



Bowie CLAW Community Cat Initiative Final Report, 2017-2018

Project #
FY-18-314

County: Prince George's County

Number of Cats Spayed: 117
Number of Cats Neutered: 128

Number of Dogs Spayed:
Number of Dogs Neutered:

Amount Received: 13,738.96

Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): 0

Project Synopsis:

To trap, neuter and release (TNR) at least 238 feral cats, to help control the burgeoning numbers of these unowned animals in the Bowie, Maryland, area.



Project Description:

Bowie Citizens for Local Animal Welfare ("Bowie CLAW") is a 501(c)(3) animal welfare organization. Our mission is to advocate for the interests of animals in the greater Bowie area.

Our project's goal was to reduce the number of feral cats in Bowie, the 13th largest city in Maryland and the largest in Prince George's County. We also included some areas south and west of the city. Before our initiative began, the Bowie area had been served by the efforts of a handful of volunteers whose efforts to help control the community cat population were significant. But these volunteers worked solo or in pairs, on their own time, often paying for veterinarian services out of their personal funds. For this project, two of the most active trappers/TNR specialists, Lila Pavelec and Rhoda Pollack, joined forces with Bowie CLAW.

Bowie had never benefitted from this type of concerted, adequately-funded project, and we are are pleased that grant funds have enabled us to to undertake a successful, coordinated initiative.

Summary of Approach:

We closely followed the approach outlined in our original grant application. The method our volunteers utilized may be described as a "clean sweep", aiming to spay/neuter the entire feral cat population in a particular area. More specifically, volunteers performed the following activities:

1. Scouted feral cat jurisdictions by auto and on foot and looked for indicators of feeders, such as bowls or shelters.



2. Canvassed the area: talked to property owners to inform them of our project and advise about our TNR method/plan. Left behind the trapper's business card.
3. Responded to multiple referrals and inquiries that arrived nearly every week.
4. Identified receptive property owners and feeders and scheduled trapping date(s). Feeders were informed not to feed beginning at a particular date/time to encourage the hungry cats to enter baited traps.
5. Estimated the cat population to ensure the proper number of traps and amount of bait food required.
6. Scheduled veterinarian appointments.
7. Began trapping, which took one-to-two days depending on the number of cats; attempted to trap all cats at the site; kept trapped cats overnight.
8. Transported cats to/from the veterinarian the next day for spay and neuter.
9. Supervised cats' recovery for one-to-two days, and then returned the cats to their homes. Cats which were pregnant at the time of trapping were typically kept an extra two to three days. If the temperature dropped below 35 degrees, cats were kept for additional days (and returned in the warmest part of day if temperatures remained low)
10. Returned to the site at intervals of four and eight weeks to determine if any cats were missed in the "clean sweep" and attempted to trap any remaining stragglers.

Accomplishments:

We provided TNR for a total of 245 cats, 103% of our target for this year. Once we exhausted our MDA funds from the grant, we knew that we had to try to continue our work. Happily, we are providing TNR services in this transitional period with a \$1,000 grant just received from the On Shore Foundation and with an appropriation of \$2,400 from Bowie CLAW's operating budget. We are hopeful that these funds will get us through until the next grant cycle begins - and, of course, we hope that we will receive substantial grant funding for 2018-19

Lessons Learned:

We learned many valuable lessons.

(1) Understand the need. The need in Bowie and the surrounding area is huge. It seems that, every week, new inquiries and requests for assistance emerge. Because there have heretofore been no organized, coordinated well-funded TNR initiatives in our area, the number of feral cats may well be significantly larger than any estimations using standard tools methods.

(2) Support your volunteers. People who choose to do TNR are passionate and dedicated. But they are not "tireless" - they do get tired, sometimes frustrated, working in the cold and the heat as well as good weather. It is important for the project coordinator to stay in close touch, not only to offer encouragement but also to troubleshoot and seek additional help when our trappers need it. We heartily commend Lila Pavelec and Rhoda Pollack for their work as our lead TNR specialists. And we offer special thanks to our Bowie CLAW treasurer Lauren Semeniuk, who served as liaison with the veterinary clinic to ensure accurate accounting of the clinical procedures.

(3) Recruit additional volunteers. We have at points enlisted members of our Bowie CLAW Board as well as staff from the City of Bowie Animal Control when we have large trappings. Our lead trappers have also done an excellent job in recruiting property owners who have sought assistance with "their cats" to actively help with the trapping process. This practice serves a valuable educational benefit and helps create neighborhood good will.



(4) Make allies and friends. We have benefitted greatly from a solid working relationship with Bowie Animal Control, which has allowed its staff to assist us with special needs, allowed the use of one of their vans for transport at large trappings, and has allowed the city's holding facility (originally funded by Bowie CLAW) to be used to house cats overnight before and after their clinical appointments. In addition, we have regularly received referrals from Kathy Rude at from Spay Spa and Neuter Nook and from Prince George's County Animal Services

(5) Keep your organization's board informed. At every juncture, we have shared information with the Bowie CLAW Board of Directors not only about our successes but about problems, frustrations and special needs. The board has felt involved and invested in our project and agreed to provide supplemental appropriations to take care of needs not covered by our grant (cats which were injured, sick or needed special treatment) and to allow TNR work to go forward when our grant funds were used up.

(6) Respond as expeditiously as possible to requests for assistance and referrals. People who call, unless it's the handful who misunderstand our mission and ask for cat "removal," are typically people of good will who perceive the nature of the feral cat problem and who want to be part of the solution. Thanks to a very positive article in the "Bowie Blade" in the fall of 2017 and word-of-mouth referrals, Bowe CLAW's project has developed a very favorable reputation. Numerous requests have arrived on our Bowie CLAW website. In fact, we've had to do virtually no "pavement pounding" or door knocking in unfamiliar neighborhoods looking for feral cats - the cats have come to us in numbers larger than we can accommodate via the referrals previously mentioned. We continue to maintain an active waiting list of individuals who have asked for our help.

(7) Seek supplemental revenue. MDA's Spay and Neuter Grants Program provides funds as generously as possible but must respond to statewide needs and demands. Extra funding that we have received has already been described above, and for 2018-2019, we will be searching for additional sources of revenue for the project.

(8) Pace yourself - it's a year-long project. Initially, some of us quietly wondered, "Wow, we've never done a project like this before - can we really trap and spay or neuter 238 cats?" But month-by-month as the totals mounted, we realized that we were on track. We also realized that you don't have to trap when the temperatures are below freezing or above 90 degrees - the cats will still be there when conditions improve.

(9) Report regularly. Having formal quarterly reports helped keep us on track and also built confidence. So, having paced ourselves, it all worked our successfully. THANK YOU to the MDA Spay and Neuter Grants Program for making it possible.

Attachments:

List of cats spayed and neutered - attached (with gratitude to Spay Spa and Neuter Nook in Davidsonville, MD for their excellent service and record keeping).

For More Information Contact:

Name:

Michael Semeniuk, Past President and Project Director
Hugh Hammett, Grants Coordinator and Board Member

Organization Name and Address:

Bowie Citizens for Local Animal Welfare
P.O. Box 116, Bowie, MD 20719

Email: hughhammett@gmail.com and michaelmagnus9@gmail.com



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SPAY AND NEUTER GRANTS PROGRAM

