



Fast Facts

Feral Cats and the Vacuum Effect

Removing cats from an area by killing or relocating is not only cruel, it's pointless. Here's why:

- **Outdoor cats choose to make their homes where they find food and shelter.**

Studies show removing feral cats from these areas creates a “vacuum effect”: Cats from neighboring areas move into the newly available space to take advantage of food and shelter. These cats soon begin to breed to capacity. Before long, just as many cats can be found in the area as were there before. **Scientific research has observed the vacuum effect across many species.**



- **Removing cats from an area is a futile effort—one that cannot succeed.**

Municipalities engaged in any type of catch and kill efforts are fighting a cruel, endless, losing battle against nature that is a gross waste of taxpayer dollars.

- **One of the few documented efforts to remove a population of cats by catch and kill occurred on a uninhabited (sub-Antarctic) island: Marion Island.**

It took 19 years of ruthless methods—methods impossible to recreate in areas inhabited by people, such as introducing disease and poisoning—to clear the island of cats. Over those 19 years, scientists noticed that when cats were cleared from a “preferred” area of the island, cats from another area took their place. In other words, even as scientists worked to kill the cats, they observed the vacuum effect.

- **Trap-Neuter-Return avoids the vacuum effect.**

Trap-Neuter-Return stabilizes the population, which then decreases over time. It also improves the cats' health by ending the stresses associated with mating and pregnancy.

For more detailed information, see the Alley Cat Allies Fact Sheet “The Vacuum Effect: Why Catch and Kill Doesn't Work” or visit alleycat.org/VacuumEffectScience.