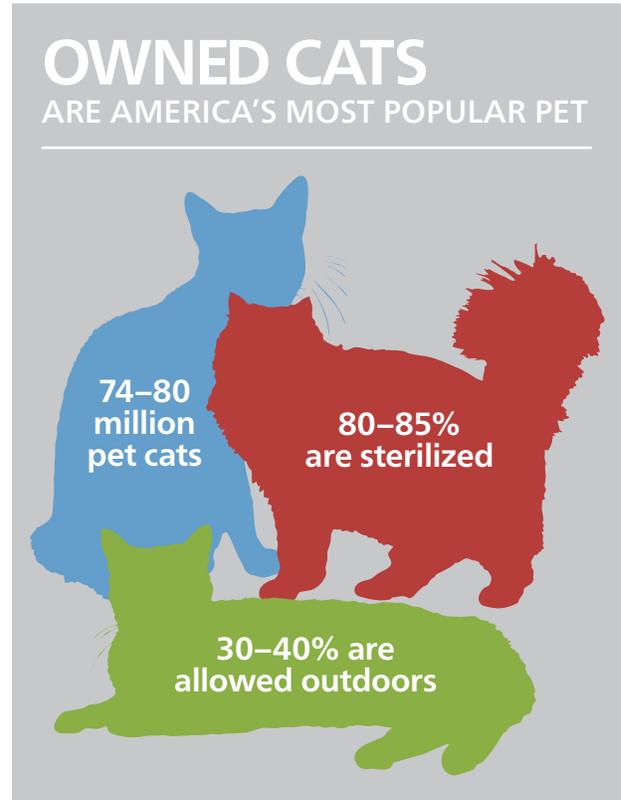


WHY ARE THERE SO MANY CATS?

Owned Cats

Cats are the most popular pet in the United States according to the American Veterinary Medical Association's 2012 *U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook* (AVMA 2012). Approximately 30% of households own cats, and overall owned cat numbers have been increasing as the number of households in the U.S. rises. The majority (approximately 85%) of owned cats have been spayed or neutered, but they may have had one or more litters—intended or accidental—before being sterilized. In underserved communities, rates of sterilization in owned cats tend to be much lower, with cost and transportation being the biggest barriers. Accessible spay/neuter services for cat owners are critical for the overall welfare and management of cats. Approximately 65% to 70% of owned cats are kept indoors at least at night, and this trend has been on the rise, up from approximately 20% in the 1970s (APPA 2012).



Un-Owned Cats

Unsterilized community cats (un-owned or semi-owned) contribute about 80% of the kittens born each year and are the most significant source of cat overpopulation (Levy & Crawford, 2004). Estimates vary greatly for the number of community cats in the United States, ranging all the way from 10 to 90 million (Loyd & DeVore, 2010). The limited evidence available indicates that the actual number may be in the 30–40 million range (Rowan, 2013). The real problem is that only about 2% of them are spayed or neutered (Wallace & Levy, 2006) and continue to reproduce generations of outdoor cats. For this reason, large-scale and targeted reproductive control of community cats is critical to reduce cat populations in your community.

“When cat populations are present, the choice is not between having cats or not having cats. The choice is between having a managed community cat population, or an unmanaged one.”

—Bryan Kortis, Program Manager,
PetSmart Charities, Phoenix, AZ

Community cat population numbers are greatly affected by the community in which they live. Human demographics, types of land usage, climate, presence of predators, and availability of resources all affect the cat population and determine how many cats can be supported in a given area. Population estimates vary greatly and provide only a loose number that can be further

COMMUNITY CATS



refined as program work takes place. Experts differ on recommended calculations, with a range of formulas from human population divided by six (Levy & Crawford, 2004), to human population divided by 15 (PetSmart Charities, 2013). For a mid-range estimate of the number of community cats in your area, divide your human population by 10. This estimate is exactly that—an estimate. Cold weather areas with freezing temperatures or locales with robust predator populations that limit survival, may have fewer cats than estimated, while rural areas with lots of barns and farms may have more than estimated. Warm climates tend to support larger populations of cats. Densely populated areas with shelter and adequate food sources for outdoor cats may have very large concentrations or relatively few cats depending on the neighborhood’s demographics.