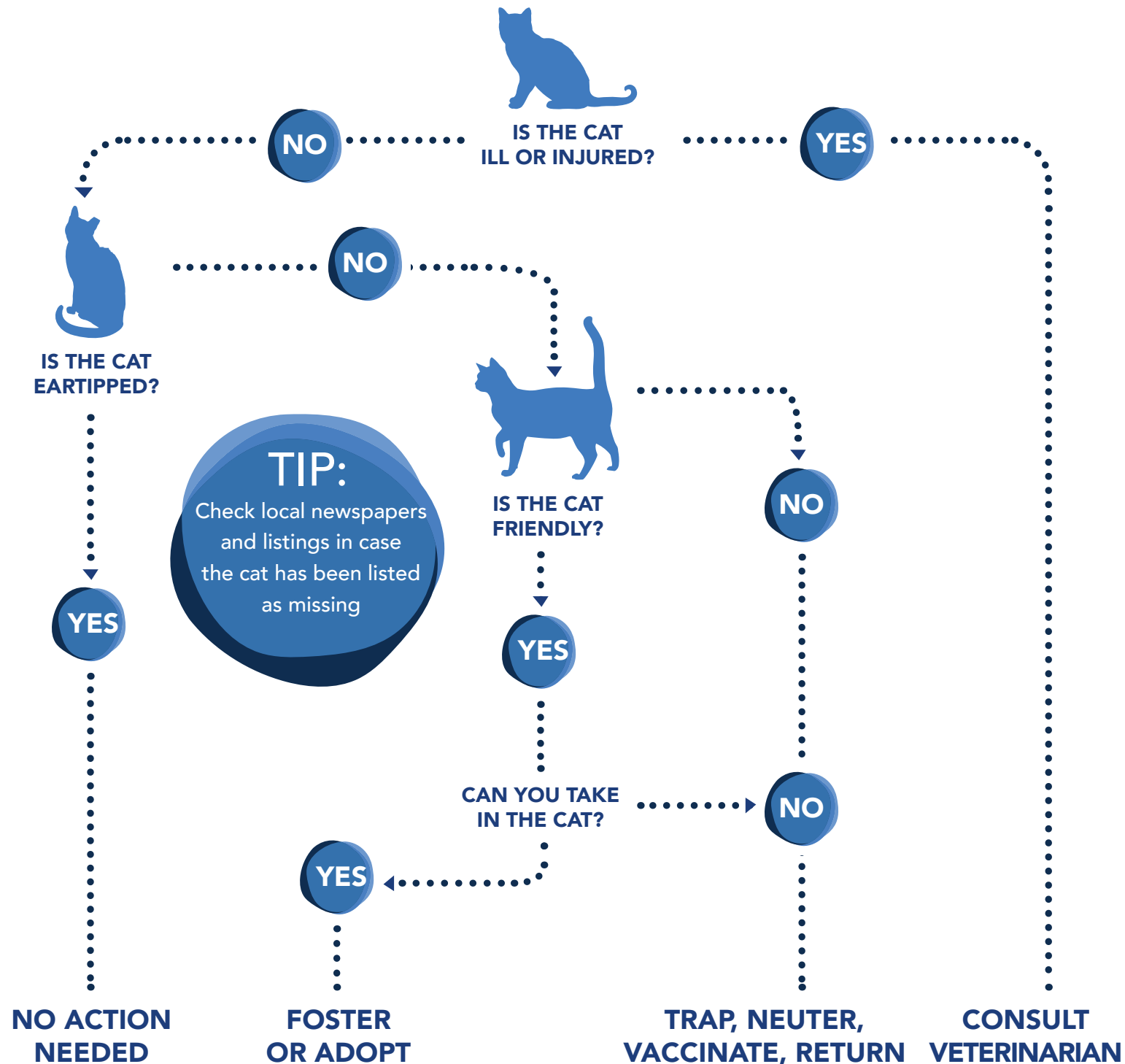


HELP, I FOUND A CAT OUTDOORS!

Found a cat? Follow North Shore Animal League America's guide to find out what to do next. Before you do anything, it is important to think about whether the cat you've found is a stray, a feral or an owned cat. If they appear well-groomed and is a healthy weight, they may have an owner nearby.



COMMUNITY CAT FAQs

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CAT?

A community cat is a stray or feral cat that lives outside in the community. These cats may live in groups (called colonies), with one or two other cats, or they may be alone. They normally set up their home near a food source.

WHAT IS A FERAL CAT?

A feral cat is a cat that isn't domesticated. They have spent their life outdoors without ever being touched or socialized by a human. Feral cats may be fed by a kind person, but have no other type of interaction nor do they seek the attention of people. The majority of feral cats cannot be rehabilitated. Don't worry, they are used to surviving and living outdoors. Often if brought indoors, a feral cat will either shut down or act out — they really are happier outside.

WHAT IS A STRAY CAT?

A stray cat is a cat that at one time or another lived with, and was cared for by people. They may have been abandoned or perhaps got lost. Usually stray cats are leery of people, but with time and patience can learn to trust again. Some stray cats will actually seek you out, almost like they are asking for help!





WHAT IS TNVR?



Trap



Neuter



Vaccinate



Return

TNVR stands for trap, neuter, vaccinate, return. Good Samaritans, as well as animal shelters and rescue organizations, humanely trap community cats, neuter or spay, ear tip, vaccinate and then return the cats back to where they were found.

For years, community cats were trapped and taken to shelters as a way to control the population. That practice resulted in a vacuum effect. The feral cats were deemed not adoptable and faced certain euthanasia. Meanwhile, new cats took the place of the old ones, and with no territorial felines to prevent new cats from moving in, the colony grew. Female cats were not spayed, and reproduced at a prodigious rate. Additionally, the cats were not vaccinated, enabling disease to move through the colony, and creating a public health issue. Clearly this old way of thinking was ineffective and inhumane.

With TNR, friendly cats are identified and rehomed, while the cats returned to their colonies live healthier lives, reducing public health concerns. And year after year, the colony will continue to decrease in size.

WHY IS THAT COMMUNITY CAT MISSING PART OF ITS EAR?

An ear tip — also known as a notch — is a universal sign that the cat has been TNVR'd. Community cats receive an ear tip/notch during their spay/neuter surgery. The marking enables colony caretakers and other members of the community to identify these cats visually, and also makes it easier to spot any new additions to the colony or neighborhood.



HOW DO I LIVE WITH COMMUNITY CATS?

Community cats are just going about their life. They want to reside where it's safe, and where they can find food and shelter. Rather than try to fight what you may consider a problem, look at it in a new light. These cats have a struggle to survive, and receiving care from kind humans makes a profound difference in their lives.



Find out if there is a TNVR program in your neighborhood. If there isn't, why not start one? You can at least TNVR the cats that are living on your property or close by. Speak with your neighbors and get them involved; do it together! TNVR will put an end to unwanted litters and keep the community cats healthier. It will also eliminate behavior such as yowling and most fighting, since the females will be spayed.



Community cats that are fed daily are less likely to kill area wildlife. Full bellies equal peaceful cats.



To prevent digging in flower beds, you can use nonhazardous deterrents such as fresh coffee grounds or citrus peels. If neighbors complain about cats in their yard, you can deter the cats humanely for little cost, using things like motion-activated sprinklers.



If you want to eliminate paw prints on your vehicle, use a car cover or plastic carpet mats with the pointy side up. Don't worry, the points don't hurt! They just feel funny to the cats and keep them off the vehicle. These can work on lawn furniture and in gardens, too!

HOW CAN I HELP?

If you find it is your calling to care for the cats in your neighborhood, most importantly: thank you! You will be surprised at how much you grow to love your outdoor friends, even if you can't touch them.



First off, TNVR the cats! This can't be stressed enough.



If you come across friendlies, always check the neighborhood to make sure the cat doesn't belong to someone. You would be surprised how owned cats will hang around for a free meal! If you determine the friendly cat doesn't have a home, then contact your local shelters and rescue organizations. Please don't be deterred or upset if they are unable to help. Many shelters and rescue organizations are overcrowded and don't always have space to take in more cats. You can also become the cat's advocate and work to find the perfect home, just be sure to screen potential adopters carefully.



Provide your new friends with a healthy diet of both dry and canned food if you are able. You can make a feeding station where the cats will be fed at specific times. After they are done eating, pick the food bowls up so not to attract bugs and wildlife. Feeding at set times will also create a routine for your cats; you'll start to notice they are there before you!



Leave fresh water available for the cats.



Place feral houses in low traffic areas, away from people and other animals so the cats feel secure. (Also, if you have neighbors who don't care for community cats, they won't see the houses and remove them.) The dwellings can be purchased or made, simple or elaborate, it's up to you! Use straw in the houses instead of hay or cloth, which can become damp and moldy.