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## Here, kitty, kitty: Administration says feral cats can stay



Courtesy

As an initiative to stabilize the number of feral felines on campus, the Feral Cat Management Program (FCaMP) was implemented in 2002 at the NMSU main campus. (Top Left) An FCaMP volunteer sets a cat trap. The cat traps used on campus are spring-loaded and do not cause harm to the animals. (Bottom Left) A group of feral cats preparing for surgery are kept covered to keep them calm.

## Volunteers ensure survival and health of campus cats

DUSTIN EDWARDS  
NEWS REPORTER

New Mexico State University is the home of the Aggies, but its campus has also become home to other residents: undomesticated cats.

As an initiative to stabilize the number of feral felines on campus, the Feral Cat Management Program (FCaMP) was implemented in 2002 on the NMSU main campus. FCaMP is a small, non-profit organization that conducts a Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) program on campus. According to the FCaMP Web site, TNR is a process where FCaMP volunteers trap unidentified cats, after which the cats are sterilized and checked for fatal diseases. A cat that has undergone the TNR process is identified by having a notch tipped out of its left ear.

The FCaMP Web site states that once the TNR process is completed, the cats are returned back to campus, "where they will live out their lives."

Michelle Corella, FCaMP program director, said approximately 200 cats have undergone the TNR process and nearly 60 cats have been adopted.

In addition to the TNR process, FCaMP provided the on-campus cat population with feeding stations, which are placed in various places around campus.

Corella said FCaMP volunteers supply fresh food and water for the cat colony

seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Due to people who are opposed to having cats on campus, Corella said FCaMP does not advertise where the feeding stations are located.

Corella explained that college campuses provide a "good haven for cats to flock to."

She added that similar conditions exist on college campuses around the nation. She said foliage and availability of food and water make campuses a prime breeding ground for cats.

Corella said the NMSU community is mostly supportive of FCaMP's initiative.

"People on college campuses are more accepting," Corella said.

Corella said prior to the inception of FCaMP, feral cats were maintained by a different approach, known as Trap Remove Kill (TRK).

Corella explained the cats were collected by NMSU groundsmen and taken to the animal humane society, where the cats were euthanized.

Due to the territorial nature of cats, Corella said this approach led to more cats on campus because cats breed as a survival mechanism.

"If cats are sterilized, they are not breeding anymore," Corella said. "What we are doing now is working."

With the implementation of the TNR program, Corella said the on-campus cat population has since declined.

"The [cat] population is healthier,"

Corella said. "The numbers are not increasing."

Corella added the number of new kitten litters on campus has dropped from about 12 in 2002, to just two this year.

Corella said some people do not support FCaMP's cause and that for some people, re-releasing the cats back on campus "does not make sense."

Corella said the NMSU administration approves FCaMP's initiative. She said Ben Woods, senior vice president for planning, physical resources and university relations, is a big advocate for FCaMP.

FCaMP is privately funded and gets most of its money from fundraisers.

The University of Texas at Austin also has a feral cat population control program, and volunteers go as far as naming all the strays on campus.

The program at UT-Austin reports that as of January 2008, there have been no new litters of kittens for seven years. They estimate that 268 feral cats call the UT-Austin campus their home.

At Stanford University, the Stanford Cat Network is comprised of a volunteer work-force that also supports a spay/neuter feeding, adoption and return program.

The program there, also sanctioned by administration, claims studies have proven trap-spay/neuter-vaccinate-release is the single most successful method of stabilizing and maintaining healthy feral cat colonies. According to the

program, the feral cat management system:

- Stabilizes the population at manageable levels (cats are territorial and don't welcome newcomers).
- Is more effective and less costly than repeated attempts at extermination.
- Monitors the population for health and vaccinates cats, as well as prevents the spread of infectious diseases.
- Provides a humane alternative to euthanasia and inspires compassion in the community.

For more information visit [www.nmsu.edu/~fcamp](http://www.nmsu.edu/~fcamp).



Corella