

# You can help cats at risk



Highway,  
*Rescued after living outdoors for four months*

ANIMAL  
RESCUE  
LEAGUE  
of BOSTON



## COMMUNITY CAT INITIATIVE

**As an unwavering champion for animals in need, the Animal Rescue League of Boston (ARL) believes that the challenges that face community cats require our attention and action.**

### Community Cats

Outdoor cats can be found in almost every neighborhood across the country. These cats include community cats (friendly strays, abandoned, or feral) and owned cats that are allowed outdoors to roam.

Community cat colonies usually form due to a conducive environment, such as outdoor cats already living in a particular area, an established food source (including dumpsters or trash cans), or a form of shelter or protection.

At ARL, we are focused on community cats; those that live outdoors and are unowned, but are a part of our local communities. It is important to remember that cats living in community colonies are not all considered “feral” but consist of a combination of feral, shy, and friendly stray cats all living together.

Previously, the animal welfare term “feral” was often associated with “bad cats” or “other cats.”

While feral cats are different in the sense that they have not been properly socialized with humans, they are biologically the same as owned house cats.

Community cats face many challenges living outdoors. Without proper shelter and care, they are at risk of illness and injury. Additionally, without spay/neuter surgery, these cats can produce many litters and continue the cycle of large colonies of unowned cats. It is estimated that over 700,000 cats roam free in Massachusetts with 70,000 in Boston alone.

To best serve the cats in greatest need, we have committed to a comprehensive approach. We have hired ARL’s first dedicated **Community Cats Rescue Agent** and started a **Community Surgical Clinic** at our Dedham Animal Care & Adoption Center.

### Community Cats Rescue Agent

Our Rescue Agent will respond to the call of residents who report a colony of cats, investigating the colony to determine the number of cats and

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kittens residing in that area, the cats' overall health status, and whether or not a local resident is feeding them regularly and can continue. After the initial assessment, a TNR (Trap-Neuter- Return) plan is formulated for that particular colony.

TNR is one of the most humane and effective ways to stop the cycle of homelessness among cats. Spay and neuter surgeries are low risk and proven to improve the safety and health of these cats as well as the community as a whole.

The plan also includes vaccines, and whether each cat will be returned to the colony, returned to their owner if microchipped, or admitted to an ARL shelter to be put up for adoption if they are friendly.

### **The Community Surgical Clinic (CSC)**

Located at ARL's Dedham Animal Care & Adoption Center, CSC is staffed by ARL's Lead Veterinarian of Community Veterinary Services.

The clinic provides TNR services to community cats through our Community Cats Rescue Agent, as well as offer low-cost spay and neuter services for pet owners who have received a *Massachusetts Animal Fund* voucher from their local animal control officer.

The CSC also provides local animal control officers with an additional surgical resource for dogs and cats held in their respective municipal shelters.

### **You can change the lives of cats at risk**

We are excited about our commitment to help keep community cats safe and healthy in the habitats in which they live but we need your investment in order to provide the best outcome for these cats.

**To fully support these innovative programs and help more than 1,500 cats lead healthier lives, we need to raise \$204,000 annually.**

We rely solely on the generosity of our supporters to be a leader in the care of community cats.

Your gift will support the Community Cat Initiative as well as our future innovations to address the challenges that face cats at risk.

**For more information** about how you can change the lives of community cats, please contact Rick Tagliaferri at [rtagliaferri@arlboston.org](mailto:rtagliaferri@arlboston.org) or (617) 226-5668.

## **Community Cats Rescue Agent in Action**

Highway, the cat shown on the front, was reported by neighbors to be living outside for four months.

ARL's Community Cats Rescue Agent responded to the call and brought Highway back to our shelter.

After scanning for a microchip (an implanted permanent form of identification for pets) we found that Highway was an owned cat and he was reunited with his family.

## **Support the Community Cat Initiative**

**\$1,000** can provide three months' worth of life-saving vaccines for the CSC.

**\$2,500** can support 20 site visits, allowing our Community Cats Rescue agent to assess and create a plan for TNR.

**\$5,000** can supply the CSC with veterinary supplies for six months.

**\$10,000** can sustain a month of surgeries for community cats.

**\$204,000** can fund the entire initiative for one year.