

## **Riverside County Department of Animal Services' Community Cat Program**

Nearly three-quarters of cats who enter our nation's animal shelters each year are killed. Most are free-roaming, stray or feral cats, referred to as community cats. Although some of these cats are adoptable, many more are not. And for unadoptable cats, a trip to the shelter is often fatal.

Riverside County Department of Animal Services (RCDAS) had a save rate for cats of approximately 20% currently it approaches 40% thanks to the community cat program in the Coachella Valley. For this reason, RCDAS is partnering with Best Friends Animal Society to implement a Community Cat Program in western Riverside County.

### **Description of Program:**

Trap-neuter-return (TNR) entails trapping, neutering or spaying, vaccinating, and returning community cats to their original outdoor locations. It is not only the most humane method of preventing cats from entering the shelter system, it may be the most effective.

TNR also ensures the cats' health and welfare. Once these cats are sterilized and vaccinated, they can live healthy, happy lives in their communities, where caring residents look out for them. Sterilization and vaccination provide a public health benefit to the community, too, a vast improvement over the failed trap-and-kill approach that has been used for generations.

### **Program Details:**

RCDAS has already been working with Best Friends on a successful Community Cat Program (CCP) out in the Coachella Valley. Our goal is to expand this program to all RCDAS service areas. The proposed expansion will be a three-year partnership with Best Friends, who will embed their employees to work in RCDAS shelters' and run the program, as well as train our staff and volunteers. At the end of the three years, the program will be handed off to RCDAS to run and sustain.

### **Program Goals:**

- Spay/neuter 30,450 community cats over three years covering all RCDAS service areas
- Reduce shelter deaths for cats at RCDAS by 58%
- Increase the collective save rate for cats at the Jurupa Valley, San Jacinto, and Blythe campuses to 90% by 2022 (currently at 32% collectively)

### **Best Friends will:**

- Contribute 2-7 staff members during the program term
- Fund 2 Registered Veterinary Technicians and 1 Veterinarian
- Supply program and informational materials
- Provide transport vehicles, up to 6, for the program that will be donated to RCDAS after the program's scope with Best Friends ends
- Cover the costs of program supplies

### Best Friends has already contributed:

- 2 staff at the Western Riverside County/City Animal Shelter
- Funds of \$150,000 to cover staff members and surgical expenses
- One transport vehicle
- Consulting expertise

### Impact of the Community Cat Program at the Coachella Valley Animal Campus:

RCDAS has been partnering with Best Friends on a three year community cat program in the Coachella Valley. From the point of initiation to now the program has led to a decrease in the numbers of cats impounded, decrease in cats euthanized, and a drastic increase in lives saved (Table 1).

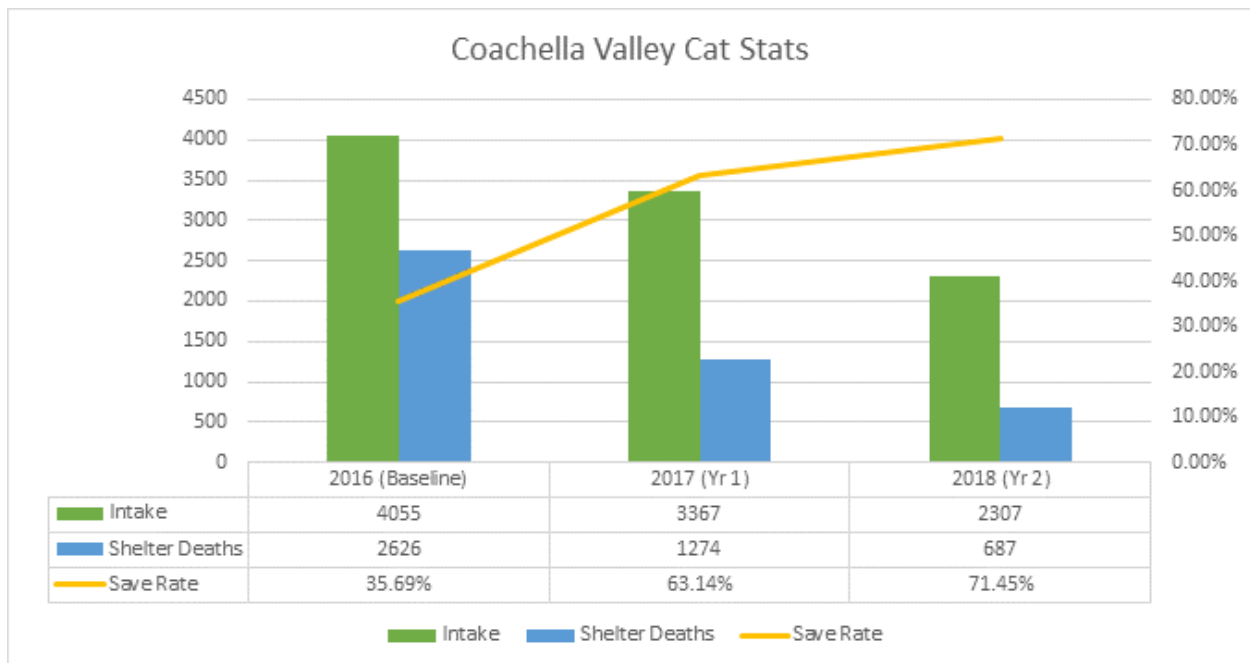
#### 2016 Baseline:

- Cat intake: **4055\***
- Cats euthanized: 2626
- Save rate: 35.69%

#### 2018 Year Two Data:

- Cat intake: **2307\***
- Cats euthanized: 687
- Save rate: 71.4

Table 1. Graph depicting impact of CCP at Coachella Valley Animal Campus.



\* The CCP in Coachella Valley not only increased the save rate for cats dramatically, it also significantly reduced shelter cat impounds.

## Impact of Spay Neuter Activities in Riverside County

Based on data calculated over a five year period, RCDAS has prevented an estimated 635,359 (Table 2) pets from being born in our communities. Through actively targeting spay/neuter activities and enforcement of dog licensing, the numbers of pets coming into Riverside County Shelters has gradually declined over the past 10 years (Table 3). This translates into cost savings for taxpayers through preventing these animals from overburdening our shelters. Other sources have determined that the numbers of births prevented would be even greater. See examples below from the Humane Society of the United States and other organizations (Figures 1 and 2).

**Table: 2 – Pet Births prevented by spay/neuter**

Pet Births Prevented by Spay/Neuter with Compounding						
Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
Surgeries Performed	13951	13860	15774	14822	15007	
Pet Births Prevented	20926	31389	78268	152893	262689	
		20790				
			23661			
				22233		
					22510	
	20926	52179	101929	175126	285199	635,359

\* Prevented birth calculated by 50% of the surgery population represented as female, with a litter survival rate of three ( $Sx/2 \times 3 = n$ ).

\* Compounded by prevented births from previous year/s divided by two (50% female) times three (litter survival rate) added to the next year's prevented births ( $Pb/2 \times 3 = n + Sx/2 \times 3 = n$ ).

**Table 3: Reduction in dog impounds to Riverside County Shelters from 2008-2018**

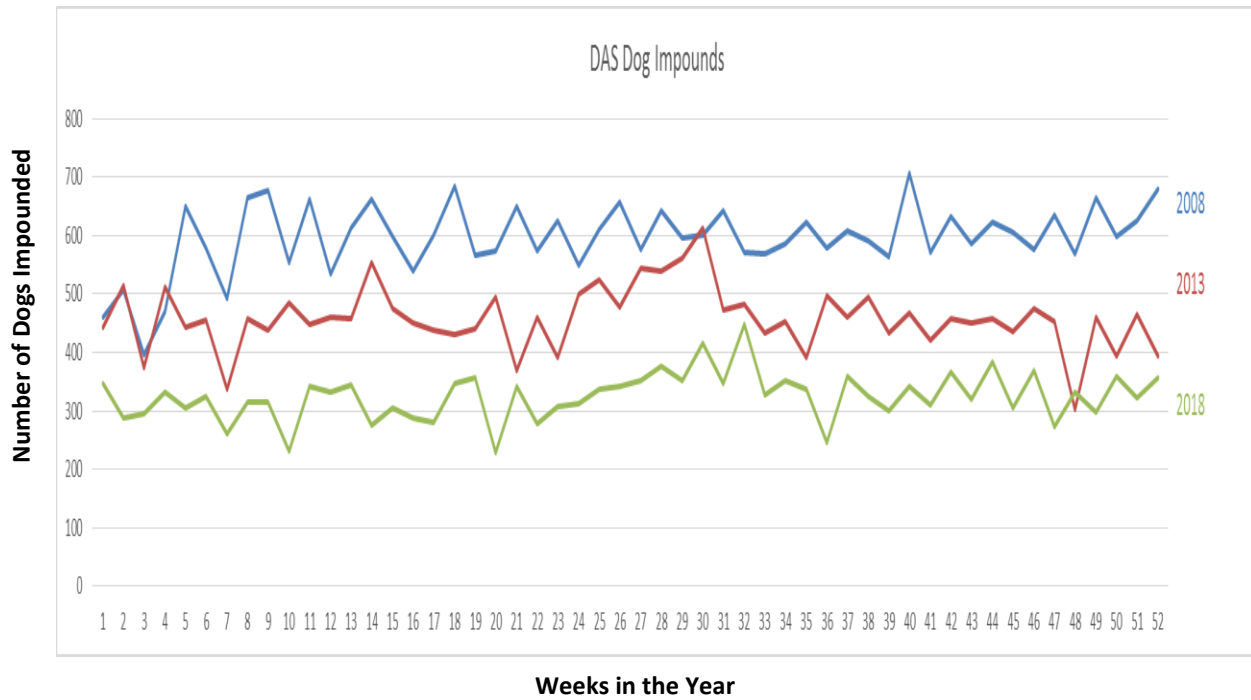


Figure 1: Humane Society of the United States Cat Reproduction Poster

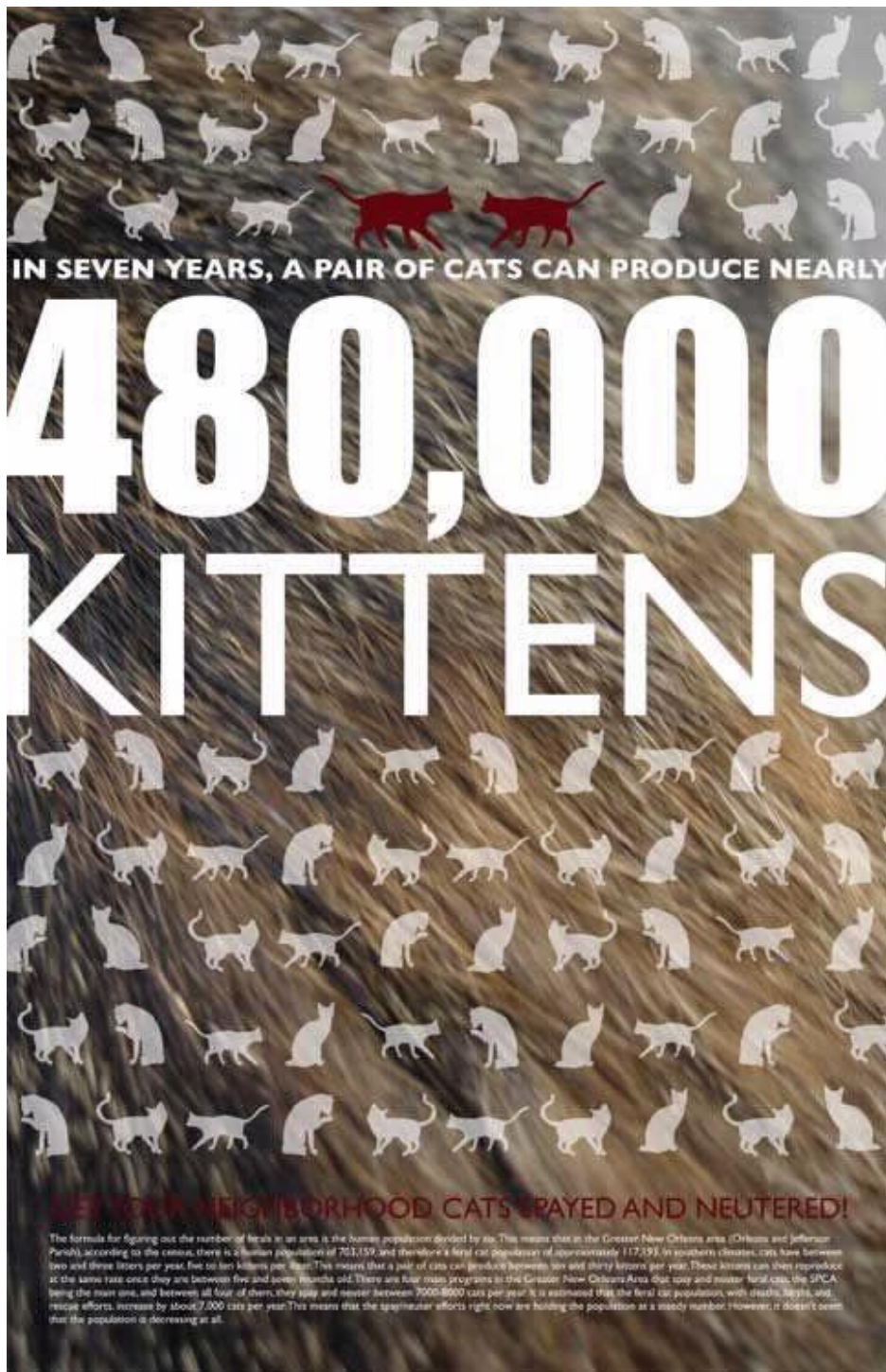


Figure 2: Cat Reproduction Poster

