lyme disease.

The core vaccines for cats are the state-mandated rabies vaccination and the combination FVRCP vaccine that protects cats against feline herpesvirus-1, feline calicivirus, and feline parvovirus (panleukopenia, feline distemper). Elective vaccinations for cats include feline leukemia and *Bordetella*. Feline leukemia is very contagious and should be a core vaccination for any cat that is allowed outdoors or has contact with an outdoor cat. There is no rattlesnake vaccination for cats, but a version of the vaccine is available for horses, llamas, and alpacas.

For kittens the first of 3 FVRCP vaccinations is given when the kitten is at least 6 weeks old, and the second and third shots are given at 3 to 4 week intervals until the kitten is 16 weeks old. Thereafter an annual booster is recommended. Adolescent cats (older than 16 weeks) or adult cats should receive an initial 2 doses of the FVRCP vaccine 3–4 weeks apart.

The primary reasons for the need of a series of shots are (1) to induce a good protective immunity, which usually requires at least 2 doses, and (2) because, particularly in dogs, the natural antibodies found in the mother's milk that are helping to protect the offspring from these diseases begin to wane as the puppies get older, and those same antibodies can block the vaccine from working. Therefore, multiple doses are required to ensure that window of disease acquisition and prevention is optimized.

Acknowledgments. I thank Dr. Dean Wilkinson for providing professional resources and for helpful discussions on vaccinations.

—Jane Love



Animal Protective Association of Socorro

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