

Shelly Kotter

Campaign Specialist, Focus on Felines

As the national campaign specialist for Best Friends Animal Society's Focus on Felines campaign, Shelly Kotter advises communities across the country on humane methods of dealing with cat overpopulation.

Focus on Felines partners with grassroots organizations and municipalities around the country to help achieve a time when there are No More Homeless Pets. With 72% of the cats who enter shelters being killed, the campaign aims to keep feral cats out of the shelter system by implementing trap/neuter/return (TNR) programs, relocating at-risk "community" cats, and establishing microchip programs.



Shelly has worked at Best Friends since 1998 and has played a pivotal role in defining its unique stance on the free-roaming cats generally known as "ferals." Best Friends refers to these cats as "community cats," because no one description fits all free-roaming cats and because the solution to their plight rests with individual communities.

In her capacity as national campaign specialist, Shelly guides a number of local model programs across the country, including the following:

- Southern Utah Four Directions Community Cat Program maintains colonies of more than 4,500 cats across southern Utah and northern Arizona.
- Feral Freedom is a pioneering partnership between public and private animal shelters, Best Friends, and animal control in the city of Jacksonville, Florida, to stop the killing of feral cats. More than 8,000 cats have been sterilized and returned to their colonies through this program.
- Fix Nation, located in Los Angeles, is the first full-time spay/neuter clinic dedicated primarily to serving feral cat caregivers and implementing TNR county-wide.
- Three cities in southern Utah have embraced TNR as a direct result of Shelly's presentation and have dedicated city funds to help pay for their community cat programs.
- One major casino in Las Vegas participated in a Best Friends pilot program to employ TNR for its resident cat colonies. Based on that success, other major casinos are now embracing the concept and funding their own TNR for their community cats.

For Shelly, the most rewarding thing about her job is helping people make a difference in their own neighborhoods and communities and teaching them to take the right steps. Among her notable successes: Shelly helped the tiny community of Randolph, Iowa, to take leadership in solving their situation of a "runaway stray cat population." Word spread, and Shelly has since been contacted by numerous rural communities for advice. After the Iowa floods of 2008, Shelly was asked to conduct a TNR program in Oakville, Iowa, which was completely destroyed, leaving hundreds of barn cats behind.

Interview Topics

Shelly is prepared to speak with media regarding a wide range of subjects related to cats, including:

- Benefits of trap/neuter/return (and maintain), and how to conduct a successful program
- How to successfully relocate free-roaming cats
- How to help cat populations on America's college campuses

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Best Friends Animal Society
Campaign Specialist: Focus on Felines
(435) 644-2001, ext. 4619
(435) 689-1221 (cell)
(435) 644-2087 (fax)
shellyk@bestfriends.org