



Best Friends Catnippers

Description of Programs **As of September 1, 2004**

Our current operations focus on (a) conducting bi-monthly spay-neuter clinics (the "Clinic Program"), (b) offering coupons which caregivers can use to obtain spay-neuter and post-op services from participating vets (the "Coupon Program"), (c) distributing City of Los Angeles \$30 discount vouchers, (d) maintaining a Website at www.Catnippers.org and a community hotline for callers interested in our services, (e) channeling Web visitors and hotline callers to other spay-neuter and/or trap-neuter-return (TNR) resources if we are unable to accommodate their needs, (f) maintaining a collection of traps which we loan out to caregivers and trappers of feral cats who participate in our programs, and (g) educating the public about TNR and offering training sessions on proper trapping techniques and care of feral cat colonies.

Caretakers interested in taking advantage of our programs, are directed to the following:

Catnippers.Org

In September of 2004, Best Friends Catnippers launched its Web Site at www.catnippers.org, to provide a more efficient way to communicate with caregivers, volunteers and the general public. This site provides up-to-date information concerning our programs and allows interested parties to download all of the forms necessary to apply for our services, together with educational materials concerning humane trapping, after-surgery care, and alternative TNR resources. A one page summary on Catnippers may also be found at www.bestfriends.org.

Community Hotline

The general telephone number for Best Friends Catnippers is (818) 377-9700. Aside from our Web site, this number is the only channel through which our services may be accessed. Callers are offered menu choices and pre-recorded messages which explain our procedures and current capacity to handle reservation requests, which repeat or frequent callers can bypass to leave messages. Our initial greeting provides a basic overview of what we offer, and the menu choices are allocated to (1) our high-volume spay/neuter clinics, (2) our Coupon/Voucher Programs, (3) an extensive listing of other TNR resources in Los Angeles, including referrals to free and low-cost vets, and (4) information for those interested in volunteering or contributing. The Hotline also explains and invites callers to take advantage of our trap loan and training services, which are available only to program participants. This Hotline is monitored regularly, and every effort is made to return calls in a timely manner.

Program Criteria

We are a non-profit, all-volunteer organization providing free spay and neuter services for feral (wild and stray) cats only, which are then returned to their colony and looked after by their caregiver. We focus on providing free spay/neuter for "managed colonies", which means food, water and shelter is provided to the cats on a daily basis. Best Friends Catnippers does not remove, relocate or exterminate homeless cats, nor do we find homes for cats or kittens. We do not sterilize owned pets or friendly strays that will be adopted by the finder or placed in an adoption agency. At our clinics and under the Catnippers Coupon program,

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(818) 377-9700

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the medical services we provide are limited to sterilization surgery, except that at clinics we also administer certain post-operative treatments, vaccinations and medications. We will not pay for or cover any additional medical needs of feral cats. Other organizations may provide funding for these costs, and a list of these is made available on our Web Site and via the Hotline.

Application Procedure

While we serve all TNR constituencies, our primary focus is to work with individuals who generally have no prior trapping or TNR experience, and who reach out to Catnippers because of a desire to finally “do something” about feral cats in their neighborhood. We have found that by working with such “managed colonies” we can not only make a difference by sterilizing 100% of the known feral cat population, but in so doing, educate and train hundreds of people to become bona fide caregivers of feral cats, knowledgeable about TNR. Dealing with this particular group can be very time intensive, as Catnippers needs a great deal of information to evaluate the situation, and to impart a lot of information concerning clinic dates, coupon or voucher availability, and TNR generally. In order to streamline this process, we have developed an extensive caregiver questionnaire, which all applicants must complete and return to us before any dialogue can be undertaken. After reviewing this application, our experienced staff determines which applications meet our criteria, and these individuals are then sent an extensive package of documents, all of which are now available from our Web site, and slotted in to the appropriate program, *i.e.* clinic, Coupon and/or City Vouchers.

Our preference is for all caregivers to communicate by fax or e-mail, and to make use of our Web site resources as much as possible, so that we can be as efficient as possible with our limited personnel and financial resources. For those without computer access, we will continue to offer access through our Community Hotline. In either case, however, new applicants must request, obtain, complete and return an application in order to qualify. Pre-qualified caregivers who have already participated in one of programs may request additional services by completing and submitting a short-form questionnaire.

Clinics

In 2004, our schedule provides for high-volume spay/neuter clinics to be held in January, March, May, July, September and November. Clinics are held at donated veterinary facilities, and are organized to accommodate 80-100 cats (or more). In order to bring cats to a clinic, caretakers must first request, and be granted, a reservation. This is done by following the Application Procedure (above). If an application is approved, then, subject to capacity, our staff assigns reservations for the number of cats each caretaker plans to trap. At this time, each caretaker is notified of the clinic location.

On clinic day, check-in commences at 8:30 a.m. The cats are anesthetized by experienced technicians while in the traps, then checked for general health and special needs and transported to surgery. After surgery, each animal is de-wormed with Droncit and administered vaccinations (Rabies & 4-in-1), penicillin, fluids and other medications as may be necessary, given a complete flea treatment with Revolution, and groomed. Also the right ear is tipped to show the cat has been altered. Intensive care is provided as necessary.

Sponsor and Voucher Programs

In the fall of 2002 we launched our Sponsor Program, under which we offered to pay participating vets a negotiated fee to provide free spay-neuter services to feral cat caretakers. This program was structured as a referral service, pursuant to which caregivers were required to have a reservation in advance in order to bring cats to a participating vet. After preliminary screening to determine suitability, callers were passed along to our referral coordinator, who allocated reservations to caregivers and made all of the necessary arrangements with the vet practices in question. Upon receipt of confirmation that the vet had performed all of the same services Catnippers offers at clinics, we then paid the vet the agreed upon fee. The Sponsor Program was welcomed with overwhelming demand for its services, and through November, 2003, was responsible for sterilizing an average of 100 feral cats per month.

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Commencing in 2004, our Sponsor Program was re-structured to operate more as a traditional voucher program, given the overwhelming personnel demands inherent in the previous model. Under the new program (the “Coupon Program”), and subject to funding capacity, Catnippers issues coupons to caregivers which entitle the caregiver to reimbursement for money spent to spay/neuter feral cats. In this manner, caregivers are free to approach and obtain sterilization services from any vet they choose, and to negotiate the best rate, and upon confirmation of the services performed, Catnippers will reimburse the caregiver for the face amount of the coupon.

In addition to offering our own coupons, Best Friends Catnippers has been authorized by the Animal Services Department of the City of Los Angeles to offer the City’s feral cat spay/neuter discount vouchers, under a pilot program originally scheduled to expire June 30, 2004, but recently extend to June 30, 2005. We regularly have city discount vouchers available for cats in the City of Los Angeles only, redeemable for \$30 toward spay/neuter at approved vets located only in the City of Los Angeles.

Other Services

Under both programs, we provide caretakers with humane trapping instructions and demonstrations, and information on transport, drop-off and collection of cats, recovery care, release, feeding, and other aspects of TNR. We also have a limited number of traps to loan out to caretakers, which our staff allocates. Also, because our resources are limited as compared to the number of applicants, we maintain a database of other TNR resources, which we update regularly, so as to provide Web site visitors and Hotline callers with a list of spay/netuer alternatives they can contact if our programs have reached our reservation and/or voucher limits, or if the applicant does not meet our criteria.