



Winter 2024

SNIPPETS

News from the SD West River Spay/Neuter Coalition

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Layout: Donnette Thayer

TRAP, NEUTER, RELEASE

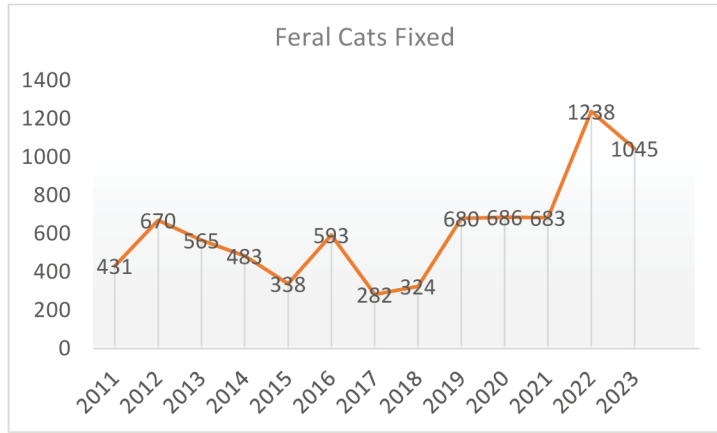
TNR - The Humane Solution to the Inhumane Act of Abandonment



Community cats fed, sheltered, happy, and fixed in their home

As the Coalition has become better known, we have received an increasing number of calls for help from caretakers with colonies of 5-30 cats. These folks often tell a similar story of a hungry “stray” (discarded) cat that showed up on their properties. Feeling sorry for those kitties, these kind people begin by setting out food, or maybe even providing a warm box if it’s winter. But almost overnight, that one cat turns into three adult “strays,” then five and more. After that come the kittens, and without human touch, they’re feral too. The caretaker becomes overwhelmed at the cost of feeding an ever-increasing number of cats. In the past, these kind folks had nowhere to turn for help to control “their” colonies. While limited food and lack of veterinary care provide a certain level of cruel control, TNR (trap, neuter, return) is the only humane solution.

In response to these calls for help, we provide traps and TNR training, along with substantial financial assistance for spay/neuter. Through TNR we have aided in fixing hundreds of cats in feral colonies throughout the Black Hills and surrounding plains, thus ending the cycle of suffering for those cats.



The graph above depicts Coalition efforts toward assisting caretakers with feral cat colonies. Once all of the cats in a colony have been fixed, there’s no more yowling, fighting and roaming the neighborhood in search of food, water, shelter or mates. With a reliable food source and a fear of humans, feral cats tend to stay in their own “community.” Although often blamed for killing birds, feral cats prefer to remain invisible during daylight hours when birds are visible and vulnerable. A guaranteed food source in a managed colony negates feral cats’ need to hunt to stay alive. 🐾

Contact us by mail or through our website or Facebook page

South Dakota West River Spay/Neuter Coalition
P.O. Box 286
Deadwood, SD 57732
605-593-5550

<https://spayneutercoalition.com/>



Like us on Facebook!
West River Spay Neuter Coalition



An unaltered female cat can produce **THREE LITTERS PER YEAR**. With average litter sizes ranging from **FOUR TO SIX KITTENS**

1 YEAR



a single unspayed female cat and her offspring can produce **MORE THAN 400,000** cats in their lifetime.

HAPPY TAILS

Loki and Louie:

Walking along a creek one September morning a woman heard frantic little meows, and saw a tiny kitten high on a tree branch overhanging a creek. She contacted our trapper Connie and together they rescued two 5-week-old kittens that were "just skin and bones." Put into foster care, Loki and Louie



thrived and were soon adopted. Connie's efforts to trap the mom cat were hindered by skunks going into the traps, but after considerable effort, she caught the cat, had her spayed, and found her a good barn home.



Bunny: After Sandy trapped four kittens who had taken up residence under her mobile home, she thought she had caught them all. Oddly, for the next two days she kept hearing tiny, frantic meows coming up through her floor. Sandy recruited a friend to crawl under the trailer, and there she found a tiny kitten hanging upside down with a back leg tangled in nylon insulation threading. Realizing the severity of injury to the kitten's leg, Sandy contacted the Coalition asking what she should do. We called Dr. Vicki (Cook Veterinarian Clinic), who treated little Bunny with antibiotics and anti-inflammatory meds. Unfortunately, the kitten's leg necrotized and had to be amputated. Bunny went to a foster home with one of her siblings for company. All was well until a week later when the kitten contracted FIP and wasn't expected to live. Bunny's foster mom, Rane, refused to give up, keeping the kitten by her side day and night, giving her hourly medication and lots of TLC. Thanks to Rane's diligent care, Bunny began to perk up, and miraculously, a month later she had fully recovered. Due to their strong bond, Rane adopted both Bunny and her sibling.



Bunny before (left) and after life-saving amputation surgery

The term "community cats" refers to those that are homeless, whether tame/abandoned, feral, or stray/lost.

Sunshine: A very hungry, pregnant cat showed up at Nikita's door, and feeling sorry for her, Nikita took her in. Just four days later, the cat she named Sunshine produced SEVEN kittens. The following week a friend called Nikita saying that her cat had been killed by a car, leaving four 2-week old kittens. Not sure that Sunshine would accept the kittens, Nikita placed them outside her box. Without hesitation, Sunshine hopped out, picked up the kittens one by one and put them in bed with her own babies. We worried about Sunshine with 11 kittens and offered to search for a new foster mom, but Sunshine had already bonded with "her" new babies.

Super cat-mom Nikita reports that Sunshine and her kittens are all fixed and placed in happy homes!



Here's Sunshine the super mom nursing 11 kittens!



Phoebe: Kind-hearted rescuer Connie found 5-week-old Phoebe all alone in a yard with no mama or other kittens around. She sent out a call for help on the Coalition's Facebook page, and in no time at all, Coalition volunteer Rane stepped up. Rane provided Connie with formula, kitten slurry, calorie paste, and bottles, along with vital training on caring for a young

kitten. In Phoebe's case, this also included providing the weakened Phoebe with life-giving fluids under her skin. Connie noted that Phoebe responded quickly to the fluid treatment, saying "I believe that [the subcutaneous fluid bolus] alone has brought her around; she just got finished eating four syringe-fulls of kitty slurry." Connie and Phoebe formed a strong bond, and now Phoebe has a wonderful forever home with her rescuer Connie. Way to go, Connie, Rane, and especially Phoebe! ●

HAPPY TAILS - CAT COLONIES EDITION

Country Road Colony:

This road runs north of Hwy. 90 from Rapid City to Box Elder, and serves as a major "dumping ground" for cats. The Coalition has stabilized several colonies along this stretch, each one with a dedicated caretaker who calls us when a new cat shows up. We average altering 2-3 newcomer cats per month from the various Country Road controlled colonies.



60 adult cats. Additionally, she recruited volunteers to foster and tame feral kittens, and to find homes for them and tame cats. Connie told us "If you want to do something that makes you feel you're making a huge difference in this cruel world, help a cat colony. You won't be disappointed! Jump in with both feet and don't look back."



Big Horn: A concerned resident in a rural area north of Rapid contacted us about helping her deal with the large number of homeless cats in her neighborhood. With traps borrowed from the Coalition, she caught and had altered 27 cats! Wow! She provides food and shelter for the cats and continues to watch for newcomers.

Winner Colonies: Felicia continues to head up a major TNR effort in her town. So far, she and her cohorts, with the help of the Animal Clinic in Winner and the Coalition, have altered 431 of the town's community cats



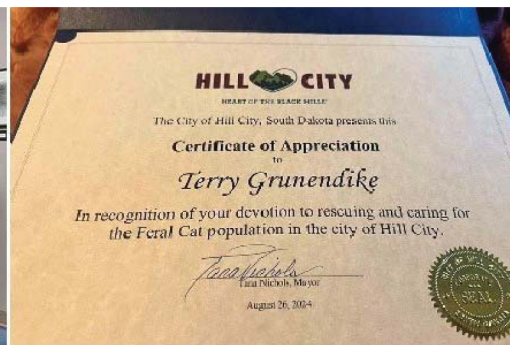
Newcastle and Surrounding Area Colonies:

Our dedicated volunteer, Ginger, continues to do TNR in the area. In the meantime, she helps caretakers maintain their stabilized colonies, ten of which are located along Hwy. 16 from Newcastle to Hill City. Ginger and her volunteers tallied 400 cats fixed in the past 18 months! She also educates people about the importance of spay/neuter and trains volunteers on doing TNR. She and her volunteers foster and adopt out cats, including an impressive number of feral cats doing well in barn homes. Ginger could not have accomplished all that she has without the vital help of Drs. Lindsey and David Sudbrink, Salt Creek Veterinary Clinic, who are passionate about helping feral and abandoned cats.



Folsom Gumbo Colony: About 3 years ago in a rural area just south of Rapid City, Connie noticed a number of skinny cats and kittens hanging out by an abandoned house, some with noticeable injuries. Alarmed, she immediately set out food, and soon after attended a meeting in the closest town where she described the situation. At the meeting, she asked for help, and town officials said yes! Connie recruited a few volunteers, and so far they have trapped around

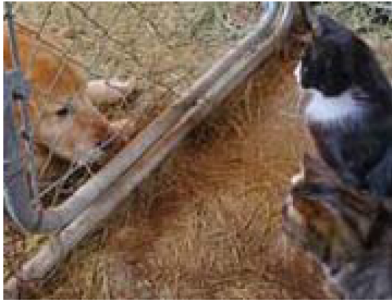
Hill City Colonies: If you follow our Facebook page, you'll find many stories submitted by Terry, a major rescuer! She said it all started 14 years ago when she spotted a feral mama cat with a sickly kitten. She caught the kitten, but it died despite her efforts. This hit Terry hard, and she set out on a mission. To date she has rescued over 400 cats and kittens in Hill City and had them fixed with help from the Coalition. Her efforts include finding folks to foster, domesticate and adopt cats and kittens. She also talks to local pet owners about the benefits of spay/neuter and refers those needing financial help to the Coalition. Recently Terry received a Certificate of Appreciate from the Mayor of Hill City that states: "In recognition of your devotion to rescuing and caring for the feral cat population in Hill City." While continuing with TNR, Terry is working with the town to find a short term recovery area for recently altered feral cats with hopes of expansion.



Continued on page 3

HAPPY TAILS - COLONIES EDITION

Continued from page 4



Good Sam Colony: This colony is located at an assisted-living facility in Rapid City where the seniors like to feed the homeless cats that hang out on the grounds. Denise, who has parents living at the facility, noticed during her visits that the number of cats

kept increasing. Although they had food, the cats had no shelter, so Denise set up straw-filled boxes and began doing TNR. So far, she has trapped 14 cats, finding vetted homes for tame adults, fostering and taming feral kittens, and relocating older kittens to barn homes. Here are Tig and Tux acclimating to their new home and their job of patrolling the barn and property for rodents. Homer the pup loves cats and cheers them on in their work!

Various Area Colonies: Lynn Irons, DVM of Noah's Ark partnered with us spring 2022. Dr. Irons's passion is preventing unwanted litters, whether it's one feral cat or a colony of 50. Most of the clients we send her way are from the Rapid City area, although she willingly fixes ferals from nearby rural dumping grounds. She also has provided emergency medical assistance for feral cats needing help. Dr. Irons altered 200 cats through the Coalition this year, and as of this writing, the year isn't over! ◆



Thank You, Volunteers!

Rapid City: Shari Rose, Heidi Herren. Christy Land, Jamie Al-Haj, Nancy Capriotti-Smith, Raneec McFarland Haglund

Lead: Donna Watson

Deadwood: Sarah McEvoy, Donnette Thayer

Belle Fourche: Carol Markeson, Beth Morey, Sandy Kringen

Sturgis: Carmen & Paula @ Rushmore Office Supply

Newcastle: Ginger Field

Thank You!

Another great big thank you to Rushmore Office Supply!

Carmen, Paula, and Bryce of Rushmore Office Supply (Sturgis) work hard to make our Black Hills community a happier place for both human beings and kitties. We think they do beautiful print work, too, and wouldn't go anywhere else for our newsletter! Please support this vital Black Hills business.

Yes, I want to help.

My gift amount is: _____

My gift is given (optional)

- In memory of (deceased - cats OK!): _____
- In honor of (living - cats OK!): _____
- I would like my gift to be anonymous.

Your name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Please make your checks payable to **South Dakota West River Spay/Neuter Coalition.**

Send to: **The Coalition, P.O. Box 286, Deadwood, SD 57732**

Donate online at facebook.com/WestRiverSpayNeuterCoalition or spayneutercoalition.com



REDUCED COST SPAY/NEUTER CLINICS/VOUCHERS

Keep this handy guide for furry friends in need!

CLINICS:

Belle Fourche Veterinary Clinic holds clinics twice a year averaging 8 females/15 males each.

Faith Veterinary Service holds one huge clinic each summer, altering up to 50 cats.

Cook Veterinary Service in Rapid City hosts monthly clinics fixing eight females and 10-16 males.

LFC Veterinary Service provides help with the majority of calls from Rapid City, where we most desperately need participating vets. To fill the gap, Doc Splichal travels from Custer to Rapid City monthly. At an off-site clinic he alters cats in a spare room at a business owned by wonderful volunteers Kevin & Kathy. Volunteer Heidi set up a surgery area, turning her grooming table into a surgical table, and assists with surgeries. Other volunteers take turns helping, including Shari, Brandi, Raneer and Tina. Where there's a will, there's a way.

VOUCHERS:

Through our custom voucher system created and maintained by dedicated volunteer Donnette Thayer, we continue to provide tailored financial assistance for alteration of domestic and feral cats. Presently we have 15 veterinarian offices throughout the Hills, on the eastern plains and in Wyoming participating in our voucher program, although only one in Rapid City, and their work is limited to feral cats only.

SIGN-UP

Clients can reach us by telephone (this is a message service; we are all volunteers and try to respond as quickly as possible) or by completing an online pre-registration form so that a volunteer can call back and discuss what option works best for the client and their kitties.

Phone: 605-593-5550

Pre-register: spayneutercoalition.com/register_form.html



OUR AMAZING PARTICIPATING VETERINARIANS



Whether in a large populated area or a rural setting, every vet is vital to our success. Our dedicated vet partners provide crucial support through honoring spay/neuter vouchers, holding reduced cost spay/neuter clinics and occasionally providing urgent medical help.

Animal Clinic LTD, Winner, SD: Veterinarians Laura Rawlings, DVM and Tom Covey, DVM joined us two years ago in an effort to control the town's community cats through TNR.

Belle Fourche Veterinary Clinic, Belle Fourche, SD: Bill Marlatt, DVM, along with Sue and staff, have been helping the Coalition for over 15 years. In addition to honoring vouchers from area residents, they hold two reduced cost spay/neuter clinics each year for low-income clients.

Community Veterinary Clinic, Gillette, WY: This clinic has a reduced cost community spay/neuter program for low-income cat guardians, and accepts Coalition vouchers for those with tame or feral cats who cannot afford this cost.

Cook Veterinary Clinic, Rapid City SD: Since 2012, Vicki Cook, DVM, has been holding one clinic a month fixing an average of 8 females and 10-16 males. She has also donated her time on several occasions to care for seriously injured cats.

Crook County Veterinary Services, Sundance WY: This vet office partnered with us in 2022, accepting vouchers for low-income cat guardians.

Faith Veterinary Service, Faith, SD: Since 2019 this vet office has partnered with the Coalition to provide low cost spay/neuter. Each year in early spring, they hold a huge spay/neuter clinic for about 50 cats. The office also accepts vouchers, generally from local farmers and ranchers.

Golden Vet Services, Milesville, SD: James Stangle, DVM began accepting our vouchers January 2021 mostly from area ranchers wanting to fix barn cats.

LFC Veterinary Service, Custer, SD: Dick (Doc) Splichal, DVM and Kathy, his wife and helpmate, have been assisting the Coalition since summer 2019. Earlier this year, he began driving to Rapid City once a month to do an offsite clinic. At this point, Doc averages altering 60 Coalition referred cats a month. Way to go, Doc Splichal!

Noah's Ark Animal Hospital, Rapid City, SD: Lynn Irons, DVM contacted us in late spring of 2022 about the joining the Coalition with a strong interest in helping feral cats. In addition to altering ferals, Dr. Irons has saved the lives of quite a few trapped cats exhibiting serious medical issues or injuries.

Northern Hills Veterinary Clinic, Sturgis, SD: Dedicated veterinarians at this clinic have been honoring vouchers for the Coalition since 2009!

Salt Creek Vet Clinic, Newcastle, WY: Lindsey Marrotte-Sudbrink, DVM and husband David Sudbrink, DVM, began accepting vouchers in 2021 to fix area feral cats. To date they have altered 763 cats throughout the area, including colonies all the way from Hill City to Newcastle and beyond.

Spearfish Animal Hospital, Spearfish, SD: David Elsom, DVM and his staff have been helping us since 2019, originally holding clinics 3 times a year and presently honoring vouchers.

Sturgis Veterinary Hospital & Equine Center: From 2022-2024 these great vets accepted vouchers for domestic and feral cats. Unfortunately, a reduced staff forced them to leave the program, but not before altering 359 cats. ●

OUR BESTIES

Shout out to the Coalition's coalition



When we founded the Coalition in 2006, no other organizations offered reduced cost spay/neuter for cats and limited services were available for dogs. Additionally, area shelters routinely placed pets without fixing the adoptees or ensuring that they would be fixed later. Over time, other folks in the area also became aware of the problem of too many pets and too few homes, and we cheered when other non-profit animal welfare organizations in western SD began to focus on saving lives through spay and neuter. Shout out to **Operation Pets, Inc., Oglala Pet Project, A Place for Meow (APFM), Twin City Animal Shelter, the Battle Mountain Humane Society (BMHS) and Save Them All Rescue Services (STARS)**. Eventually APFM, STARS and BMHS also initiated TNR programs. We maintain open communication with these non-profit groups by referring calls where appropriate, sharing facebook posts, and providing hands-on assistance when needed. We firmly believe that by working together we can save the lives of more cats and dogs. ●

A truly feral cat avoids human contact and cannot be touched.

FOUR YEARS OF FELINE FEISTA FUN!



Christy Land, owner, The Wine Cellar Restaurant

CINCO DE MEOW. For the fourth year, Christy Land has sponsored a fantastic fundraiser at her Wine Cellar Restaurant in Rapid City. She solicited many generous donations for the silent auction, and provided snacks and drinks. This event not only raises funds for our spay/neuter program, it provides Christy with an opportunity to raise community awareness by promoting the importance of spay and neuter to save pet lives. A dedicated animal lover, Christy finds time when not running her restaurant to rescue, foster and place cats and the occasional dog. ●

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Saving Shelter Lives Through Spay/Neuter

We love sharing stories about the grateful kitties we work with, and the heroic volunteers and caregivers who help them, but our mission is to save lives through spay and neuter, and nothing tells that story better than the numbers. Back in 2007, when we started keeping track of fixes and their impact on shelter statistics, the Humane Society of the Black Hills (HSBH) reported over two thousand cats euthanized. Last year, this number was down to 600, representing a reduction in shelter deaths by about 75%. We are grateful to HSBH for their transparency and for being the only open-admission shelter in the Hills, a challenging and important service. While we can't claim that spay/neuter is the only reason for this reduction, we like the trend the numbers are taking. We believe we are making a difference with the help of our generous donors, hard-working veterinarians, and dedicated volunteers.

