

Neutering project curbed feral cat population

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Rates of impoundment, euthanasia dropped dramatically in targeted area, study says.

(HealthDay)—An intensive effort to sterilize feral cats reduced the number of felines taken to an animal shelter in Florida and euthanized, a new study reveals.

"We investigated whether we ever could neuter enough cats to slow their intake into animal control," Dr. Julie Levy, a professor of shelter medicine at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, said in a university news release.

"Neutering a few cats here and there wasn't making a big impact," she explained, "so we wanted to pick a focused area and throw all our resources into it."

The program was conducted in an area of Alachua County with a large population of feral cats. The researchers trapped and sterilized more

than 2,300 feral cats, or about 54 percent of the estimated population of [feral cats](#) in the targeted area. After neutering, the cats were returned to their original location or adopted.

The number of cats taken to the local animal shelter fell 70 percent after the neutering program—from 13 to 4 cats per 1,000 residents. Euthanasia of cats decreased 95 percent—from 8 to less than 1 per 1,000 residents, the researchers said.

In the rest of the county, the number of cats brought into shelters fell 13 percent (from 16 to 14 per 1,000 residents) and the number of cats euthanized declined 30 percent (from 10 to 7 per 1,000 residents), according to the study recently published in the *Veterinary Journal*.

"The figures were incredible as were the adoptions," Levy said.

"Adoption wasn't part of the original plan, but it happened organically as residents offered to take in kittens and the friendlier adults."

This type of targeted sterilization could save the lives of some of the millions of [cats](#) and other animals euthanized each year in shelters across the United States, according to the researchers.

More information: The American Veterinary Medical Association has more about [spaying and neutering](#).

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