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# MISSION STATEMENT AND INTRODUCTION

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The Founding Of The Feral Cat Caretakers Coalition (FCCC) The Feral Cat Caretakers Coalition was formed when it's founder, Dona Cosgrove Baker, a caretaker herself, was profoundly moved by the suffering of feral cats and kittens. She was called to the often times overwhelming responsibility and commitment required to care for a large number of feral cats, scattered over several acres in an industrial area in Los Angeles, California. While caretaking, she experienced an unconscionable lack of support and understanding from the community, and on numerous occasions, overt hostility. She knew that feral cat caretakers were great in number and were caring for feral cats and kittens under similar or worse circumstances. Dona recognized that if feral cat caretakers were organized as well as effectively directed and collectively supported, they would be a forceful instrument in providing a specialized solution for humane feral cat population control and responsible long-term care.

By joining together with FCCC, the caretakers could then become a unified force and voice for the compassionate care of feral cats. Experience taught her that trapping cats was only the beginning of a lifetime commitment once the cats were returned to the original home site. She realized that it would be the responsibility of the feral cat caretaker to provide care for cats that may live 10-12 years. **The significance of the quality of care provided to the cats upon return, is the main focus and mission of FCCC.**

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

FCCC's mission, in the interests of feral cats everywhere, is to support feral cat caretakers, gain recognition of the beneficial role that caretakers perform, implement the trap, neuter and return (TNR) method of population control, and promote the adoption of long-term, caretaker-based solutions regarding feral cats.

Specifically, our purpose and commitment are to:

- Facilitate the work of caretakers in caring for feral cats and controlling feral cat population growth by trap, neuter and return.
- Provide a communication network and support resources for caretakers.
- Project a strong unifying voice for feral cat caretakers and their colonies.
- Work with and educate property decision makers and governmental agencies in appropriate and

humane solutions for feral cats.

- Implement and manage programs that benefit the constituencies we serve.

Beginning in her home with the encouragement of active supporters and friends, the Feral Cat Caretakers' Coalition was formed in 1997 and is now formally established as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. The FCCC has gained many supporters and provides a range of support services to caretakers. The FCCC is poised to launch its further growth with innovative plans and programs. These will bring a greater range of benefits to caretakers, by offering them a "life line" to facilitate their work. The services caretakers provide will solve problems, save money for taxpayers and improve the lives of feral cats and kittens.

### SALIENT FACTS

- **Population nationwide:** The population of feral cats is estimated at 60 million, and growing (Humane Society of the United States).
- **Los Angeles population:** Local officials estimate the city's feral cat population at 3 million (City of Los Angeles Animal Services).
- **Caretaker population:** Throughout the United States, 17 million caretakers tend to 35 million cats (Humane Society of the United States).
- **Caretaker profile:** Caretakers range in age from 9 to 90, and they come from all walks of life. According to a survey conducted by Tufts University, the median age of the feral cat caretaker is 43.2 years.
- **Feral colonies:** Feral cats live in colonies where they congregate around a food source. Colonies typically number 10 to 30 cats.
- **The ferals' favored locations:** Feral cats live near dumpsters, in storm drains, alleys, vacated buildings, storage areas, warehouses, and behind restaurants and supermarkets.
- **TNR—the approved solution:** The humane method of trap, neuter and return (TNR) is the only successful, proven method of controlling the population growth of feral cats.
- **Championing the caretakers:** The primary purpose of the FCCC is to aggregate caretakers into an organization that is entirely focused on supporting their work with feral cats and kittens. With FCCC's assistance caretakers can join together to form a coalition to care for and implement humane solutions for population control and other important related issues.
- **Cost savings for taxpayers:** Hard numbers have been collected and analyzed by local authorities in several areas of the U.S. The conclusions consistently verify that the trap, neuter and return (TNR) method reduces costs to local governments. (Feral Cat Coalition, San Diego, CA)
- **The need for an informed public.** The public and local government presently lacks awareness that a humane solution to feral cat proliferation is available. This lack of information frustrates and impacts the work of caretakers, especially when property owners and local government officials make uneducated and inappropriate decisions involving inhumane and short-term solutions.
- **No feral cats your area?** Ferals usually forage at night. They may not venture forth to be seen during the day. They are wary of humans and this makes it difficult for them to be observed.

## The Constituencies We Serve

Our constituencies encompass the caretakers primarily, but also include animal enthusiasts, animal rights advocates, property owners and local government agencies. Our purpose is to work together with all concerned persons who are willing to be involved in solving this most pressing problem.

## Our Core Philosophies

The five points set forth below represent our core philosophies and drive the programs of the FCCC:

- Feral cats and kittens have a right to live and to be humanely treated and cared for.
- Provide managed long-term quality care in conjunction with trapping, neutering and return to home site for adult cats. (TNR) is the accepted and the best available method to control the feral cat population.
- Adult cats that are in jeopardy and the home site is not safe or available, must be relocated to appropriate places or sanctuaries.
- Kittens are taken from their colonies to continue their lives in adoptive homes.
- Implement solutions for the immediate and ongoing needs in supporting feral cat colonies.

### **TRAP, NEUTER/SPAY AND RETURN**

#### **THE ONLY HUMANE, PROVEN AND SUCCESSFUL METHOD OF FERAL CAT POPULATION CONTROL**

The costs associated with trapping and euthanasia of feral cats are prohibitive to local governmental agencies. Because of their undomesticated nature, ferals are not considered adoptable and are routinely destroyed in city and county animal shelters. Killing feral cats is inhumane as well as costly and does not solve the problem. The method of trapping, neutering, and returning (TNR) has been accepted and endorsed by municipal agencies, animal welfare organizations and the California Veterinary Association as the only successful, proven way to solve the problem of feral cat overpopulation.

## Feral Cat Caretakers and Their Needs

Sadly, the plight of the feral cat caretaker is under the radar screen of the media and local governments. Their service to the community is rarely, if ever, acknowledged in the local press. Local governments are for the most part unaware of the value of the service caretakers provide. Often, local officials, property owners and others, place obstacles in their path that can be insurmountable. The physical, financial and emotional stress of these dedicated citizens having to do honorable work under some of the most adverse conditions is incomprehensible. It is a sad reality that many caretakers are forced to operate in secret because of their fear of humiliation and chastisement by strangers or abuse and threats by landlords and officials, not only to them but to the cats they care for. Feral cats living outdoors are vulnerable and unprotected. Stringent laws are needed to protect them and their caretakers. Little education is available for the average citizen as to their plight and suffering.

The dedicated feral cat caretaker has few days off. Caretakers continue their daily chores, often helpless to change their situation for the better. If the landlords of the industrial or private property on which the feral cat colony resides decide they want to destroy the cats, the caretaker has no rights

and can do little to protect the colony from being destroyed. These unfortunate situations are all too common. A woman getting up in years, who is a responsible and dedicated caretaker, will often be viewed by the people in her community as an eccentric, troublesome old lady. Many of these anonymous, independent caretakers have barely enough money to feed themselves and yet they share their meager earnings or social security checks with the ferals they feed and care for. They have unselfishly opened their hearts.

Without the caretaker, feral cats will not be spayed, neutered, fed or cared for. Without the caretaker, what emerges, is not a responsible, well-maintained feral cat colony, but a group of starving, sickly cats and kittens, roaming the neighborhoods scavenging for food, seeking shelter and safety and reproducing at an uncontrolled rate. Male cats will mutilate each other over mates, hunting grounds, food sources, garbage containers and territory. The irony is that when uneducated persons attempt to destroy feral cat colonies, the vacuum created will be quickly filled by cats in adjacent areas. There will also be cats that could not be trapped, and they will continue to reproduce at random. Killing is not the answer. Caretaking with long-term management is the only successful and humane solution

### The Caretakers Supply the Link that Leads to the Solution

Solving the overpopulation of feral cats and improving their lives depends upon the dedication and commitment of caretakers to provide compassionate care while implementing humane population control. In turn, the caretakers' success in achieving these goals requires support, services, training, networking and supplemental resources to provide quality feral cat care and acceptable long term care alternatives.

### Our Unique Focus

Many, non-profit organizations that dedicate their efforts to improving the well being of animals, also include feral cats and kittens. The FCCC works with these organizations on behalf of animal welfare, no-kill and other humane animal population control measures.

Although many organizations worldwide include the feral cat, our organization exists for the specific purpose of recognizing the importance of the feral cat caretaker by providing support for their work on many levels and improving their status in the community. Our focus and commitment is to the feral cat caretakers.

### Our Vision for the Future

The FCCC is being eagerly welcomed by feral cat caretakers. The response to the FCCC by independent caretakers has been nearly overwhelming. A growing stream of communication through phone calls and E-mails come in daily from caretakers hungry for information and help in managing their colonies.

Over the long term, the FCCC is committed to educating the public about the significant role that caretakers play in the lives of feral cats and kittens. An important purpose of the FCCC is to create a national educational and information center. At present, the overwhelming majority of feral cat caretakers have no voice, no rights, little support and even less awareness from the general public.

The FCCC will represent and support these caring people and will disseminate valuable feral cat care information to the caretakers through our website, mailed pamphlets and a newsletter “The Voice of the Feral.”

Caretakers’ membership in the FCCC is a means of acknowledging and recognizing their official status as a caretaker in the communities they serve, locally and nationally. Membership in the FCCC will provide the unity needed for recognition of their status.

A national trap, neuter and return (TNR) program adopted by local governments that encourages, supports and acknowledges the feral cat caretakers’ pivotal role as vital in helping to ease the population explosion and provide compassionate and quality care for feral cats. The FCCC will be a significant voice in facilitating the adoption and implementation of these programs.

## Our Plans and Programs

### 1. To Support the Caretakers

- Training
  - Information center
  - Network for caretakers to share their experiences and information
  - Resources – food, traps, supplies and health care to ease the economic burden on caretakers
  - Hotline and emergency response capability
  - Legal stature and improved image
  - Certification
  - Credentialing and visual identification (logo, emblems, decals, badges)
  - Volunteer force to handle special needs
  - Intervention on behalf of caretakers
  - Communication through newsletters, conferences and meetings
- To Broaden Our Base of Resource Partners and Supporters
    - Manufacturers of cat food, pet accessories and supplies, medicine and nutritional supplement, and retail pet companies
    - Veterinarians and veterinary hospitals
    - Donors, grant issuing foundations, allied animal rights organizations
  - To Educate the Public and Advocate for the Interests of Feral Cat Caretakers
    - A unified voice
    - An outreach program to increase awareness of feral cats and caretakers needs
    - Education of the public concerning feral cat issues
    - Encouragement of responsible pet ownership
  - To Provide Legal Intervention and Provision for long-term Solutions
    - Model laws and regulations proposed for adoption by local governments
    - Caretaker rights advocacy
    - Negotiation with government entities and property developers/owners
    - Injunctions and other measures that facilitate caretakers’ work

## Immediate Needs and Next Steps

The near-term goals of the FCCC are basic: to relieve some of the crushing physical and financial burdens carried by the unsung, unrecognized heroes and heroines of this movement, the individual feral cat caretaker. Additionally, there are many people who would gladly assume the responsibility of humane long-term management of feral cats, but lack the means or know-how. A strong FCCC outreach program would provide support, education, public awareness and training.

We are currently operating at capacity. The limited capital of our growing organization has strained our operating resources and slowed our productivity. The e-mail and telephone calls for help have increased to the point where additional trained volunteers are needed to handle the complexity of circumstances that confront the caretakers who call. We are reaching out for support in all categories as well as added funding to strengthen our operating base, implement our plans and realize our mission.