

Management of feral domestic cats in the urban environment of Rome (Italy)

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Abstract

In Italy, which is rabies-free, the national Law No. 281 [Legge Nazionale 14 agosto 1991. No. 281: Legge Quadro in materia di animali di affezione e prevenzione del randagismo. Gazz. Uff. Rep. Ital. no 203 del 30 agosto 1991: p. 3] on the management of pets and on the control of feral cats has introduced the no-kill policy for this species. Thus, “trap-neuter-release” (TNR) programs have been carried out for >10 years. In this paper we present data on registered colonies and censused cats in Rome from 1991 to 2000; the results of the neutering campaign from 1991 to 2000; and a survey, on 103 cat colonies, on the effects of demographic control of urban feral-cat colonies in the city of Rome, carried out by the local Veterinary Public Services (VPS) in collaboration with the associations of cat care-takers. In 10 years almost 8000 were neutered and reintroduced in their original colony. The spay/neuter campaigns brought about a general decrease in cat number but the percentage of cat immigration (due to abandonment and spontaneous arrival) is around 21%. This suggests that all these efforts without an effective education of people to control the reproduction of house cats (as a prevention for abandonment) are a waste of money, time and energy.

Keywords: Cat care-takers; Domestic cat; Veterinary Public Services; Urban environment

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