

# THE ADVOCAT



Spring/Summer 2015

A Billerica Cat Care Coalition Publication

News for BCCC Members, Friends and the Public

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## Help Homeless Cats and Kittens

Visit our web site:  
[www.billericacatcarecoalition.org](http://www.billericacatcarecoalition.org)

### Learn About:

- Feral Cats
- Pet Overpopulation
- The Importance Of Spaying & Neutering
- View Our List of Available Cats
- Become a Volunteer

### Donate To Our Food Bins at:

- Market Baskets in Billerica
- Billerica & Tewksbury Libraries
- Agway, Chelmsford
- Pet Supplies Plus, Billerica

### We have Donation Jars at:

- K-9 Comforts, Billerica
- Shank's Mare, Billerica
- Lexington-Bedford Veterinary Hospital

### Our Sponsoring Vets:

- The Cat Doctor
- McGrath Animal Hospital
- Tewksbury Animal Hospital
- Middlesex County Animal Hospital

## What is TNR?

Trap-Neuter-Return, commonly referred to as "TNR," is the only method proven to be humane and effective at controlling feral cat population growth. Using this technique, all the feral cats in a colony are trapped, neutered and then returned to their territory where caretakers provide them with regular food and shelter. Young kittens who can still be socialized, as well as friendly adults, are placed in foster care and eventually adopted out to good homes.

TNR has many advantages. It immediately stabilizes the size of the colony by eliminating new litters. The nuisance behavior often associated with feral cats is dramatically reduced, including the yowling and fighting that come with mating activity and the odor of unneutered males spraying to mark their territory. The returned colony also guards its territory, preventing unneutered cats from moving in and beginning the cycle of overpopulation and problem behavior anew. Particularly in urban areas, the cats continue to provide natural rodent control.

Another significant advantage to TNR is that, when practiced on a large scale, it lessens the number of kittens and cats flowing into local shelters. This results in lower euthanasia rates and the increased adoption of cats already in the shelters. TNR is not just the best alternative to managing feral cat populations - it is the only one that works. Doing nothing has resulted in the current overpopulation crisis. Trying to

"rescue" the cats and find them all homes is utopian and unattainable given their numbers and the futility of trying to socialize most of them.

Trap and remove, the traditional technique exercised by animal control, is simply ineffective. If all the cats are not caught, then the ones left behind breed until the former population level is reached. Even if all the cats are removed, new unneutered cats tend to move in to take advantage of whatever food source there was, and the cycle starts again. This explains why more and more animal control agencies are willing to try TNR.

Finally, TNR is an idea whose time has come. It recognizes there is a new balance in our urban and rural landscape, one that includes feral cats. It seeks to manage this new population with enlightened techniques that allow the cats to live out their lives and fulfill their natures, while minimizing any possible negative impact. TNR is a movement that will continue to grow as more and more caring people see its potential and, in time, it will become the predominant method of feral cat management.

*Courtesy of [www.Neighborhoodcats.org](http://www.Neighborhoodcats.org)*



**DUTCH**

## Featured Cats: Dutch & Ormond

Dutch & Ormond were born in April of 2014. They have tested neg for FIV, FELV & HW. They have been neutered. They are brothers who are quite bonded. They're very playful & get along very well with other cats. Ormond is the outgoing one of the two. Dutch is very happy to stay in his brother's background. They do need to be adopted together & to a home who will let them emerge on their own schedules. If you think these 2 wonderful brothers are the cats who would fit in with your lifestyle, please submit an application for them.

Adopt us at [www.billericacatcarecoalition.org](http://www.billericacatcarecoalition.org)



**ORMOND**

# Letter From the President

Since 2004, Billerica Cat Care Coalition (BCCC) has been going strong – providing no-kill population control for feral cats via our humane Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) program, as well as foster and adoption services for abandoned, friendly felines. During kitten season, we get them into foster for socialization and adoption, so they will not have to repeat the feral cat cycle.



Kitten season typically begins in the spring and continues into the fall. To that end, it is very important BCCC is contacted when kittens are first seen, while still young enough to come into foster care. If not brought in time, a feral kitten might lose their window of opportunity to be socialized. (Not always, but, the older the kitten is, the more time can be required to help them be ready to be adopted). How does it work? You contact us about cats and kittens you see/find/feed outside. BCCC sets a trapping plan. If the kittens are too young to be away

from their mom, we trap mom cat too and let her nurse her babies in a quiet foster room, inside a roomy cage. As soon as the kittens are weaned, mom gets tnr'd and returned to her feeder. (This is not cruel, feral cats prefer to live with their cat family, called a "colony"). The kittens go to their public meet & greets and completed adoption applications are screened for the right forever home for each of them.

Check out the article in this edition about helping feral kittens. If you think you are ready to foster, we'd love to hear from you, to give each and every one of them the chance to be socialized, then move along to their forever home. (Yes, they do find their forever home !) We can never have too many fosters and we don't want to turn any kitten away. BCCC provides all expenses, including food, litter and vet care for our foster felines. You just provide TLC and the opportunity for a better life. Visit our website to learn how you can volunteer – BCCC wants to grow our network of foster homes for adoptable cats. If you are the outdoorsy type, sign up to be a trapper to help our ferals get tnr'd. Working together, we make this a win-win situation for everyone – furry or human.

Purrs,

🐾 Sharon



Visit our Facebook page and see how BCCC is making a difference. We've got pictures, rescue stories, and more!

<https://www.facebook.com/BillericaCatCareCoalition>

## MRFRS Catmobile



Wow! Low cost spay/neuter service for your cat in your neighborhood: \$80 for males, \$120 for females. The package includes exam, spay/neuter, rabies vaccination, flea treatment and nail trim.

To find out when the Catmobile will be in your area, go to [www.catmobile.org](http://www.catmobile.org)

How to make an appointment:

**Online:** [www.catmobile.org](http://www.catmobile.org)

**Phone:** 978-465-1940

**E-mail:** [catmobile@mrfrs.org](mailto:catmobile@mrfrs.org)



## Just One Day - June 11, 2015

**We're trying to save 13,000 lives in Just One Day.**

Every year on June 11, we ask shelters across the country to put down their needles and become No Kill for Just One Day. Roughly 13,000 animals are adopted, over 1,000 shelters and rescue groups come together, adopters welcome a new family member, the incinerators remain shuttered and the morgues stay empty. We erase more than one day's worth of killing in the U.S. June 11 just may be the safest day for companion animals in shelters. And on June 11, 2015, we hope to do even better. To read more about Just One Day, visit: <http://www.justoneday.ws/>

## THE ADVOCAT Volume 10 Issue No. 1

Editor  
Jody Nelson

*This newsletter provides general information. It is not intended to provide medical advice. Medical advice should be obtained directly from your veterinarian.*

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# 11<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL THE CAT'S MEOW

*Presented by Billerica Cat Care Coalition*



Friday, MAY 15, 2015, 7:00 pm - 9:30 pm  
BILLERICA ELKS CLUB, 14 WEBB BROOK ROAD  
BILLERICA, MA 01821



Purchase tickets online: [www.BillericaCatCareCoalition.org](http://www.BillericaCatCareCoalition.org)

## Purchase In Advance At



The Cat Doctor of Bedford  
200 Great Road, Suite 9  
Bedford, MA

Middlesex County Animal Hospital  
330 Boston Road  
North Billerica, MA

Tewksbury Animal Hospital  
1098 Main St  
Tewksbury, MA

Shanks Mare  
306 Boston Rd  
Billerica, MA



Tickets: \$30 at the door  
or \$25 in advance  
Cash or check at event.

## Calendar of Events

**March 28:** 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM - Billerica Health & Wellness Fair - Billerica Elks, 14 Webb Brook Road, Billerica

**April 18:** 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM - 7th Annual Health & Wellness Fair - Tewksbury Senior Center, 175 Chandler Street, Tewksbury

**April 28:** 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM - Meet & Greet at Jones Farm Spring Market, Chelmsford, MA

**May 15:** 7:00 PM to 9:30 PM - BCCC's 11th Annual "The Cat's Meow Chocolate Tasting & Silent Auction" Billerica MA - Please visit website for more details and ticket information

**September 19:** 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM - Yankee Doodle Fair - Info booth behind Billerica High School AND Meet & Greet inside Bennett Library - 25 Concord Rd, Billerica

*BCCC is adding new events all the time. Please check our website for new locations and dates.*



**Scan THIS QR code  
WITH YOUR PHONE TO  
GO DIRECTLY TO OUR  
WEB SITE!**



# Cats and Nutrition

*By: Dr. Anne Richards, DVM, The Cat Dr., Bedford, MA & Nashua*

Cats can present a challenge nutritionally, whether they are pampered indoor pets or ferals who want nothing to do with people. Many cats are prone to obesity and, especially if they are sedentary and stay inside, their food intake must be regulated to prevent them from becoming larger and larger every year. Other cats are born finicky and it is challenge to keep them at a healthy weight. Feral and free-roaming cats tend to get more exercise and need to burn more energy to stay warm in the cold winter months. Similar to human athletes, they require a higher calorie intake to maintain their body mass compared with their less-active counterparts. In both populations, many cats have less-robust appetites as they age and develop health problems, which can lead us to shift our focus to keeping their weight up from keeping their weight down.

Both indoor and outdoor cats share the common characteristic of being descended from hyper-carnivorous ancestors, which means that they only eat meat as their natural diet. Over the many thousands of years as their evolution as a species, this has caused shifts in their metabolism that have made them dependent on a high protein level in their diet. Cats have largely lost the ability to process carbohydrates directly into energy for immediate activity, so starches and sugars tend to be stored as fat. This means that, for indoor cats, a mostly-canned diet can help them to maintain their muscle mass while not becoming overweight. It can also make them less prone to becoming diabetic, which is a concern in middle-aged overweight cats, similar to Type 2 diabetes in humans. Canned food also has the benefit of containing a lot of water, which helps to support bladder and kidney health by promoting good hydration. As cats age, canned food can help stave off the muscle loss that often comes with common diseases of older felines.

When choosing a canned food, the ingredients on the back of the label are more important than the brand name on the front. Just like with human food, ingredients are listed in order from the largest to smallest proportion in the food. Water is generally the first or second ingredient in canned food, and then you want to see meat or meat by-products as the next ingredients. (By-products get a bad rap in advertising and the popular press, but they provide valuable protein and are not a reason to avoid a food.) After the meat ingredients, you will see a list of vitamins and minerals that supplement the diet. Look for a food that contains no corn, wheat, or soy ingredients.

If they are present at all, they should be the last ingredient listed before the vitamins and minerals. Keep in mind when evaluating more expensive foods that vegetables and fruits are ingredients that sound healthy but are not required in the natural diet of a cat. There are some foods available in the grocery store that provide better nutrition than some on the shelves of a boutique pet store.

Dry food is more convenient to feed than canned food and many owners prefer it for that reason, but it is generally not as healthy because it contains a higher level of carbohydrates. It should not be fed on an unlimited basis to indoor cats unless your cat is one of the rare individuals who can maintain a healthy weight despite the presence of a continuous food source. (I call these cats “supermodels!”) For most cats, dry food should be a treat or a side dish to the main meal of canned food, and should be fed in a quantity that will be gone within 20 minutes of putting the food down. A fasting period between meals helps your cat burn calories and prevents obesity.



For older or sick cats, leaving the dry food down can help them keep their weight higher, but in some cases they will tend to put on fat but not muscle mass. Your veterinarian will assess your cat's overall weight and muscle mass at each checkup and let you know how he or she is doing. For feral cats, dry food can be a valuable source of calories and can allow them to “stock up” on energy and put on an insulating layer of fat during the colder months, and it should be provided in greater quantities at this time.

## Cats and Nutrition cont'd

One of the most challenging situations in a household (or outdoor feeding station) can be the presence of multiple cats with multiple nutritional needs. It's almost inevitable that if you have an elderly, sick, or naturally underweight cat, you will also have a larger cat with an enthusiastic appetite who is prone to becoming even chubbier as you try to maintain the thin cat's weight. In an indoor situation, it is very important that each cat has his own bowl and space for eating. This reduces the anxiety associated with food competition that can make a less-confident cat simply walk away from his bowl. Also, feeding meals instead of having unlimited food means that it is a minimal investment of the owner's time to watch the cats eat each meal and make sure that each cat gets his fair share. If necessary, get the cats used to eating in separate rooms so that cats who eat more slowly, or who want to walk away and come back a few minutes later, have a chance to eat their entire portion of food. Elderly or sick cats may need to be given their own space, with food available, for a portion of each day so that they can pick at the food whenever they feel hungry. It is not unusual for these cats to want to eat multiple small meals per day. For feral cats, placing the food in two or three locations at the feeding station should prevent one or two cats from dominating the entire food supply.

Table food containing protein, like chicken, fish, or lean beef or pork, can be used as a treat or to tempt finicky cats to eat. For sick cats, plain meat or baby food can be a valuable tool to stimulate appetite and can replace their normal diet for a short period of time. This can also be necessary, with your veterinarian's guidance, if you are investigating the possibility of a food allergy in your cat. Plain meat does not contain the minerals and vitamins that are supplemented in commercial diets, though, and so these foods can only be used for a few weeks at most before a cat returns to a regular cat food. In some cases, owners may prefer to prepare their own cat food at home, but this can be tricky because it is difficult to formulate a balanced diet without the commercial nutrient analysis that cat food manufacturers depend on. If you elect to prepare a home-cooked diet, make sure the recipe comes from a reputable source, like a veterinary nutritionist, and be sure to consult with your veterinarian first.

## 5 Tips to Help Kittens This Spring

Here are our 5 tips to help kittens this season:

**Leave kittens with mom.** Like all babies, kittens are best left with their mothers who instinctively know how to help their kittens grow up to be strong and healthy cats. Neonatal kittens, 4 weeks old or younger, need constant care and still depend on mom for 100% of their food. Kittens 5 to 8 weeks old can begin to eat wet food, but are still being weaned. If you know the mother is present, it is best to leave kittens with her. To determine whether the mother is caring for the kittens, wait and observe for two to four hours to see if the mother returns. The mother could just be out looking for food. If she doesn't return, the kitten could be abandoned. A young kitten living outdoors who does not have a mother present should be taken in and fostered. "Ultimately you have to use your best judgment," says Robinson. "Determine if the kitten is young enough to be socialized and fostered or adopted, or if she is old enough to be trapped, neutered and returned." If the kitten is not weaned, she will require

bottle-feeding and round-the-clock care. To determine the age of a kitten, use Alley Cat Allies' Kitten Progression Chart.

**Do not bring a neonatal kitten to an animal shelter.** Most shelter employees are not equipped or trained to provide round-the-clock care for neonatal kittens (up to 4 weeks of age). If a kitten cannot eat on her own, she will likely be killed at a shelter. Realistically, it is never a good idea to take a cat to a shelter. More than 70 percent of cats who enter shelters are killed there, and that number rises to virtually 100 percent for feral cats taken to shelters. Killing is never the answer—it is cruel and inhumane, and it fails to stabilize or reduce outdoor cat populations.

**Volunteer as a kitten foster parent for a local rescue group.** There are kitten foster parent programs associated with rescue groups across the country. It is time consuming and requires some training, but volunteering to foster young kittens can save their lives. To learn the basics of kitten care, attend Alley Cat Allies' free "Help! I

found a kitten!" webinar on April 18, 2014 at 1 p.m. EST. Register here.

**Support and practice Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR).** TNR is the only effective and humane way of decreasing feral cat populations. In a TNR program, community cats are humanely trapped and brought to a veterinarian to be spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and eartipped (the universal symbol that a cat has been neutered and vaccinated) before being returned to their outdoor homes. Learn more about TNR.

**Support policies and programs that protect cats.** Let your shelter and local officials know that you support pro-cat ordinances including spay/neuter funding and spay/neuter before adoption. Write letters and call in support of community outreach and education programs that spread awareness about feral cats and TNR – you can make a big difference.

To read more visit:  
<http://news.alleycat.org/2014/04/15/5-tips-to-help-kittens-this-spring>

# Kids and Kittens

Kittens have 26 teeth, while adult cats have 30. If each tooth can be considered a patient, that equates to a lot of dental! A new kitten may conjure up Norman Rockwell images of rocking chairs, basketfuls of yarn, and warm saucers of milk. But if you have very young children at home, more likely you envision lots of chasing, screeching, and spats over who gets to sleep with the newest family member.

The young child's curiosity and unbridled energy makes it natural for them to want to touch, grab, squeeze and envelop that kitten. Conversely, kittens are cautious by nature; they need to observe, test, trust, and eventually approach. They are, after all, not DOGS (a species that shares the ebullience of small children!)

Kids and kittens can make a delightful and harmonious combo with patience and parental guidance. This is what I tell my youngsters: Imagine that I picked you up and held you in my arms. You want to run, you want to play; you want to get down and explore – but I say no- you have to stay on my lap all day. Would that be fun for you? Do you think you would enjoy that? Then I watch as the wheels turn in their mind – this they can appreciate, this they can understand – now they empathize.

Our “house rule”: Let kittens come to you. (In effect, no chasing and grabbing.) To reinforce this, encourage the use of interactive toys that your youngster controls, but gives the kitten some distance. These include wand-type toys with an attached length of fabric, ribbon or cord and a “teaser” at the end (feather, catnip toy, etc.) This toy should not be left alone with a kitten (or kid) unsupervised, so it's the perfect tool for some wonderful relationship-building between the two. The more your child gets positive reinforcement (play) from the kitten, the more your child will view and appreciate the kitten as a companion, not a toy.

Very young kittens may need 3 – 4 feedings per day, and children can take turns filling the dish, calling the kitten, and laying down the food. Its next meal means a lot to the kitten, and the bond between your tot and your kitten will increase if your child does the feeding. Leaving kittens to free-feed (food left out all the time) denies your child a lesson in responsibility and reward. Trust is earned, not bestowed, and kittens come to trust the caregiver who feeds. (They could care less who scoops the poop, so let that be your job!)



As interactive play continues, and feedings are increasingly associated with a familiar face (or faces), your new kitten will begin to seek out your kids. Here is the long-awaited reward for their no-chasing and no-grabbing. The kitten is climbing on them – is searching for a warm lap to lie in – a chest to curl up on. It's a beautiful thing!

Now is the time for some one-on-one kid/kitten constraint: teach your child that a wiggling, squirming kitten is saying “Let me go!” If tots learn the language of the feline, kittens will LEARN not to scratch or bite. Early behavior becomes ingrained, so the kitten that doesn't have to resort to claws or teeth stands an excellent chance of growing up to be a gentle and confident cat.

And as for the fights over who gets to sleep with whom? Crate-train your kitten at night. You can sleep soundly knowing that kitten keeps out of trouble, while at the same time reinforcing that bedtime “golden rule”: everybody stays in his or her own bed!

*Courtesy of Christy Fajkowski, [www.habitOts.com](http://www.habitOts.com), Billerica, MA*

## Got Kittens? Tell us Immediately!



**Contact BCCC if you find kittens in your yard or place of business. Do not move them or mom cat will, then we won't be able to find them. Instead, just contact us and BCCC will help.**

**Also, if you or someone you know has a cat with a litter of kittens, give BCCC all the kittens for foster/adoption and we'll help mom and dad cat get fixed for free!**



# Massachusetts Animal Fund

Thanks to a law passed in 2012, you can now help homeless animals when you complete your Massachusetts income tax return. The Massachusetts Animal Fund provides no-cost spay/neuter surgeries for homeless cats and dogs and those owned by low-income families and will begin training animal control officers this year. In the first six months of the Massachusetts Animal Fund Spay/Neuter Voucher Program, the Fund distributed over \$200,000 to help over 2,300 dogs and cats get fixed and vaccinated at a participating veterinary provider across the state.



Donating is as easy as filling in a donation amount on Line 32f of your Massachusetts tax return. There are easy step-by-step instructions for most major online tax preparation platforms on the Fund's website at [www.massanimalfund.com/donate](http://www.massanimalfund.com/donate). You can be confident that your contribution is directly supporting the animals you care for; over 80% of the Fund's budget is allocated for spay/neuter funding and animal control officer training, with under 20% going toward administration and marketing. To utilize the Funds, residents must verify that they are low-income, and either earn an income that places them below the poverty line or be receiving state or federal assistance through a program such as TAFDC, SSI, VS, SNAP, WIC, Section 8, etc.

To apply, residents should contact their city or town's animal control officer to request a voucher. Once they receive the voucher, they can schedule an appointment with one of the Fund's participating veterinary providers for no-cost surgery and vaccinations. More information about the process can be found at [www.massanimalfund.com/assistance](http://www.massanimalfund.com/assistance) or contact your local Animal Control Officer.



## Volunteers Needed



We are in need of volunteers to help with the cats and kittens. Requirements include experience, references and a love of cats.

For complete volunteer information please visit our website at: [www.billericacatcarecoalition.org](http://www.billericacatcarecoalition.org)

- Fundraiser
- Grant Writer
- Carpenter
- Foster Care
- Drivers
- Trappers



BCCC would like to thank the following organizations and people for their generous support:

- Agway, Chelmsford
- Billerica Public Library
- Pat Bucko, Artist
- Charles J. DiMatteo Jr., CPA
- DeMoulas Market Baskets
- K-Nine Comforts, Billerica
- Michael Kuszek, Photographer
- McGrath Animal Hospital
- Middlesex County Animal Hospital
- Nestle Purina
- Petco Foundation
- Petco in Burlington
- Shank's Mare, North Billerica
- Tewksbury Animal Hospital
- Tewksbury Public Library
- The Cat Doctor
- Donna Turley, Attorney
- Greater Lawrence Technical School

Thanks also go out to the private citizens who have donated to the BCCC. You help us keep the cats fed and healthy!

*Thank*  
**YOU**  
*Very Much*

## How Can You Help The Cats?

### You Can Save Lives.... Right Here, Right Now.

*The cats are depending on you. You can make a difference. You can make their hard lives a little bit easier.*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS GIFT OF:

\$25    \$35    \$50    \$250    OTHER\_\_\_\_\_

All contributions are fully tax-deductible and greatly appreciated.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_



**Thank You!**

You may donate online at [www.billericacatcarecoalition.org](http://www.billericacatcarecoalition.org) using PayPal

You may also send a check to:

Billerica Cat Care Coalition P.O. Box 141 N. Billerica, MA 01862

**THANK YOU FOR DONATING FOOD AND SUPPLIES TO OUR FOOD BINS. IT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!**

#### Donation Locations

- Billerica Market Basket
- Billerica and Tewksbury Public Libraries
- K-Nine Comforts, Billerica
- Shank's Mare, Billerica
- Agway, Chelmsford
- Diamond Dog Grooming, Billerica
- Lexington-Bedford Veterinary Hospital
- Pet Source, Lexington
- Pet Supplies Plus, Billerica

#### Wish List Items

- Canned Cat Food
- Dry Cat Food
- Kitten Food
- KMR Kitten Milk Replacement
- Kitten Bottles
- Cat Litter
- Cat Toys
- Pet store gift cards
- Buy items on our Wish List at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

#### OTHER WAYS TO HELP:

- Donate inactive cell phones/Blackberrys
- Use GoodSearch.com for BCCC
- Use iSearchiGive.com for BCCC
- Shop online at [www.iGive.com/BCCC](http://www.iGive.com/BCCC)
- Volunteer Your Time
- Donate Your Used Vehicle [www.donationline.com](http://www.donationline.com)