

Garfield's Rescue Inc. legally practices TNR

KILMARNOCK—Trap-neuter-return (TNR) is a legal process in the Northern Neck, according to Garfield's Rescue Inc. (GRI) vice president Cyndi Lee.

When a citizen reports a stray or colony of cats to a rescue organization, a volunteer will go to that location and observe the situation. The goal of the rescue organization is to assure that strays and colonies of cats are sterilized, preventing reproduction, said Lee.

TNR is the process of securing a cat in a humane trap or carrier, transporting it to a veterinarian where it undergoes surgery for spay/neuter, then returning that cat to the location where it was found, she said. The return location should be safe and where there is food, water and shelter available. When all cats in the colony can no longer reproduce, the colony will reduce in size over time.

TNR is legal for a private



A cat begins the trap-neuter-return journey.

citizen or rescue organization that coordinates cat sterilization services in the Northern Neck. There is a misconception of who may/may not practice TNR. One of the nation's leading advocacy organizations for community cats is Alley Cat Allies. Their website contains a synopsis of the Virginia Attorney General's advisory (VA. Att'y Gen. Op. No. 12-100 (June 12, 2013)

“Advisory Opinion”) which strongly supports TNR programs carried out by locally sponsored organizations.

According to the Advisory Opinion, an animal control officer (ACO) may not trap feral cats and then return them to the wild, said Lee. ACOs, by law, may only trap and then confine these felines in animal shelters. Private citizens or individuals

representing an organization that provides or coordinates sterilization services do not fall under this mandate of seize and confine. Those individuals may trap and then return cats to owners or to colonies, which have caretakers who provide humane care.

GRI reached out to each of the animal control officers in the four counties of the Northern Neck, Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond and Westmoreland, Lee said. After a brief introduction and explanation for the call, the officers indicated they support this process as a means to decrease the overpopulation of cats in their counties. Some of these officers stated they have contacted rescue organizations recently to connect residents with an organization to help with TNR.

GRI proudly joins many leading nonprofit rescue organizations throughout Virginia participating in TNR.