

**POLICE MEMORANDUM**  
**#19-2023**

**DATE:** Nov. 13, 2023

**TO:** Honorable Mayor Meredith Leighty and City Council Members

**THROUGH:** Heather Geyer, City Manager *hmg*

**FROM:** James S. May, Jr., Chief of Police *JSM/217*  
Randall L. Darlin, Deputy Chief of Police

**SUBJECT:** Shelter-Neuter-Return Program Update

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**PURPOSE**

To provide Council with an update on Northglenn's Shelter-Neuter-Return (SNR) Program for community cats at large after the adoption of the SNR program in September 2022.

**BACKGROUND**

In early 2022, Council requested that an SNR program be brought forward for consideration. Staff conducted research and coordination with Riverdale Animal Shelter and moved to bring an SNR program forward. An SNR program is designed to protect the health and welfare of community cats. Community cats differ from pet cats in that they are often feral and have had little to no contact with humans during their lifetime. Therefore, they cannot be adopted into homes as family pets; instead, they live outdoors, freely, and independently.

Upon adopting SNR practices in late 2022, Northglenn had one cat for the remainder of the year where SNR was applicable and implemented. 2023 year to date, to include both the Northglenn Police Department (NPD) and residents, three cats have been impounded where SNR was applicable and implemented. Since adoption, four cats have undergone the SNR process in Northglenn.

**About SNR**

SNR programs provide a humane way to improve the quality of life for feral cats while reducing their numbers within communities by limiting their ability to reproduce. This helps community cats live healthy lives and reduces nuisance conduct associated with wild cats. SNR policies provide an opportunity for community members to trap cats and bring them to a shelter. The shelter will then spay or neuter the cats and vaccinate them to protect against rabies. The shelter tips one ear to identify that the animal has been sterilized and vaccinated. The cat is then returned to the same neighborhood, where it lives independently.

Once community cats are spayed or neutered, behaviors associated with mating such as howling, fighting, and spraying stop. Also, the cats roam less and become less visible in the community. Foul odors associated with cats are reduced, and the mixture of urine as cats attempt to mark territory decreases. The size of colonies decreases over time by an average of 66%.

**Municipal Changes**

In September 2022, Northglenn adopted changes to the Municipal Code necessary to implement SNR policies. Under the new ordinance, a community cat at large is defined as "a free-roaming

cat that may be feral but is not wildlife, and who may be cared for by one or more residents of the immediate area, whether those resident(s) are known or unknown, and who are distinguishable from domestic cats because they are less socialized to humans and are unadoptable.”

The adopted ordinance allows Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) to be practiced by community cat caregivers, organizations, and Animal Control Division in compliance with any applicable Federal or State law. Under Northglenn’s ordinance, TNR is the preferred disposition for impounded community cats. The terms SNR and TNR are used interchangeably in this memo and Northglenn’s ordinance.

### **Riverdale Animal Shelter**

Riverdale Animal Shelter provides sheltering services to Northglenn, Thornton, Commerce City, Federal Heights, Lochbuie, Bennett, and Brighton. Annually, the Northglenn Police Department impounds approximately 300 to 350 animals. Northglenn’s animal shelter needs include:

- Adoption
- Care
- Boarding
- Shelter of impounded animals such as dogs, cats, fowl, small farm animals and other small domestic creatures
- Disposal
- Euthanasia
- Impoundment
- SNR services

### **BUDGET/TIME IMPLICATIONS**

The financial impact on the City should be reduced over time. As cat colonies shrink, fewer cats are present in the community, and the cost associated with euthanizing feral cats decreases.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

This is for informational purposes only.

### **STAFF REFERENCE**

If Council Members have any questions, please contact James S. May, Jr., Chief of Police, at [jmay@northglenn.org](mailto:jmay@northglenn.org) or 303.450.8967.