



**Maddie's Fund**

## *Creating a Successful Working Cat Program*

Webcast Transcript

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*[Beginning of Audio]*

*Jessie Guglielmo:* Good evening everyone. Thank you for being here tonight for our webcast, Working Cat Programs. I'm Jessie Guglielmo, education specialist with Maddie's Fund.

Our speaker tonight is Monica Frenden. In 2008, Monica founded a trap, neuter, return organization that sterilized thousands of cats called Safe House Animal Rescue League. To further reduce euthanasia she then pioneered one of the nation's first and largest barn cat programs.

Then in 2012, Monica moved to Austin, Texas and joined Pets Alive where she served as a cat program manager. Since 2012, Monica has led her team to a 40 percent growth in cat adoptions, helped Austin achieve a city-wide 98 percent live release rate for cats and oversees the adoption and care of nearly 4,000 cats each year.

Before we start let's talk about a few housekeeping items. Please take a look at the left side of your screen where you'll see a Q&A window. That's where you can ask questions during the presentation. Please get your questions in early as questions submitted late in the presentation may not be processed in time for a response. If you need help with your connection during the presentation you can click the help widget at the bottom of your screen. This presentation will be available on demand within 24 hours should you wish to view it again.

Monica, thank you for being here tonight.

*Monica Frenden:* Thank you so much for having me. I want to first give a shout-out to you guys at Maddie's Fund and Jessie our moderator here tonight. Thank you for putting this on and helping us to educate our shelter and rescue workers to help save more cats and all the work that Maddie's Fund does to help us all every day.

And thank you to everybody who is joining tonight. I'm told we have upwards of 900 people registered, which is a little intimidating for me, but I am so glad that you are all here tonight and that you are wanting to learn how to save feral cats and barn cats and get these guys out of your shelter alive and into good homes and that means the world to me. I'm so happy that you guys are all here. So let's go ahead and dig into it.

So why are we interested in starting working cat programs? Feral cats are often as many of you probably know the very last to make it out of animal control alive. These are cats who have no other live outcome. They're feral or unsuitable for traditional adoption in their behaviors. So if they can't be returned to their habitat they're usually killed at animal control. This is their life path out of animal control.

I'm sure everybody taking this webinar tonight has attempted to socialize an adult, feral cat at some point in their rescue career. And usually when I present this presentation live we all kind of joke and everyone raises their hands and talks about their experiences trying to socialize an adult, feral cat and how that went for them. Usually everyone shows me the scratches on their arm.

But you all know that socialization of true, adult, feral cats is very, very hard. It's very time consuming, resource intensive and even if you're somewhat successful with it with an adult cat you often end up with a cat who is kind of not 100 percent social or adoptable but now he's not quite feral and you're stuck in limbo with what do we do with this cat. And then working cat programs are really inexpensive and easy to start.

So here at Austin Pets Alive our working cat program is hands-down our most cost-efficient program to run. That is we spend the least amount of money on this program and it has a huge impact of saving hundreds and hundreds of lives every year. So this is a program that you can get started no matter what your shelter or rescue budget is. So those are all really awesome reasons of why we should and can start working cat programs.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* Thank you, Monica. To get us started we have our first pole question. So here we go. True or false, a working cat program can replace a T and R slash S and R program? True or false? Click on your screen instead of in the Q&A window. I'm going to give you a few more moments to go ahead and answer this question. All right. And we have our answer. Looks like everybody, 100 percent, are saying false, Monica.

*Monica Frenden:* That is fantastic. So false is the correct answer. A working cat program or barn cat program is going to be complimentary to your trap and return or shelter neuter return program. It is not something that's going to ever replace either of those options. This is strictly for cats who can't be returned to their outdoor habitat. They can't be T and R'd.

They have no habitat to go back into. The habitat is destroyed. Someone is threatening their lives. Whatever it is, they can't be returned. So think of this program, a working cat program, as the very last resort for where to go with feral cats when they have no other option. So awesome, 100 percent. That's fantastic guys.

So let's talk a little bit about which cats are eligible for barn or working cat placement. So like we just said they're not cats who can be T and R'd. These cats are unable to be returned to their original habitat. Often times you'll get cats in a hoarding case that are feral and obviously cannot go back to their home. So that is a place that we get a lot of our feral cats from. The cats should be unsuited for traditional adoption. So if these are friendly, healthy cats and you have capacity for them in your regular adoption program, a working cat program is not the traditional place that those cats would go.

You have finite number of barn cat adopters and so I like to reserve those spots for the cats who truly need it. And the cats should be capable of life in a managed colony. And so what I mean by that too, think of it in terms of these cats are going to a caregiver. So they're going to have shelter. They're going to have food. They're going to have ongoing vet care.

So when you're thinking about capable of life in a managed colony, remember that someone is adopting them. They have an owner. They have an adopter. So it's not as if they're going to have to hunt for food or that kind of thing. These guys are going to have an adopter taking care of them. So they only need to be capable of living in that environment.

Some of the cats we don't consider for barn placement or are immediately not barn cat candidates for us are obviously kittens. If they're four months or under we want to try and send them to foster to get socialized. Feral kittens usually come around pretty quickly if they're three months or under of age. When they start getting beyond three months it starts getting trickier. Declawed cats we don't want to consider for barn placement right off the bat. Geriatric cats we don't consider right off the bat. And cats who can be returned to their habitat through T and R obviously are just not candidates for our barn or working cat program.

That said, we don't have hard and fast rules if a cat is declawed or geriatric and he's feral because you have to consider what other live options exist for that cat. So say you have a geriatric, feral cat. What exists for him? You have to think outside of the box. Obviously we don't want to euthanize that cat because he's geriatric and feral. We're going to think outside the box.

With declawed cats behavior management and trying to fix those angry declaws is certainly challenging and if it's a life or death decisions you can look for alternative placement in a working program for a declawed cat. That may look like a warehouse or a retail store front or some place that's extra safe for him, but these are cats that we generally don't immediately consider for barn cat placement here at Austin Pets Alive.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* It looks like we've come to our second pole question for the night. What are placement options for a senior or geriatric, feral cat? Here are the answers. Live out his life inside your adoption center, working cat placement with special considerations and accommodations, hospice care through your organization. Senior ferals cannot be placed or adopted. Again, please answer on your screen and not in the Q&A window. I also want to remind everybody to get your questions in early so they have enough time to be processed for questions at the end. Okay. We'll go on to the answers. And it looks like we have it says about 100 percent on the second answer and 7.7 percent on the hospice care through your organization, Monica.

*Monica Frenden:* Yeah. This is really awesome. You guys are already professionals at this. I don't know why I'm giving the presentation. So yeah. If you can find special placement for the geriatric cats that's fantastic. And again that can look like a warehouse, a bodega, a retail store, any number of places that would want to take on a cat who needs a little bit more of a posh life. We also do accept and keep ferals in hospice care here at Austin Pets Alive. That is something that we started in the last year or two.

We actually have the term hospice ferals now which I completely love. We're able to do that because we have really large and kind of fancy outdoor cat habitats for our barn cats here. And so we do occasionally get a cat who is very, very geriatric and in the end stages of his life but is comfortable and happy. We can now let them live out their life in one of our enclosures and let them be totally comfortable.

So if you have really great accommodations like that or you're still able to consider the cat's quality of life if you can consider hospice through your organization too. But I'm super glad to hear that no one picked senior ferals cannot be placed and adopted. That's fantastic. Also really

glad to see that we didn't have any results for people choosing that the senior, feral cat should live out his life inside the adoption center. I think we can all kind of agree that that would not be a super humane option for that cat's emotional well-being.

Okay. So now we have the feral cats that we're going to look for barn cat homes for. And they're in the shelter. So how we handle them in the shelter is the first building block on your road to success here. So as most of you know a stressed cat equals a sick cat. And when you have a feral cat that is sick you're treatment options now become really difficult. So imagine maybe most of you have done this, trying to get medication down a feral cat. It's not easy and that is an understatement.

So everything we do here at Austin Pets Alive is about reducing their stress to keep these cats healthy from the onset. And so what that looks like in terms of you sheltering them if you can come up with a dedicated quiet room that is just for your feral cats that's the first key. And that's going to be a big piece of the puzzle.

And a dedicated quiet room, it can be someone's office where you've got their cages or condos. It can be an old storage room, you know, a basement or unused part of your shelter or rescue or house, something that's a quiet place where there's not going to be dogs. There's not going to be people coming through, certainly not the public or visitors poking or looking at them. It's a place just for them where it's quiet and they're not going to be subjected to all those stressors.

When you're talking about how to house them in the shelter everybody should have a feral cat den and I'm going to show you a photo of that on the next slide. Or if you don't have a feral cat den we can talk about alternatives, but you want to cover up their condo if they're going to be confronted with a lot of people or other stimulus passing their condo by.

And then keep in mind little things like the artificial life cycles. Turn the lights off when you leave at night. Turn them on in the morning. We took essentially wild animals and they're used to living outside and all those little things now coming inside can trigger stress responses in the cats that make them sick. When we talk about handling the cats, basically picture that these are raccoons in cat suits. And think about a wildlife rehab model where a raccoon comes in and is sick. You know, how do you treat that animal when you can't touch him?

So a lot of this is going to be appropriate handling or a complete lack of handling. A lack of handling is always our goal with our barn cats here at Austin Pets Alive. When you talk about feeding the feral cats think about where these guys originally came from. These are street cats.

They are used to eating out of the trash bins or people feeding them and usually I know when I feed my colony cats, I'm not buying them the most expensive, grain-free option in the world. I'm picking up the 40-pound bag of chow at the grocery store and that's usually what these cats like.

So when they're under stress at the shelter it's very, very common for them not to eat, so when you feed them, pull out the junk food. We call it the McDonald's of cat food and feed those guys that. It will keep them eating and encourage them to eat with all that delicious food coloring and salt. And then the timing of food, it is not uncommon for these cats to eat only at night. That's when they're most active and when it's the most quiet in your shelter and it's safe to come out. So make sure that you're feeding them the most delicious, \_\_\_\_\_ foods, the wet foods and what not at night so that you can really encourage them to eat.

Few things are worse than when a feral cat stops eating in your shelter. Then things become really difficult. So go into the situation armed with I'm going to give you the junk food. I'm going to feed you at night and just keep you eating right off the bat so you don't get to the point where the cat stops eating. And then the quicker you can get that cat in your door and out your door into an adopter's home is best. Obviously the shelter is a very, very stressful place for all cats, even worse your feral cat. So the less time they have to spend at your shelter or rescue the better.

And then if you can get outdoor habitat, that's always better. So we've got a few outdoor habitats here at Austin Pets Alive that I'm going to show you and by far the cats who live out there are barn cats are the healthiest cats in our population here. They have almost no stress out there. They're in a natural environment. No one bothers them.

It's in a quiet area of the shelter and tons of fresh air. And those cats are by far our healthiest. So it really, really cuts down on sickness and stress if you can get outdoor habitats for your barn cat or working cat program. If you can't, don't worry about it. You can still start a working cat program without outdoor habitats, it's just a nice goal to have those in the back of your mind that it's really going to help you.

So these are the feral cat dens which I mentioned. So if you have a feral cat accepted as feral here at APA you get a feral cat den in your house or your condo. So these are about \$75.00 or \$80.00 and most shelters or municipal shelters nowadays are going to this feral cat den and they're wonderful. So if you haven't seen these before it's a little plastic den that's about cat size. It's got the little circular cut out on the side that the cat will go in or out of and a clear piece of plexi on the front.

So this goes inside the cat condo and the feral cat will zip right into that box because it's a nice, safe, dark little box for him to hide in. And when you have someone feeding or cleaning his cage they can easily just slip that little circle closed to contain the cat and then you can open the cage. You can clean the cage. You can even take the cat out and medicate the cat, whatever you need to do in his little box without needing to handle him. So these are expensive but these are worth their weight in gold. There's a little link there where you can get them on line. There's also many manufacturers selling these nowadays, but they all run about \$75.00 to \$80.00.

Some of our options for housing the cats at the shelter. So on the right is what that feral cat den would look like in the typical stainless steel cage at the shelter. You can see a little cat tucked away in his box. So if I wanted to open that cage and feed or clean the cat you could take a stick if you didn't want to open the cage and you can just pop that circle closed and then the cat would not be able to come out.

The enclosure on the left is what we call our feral cat ISO unit here at Austin Pets Alive. Somebody donated that top component to us and we just built a base onto it for about \$50.00 so that they were out of dirt and mud. And we use that if we need to house a sick cat inside. And you can even see there's a feral cat den in there. So this is an option to get things donated. Old chicken coops and contraptions like this thing on the left are always available on Craigslist or Free Cycle. We get them donated to the shelter here a lot, and you can fashion any number of things up like that for really on the cheap. And those are great options to start your outdoor habitats for barn cats or working cats.

These are two of our larger enclosures here at Austin Pets Alive. The one on the left was built for us by Eagle Scouts. So hopefully your shelter has Eagle Scouts that are approaching you looking to do projects. If not, reach out to them. They're a great group of folks who do projects for non-profits all the time. They spent about \$700.00 on that condo or on that enclosure on the left and it was an old dog run that we retrofitted and they put a roof on it. And then of course we had to go around and make sure it was cat proof. It's on an elevated base so they're not in the mud. And they built a little hutch inside so the cats have a little hutch to be out of the weather.

The enclosure on the right is our large barn cat enclosure. This was custom built for us. This one cost about \$1,500.00 in materials and Maddie's Fund has the blueprints for this if this is something you'd like to make at your shelter. The option on the right will hold easily 20 cats. You can put more in when you need to, but you can easily get 20-25 cats

in the enclosure on the right. It's about – I think it's 14 by 14. And the habitat on the left is I think it's about eight feet long and that will easily hold eight to ten cats if we needed to.

On both of these enclosures, if you guys would kind of notice some of the enrichment items that are available in there. In both spaces the cats have lots of vertical space and places to get up high. And that is imperative to their stress reduction. Both of the enclosures also have the carpeted cat trees and so if your shelter is like ours we get a lot of used carpeted cat trees donated and we can't use those at our main adoption center because we can't disinfect them. And we put them out for the barn cats. And so they will go up in those carpeted cat trees at night and lounge around like a normal cat and they like those quite a bit.

In both enclosures there are some towers for them to get up high. On the enclosure on the right there's little perches for them to go all around. Above the walk in human door is a platform for them and that's their favorite spot. It's way up high above everyone's head and you can always find the bulk of the cats up above that door. And in fact that enclosure overlooks the park here in Austin where we put on Austin City Limits and all the concerts and stuff like South by Southwest, so we always joke that those barn cats up there have the best view of the concerts and for free.

But there's also a hutch. There's a hutch so they can get out of the weather and it's insulated. We can put straw in there in the winter. If you're in the northern climates you can look at putting additional walls into one or more of the sides if you're looking for wind breaks. Here in Austin of course we have pretty mild winters so we don't have to do much other than put up the occasional wind break. But these are both awesome options if and when you're able to build anything at your shelter or rescue to house barn cats or working cats.

What's also nice about having outdoor enclosure space like this is that we are able to take large groups of feral cats when we get an emergency call that there's a hoarding case that an animal control has just taken in. And so usually we'll get those once or twice a year and it's always large numbers of cats, you know, 50-100 or more cats. And often times we have to take them right away because the animal control doesn't have capacity for them.

And so having the outdoor habitats like this has really allowed us to say yes, we can take those 100 feral cats that came from a hoarding case today. We have a place for them to go. And having multiple enclosures like this allows us to kind of separate them out as we need to. So that's another really nice aspect if this was capacity within your shelter as well.

Okay.

So now everybody's favorite question is great; so how do I find these homes for the working cats? And what types of homes am I looking for? So I use the term barn cats a lot because barn cats, everybody knows what that is here in Texas, but working cats may be the more familiar term where you live in the world. But you're looking for barns, farms and ranches, stables, any type of factory or warehouse. We do lots of greenhouses and nurseries who want working cats.

There is a really big, growing trend for winery cats and distillery cats. There are some great social media feeds for distillery cats and winery cats and lots of information out if you want to Google that about how cats are really helping the wineries. Junkyards, churches, storage facilities, any type of retail store or repair shop and then even residential homes.

So what I like to tell people about any type of place that has a rodent problem or a snake problem. Here in Texas we have a lot of people who adopt cats for snake patrol. But think about anybody who has a pest problem that cats can take care of and that's your target audience. That's who you're going to market to and that's who we're going to seek out and tell them that our program exists.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* All right. Looks like we've gotten to our third poll question. It's a true or false question. Cats who are FIV positive can be placed as working cats. Again, answer on your screen and not in the Q&A window. Okay. Give you a few more moments to answer. All right. It looks like we have 100 percent for true, Monica.

*Monica Frenden:* We have a phenomenal audience tonight, Jessie. And everyone knows all the correct answers. That's fantastic. I get this question a lot. Can I place FIV positive cats outside or more often we get an animal control who wants us to take that feral cat who's tested positive for FIV because they won't place it outside.

So there's a ton of research on FIV lately disproving a lot of the myths of yore and we know that FIV is not something that's going to be spread very easily and of course because we are all responsible rescuers and shelters we are spaying and neutering our cats before we're adopting them out. So these are cats who are already neutered and they're not going to be mating.

So they can't pass the FIV through mating and because we're spaying and neutering them their inclination to fight is much less reduced. So FIV for us here at Austin Pets Alive is not a deterrent to them being

adopted as working cats at all. So we will adopt out FIV working cats all day long. So awesome job everybody on your 100 percent correct answer there too.

So rural options are our number one placement for cats. It is barns and ranches by far for us who are the overwhelming adopters of these cats. But for all of our adopters we have some basic requirements if you're interested in adopting a barn cat. We want you to be off a busy road, not have any recent predation so coyotes or dogs or hawks or what have you. We want you to provide shelter to the cat, daily food and water.

There is still in some pockets in society the folks who think that cats can live on mousing alone and so we want them to acknowledge that cats need daily food and water or the cat is going to leave for someone who is providing them daily food and water. We ask our adopters to be responsible for long-term vet care as needed and the adopters need to be willing to combine the cats for relocation period.

Suburban cats, we also do a lot of suburban cat placement and this is an area that most people in our country can find adoptive homes for barn cats. Everybody's got suburban areas. So if you've ever driven around and you see a garage door like the photo on the left with a few inches cracked at the very bottom, you can pick that person out as your local cat lover who is just providing safe harbor to their neighborhood cats. I absolutely love to see those garage doors open like that when I drive around.

Garage cats are really, really common. We have a ton of adopters who house cats in their garage in suburban neighborhoods like this. If they back up to a natural preserve, if they're on water like a lake or a creek or anything like that they've got rat problems. Really, really common for suburban people to want to adopt working cats nowadays and more often times than not they become garage cats.

If you're going to look for suburban adopters a couple of things to keep in mind is to make sure their neighborhood is cat friendly. Some people like to when they're setting out to adopt a barn cat they think it's going to stay in their backyard or they may even say well my yard is fenced; they'll stay in, right. So of course the cat is not going to stay in even the fenced yard.

So we'll make sure that their neighborhood is cat friendly first and usually that's just a really quick conversation with the potential adopter and we just ask like hey, are you where this cat's going to roam up to half mile in every direction. Are your neighbors cool with this? They're not going to mind that the cat may be out on their car hood one morning

or scratching in the rose bushes. And we want to make sure that there's not a homeowner's association that bans outdoor pets. And so we'll ask people to look into that.

More often than not, yeah, my neighborhood's always got cats. Everybody's got the same rat problems that I do. We're all on board with this. But it's good to make sure that that is not going to be a problem before you place the cats so the cats don't end up needing relocation again. This is a great fit for cats who are a little bit more social. They're going to have a few more neighbors than somebody who lives very rurally. So if you've got some cats who are on the more social side of feral, this might be a very good option for them where they're going to get a little more human interaction.

Urban cats are now a really growing segment for us too. I'm sure you guys have heard a lot about working cat programs in cities. New York City has one and Chicago has a very famous working cat program and these are cats being placed in downtown cities. And so even if you're in a very urban location you can have a working cat program. Your housing is going to differ a little bit.

Most people are not going to have barns and garages and storage sheds for these cats to live in so you can retrofit cat houses to be like the one on the left where you've got a bunch of crates linked together and you've got insulated houses inside for the cat. You can see options on the right where somebody's made a little homemade option for the cat to get in and out of. But urban options completely exist for working cats.

Think about all the rat problems that cities have and the money that cities spend on trying to rid rats from people's homes and work places. I think Chicago was voted the last several years as the rattiest city in the United States. So perhaps it's not too big of a shock that they've got an outstanding working cat program going there with a long wait list of cats from all the people who want them.

If you're going to do urban placements I try to put cats who I know have come from an urban environment back into an urban environment. And my hope is that those cats are already kind of smart to cars. They're already familiar with roadways and how cars work and how to avoid them versus taking a cat that I know came from a rural environment and might not be as street savvy. So I try and match up urban cats to urban cats whenever I can if I'm doing an urban placement.

So how to advertise for these places. So first and foremost your website needs to have an online adoption application for your working cat program. And obviously you're going to have a little section on your

website that talks about what your working cat program is, what it's about and why people need it. So your adoption application should be on your website.

I like to have it on your website because it is so easy and convenient for people. They don't have to call to get hold of you. They can just immediately decide this is the program for me. I've looked into it. I want to move forward. They can put the adoption application in right away. It doesn't get any easier than that. And you want to make it easy of course for all adopters to do the right thing and adopt from your shelter.

Newspapers are still a pretty effective means of advertising especially in the rural areas of the US where that is still a really frequently used means of getting the news. And often times your local, independent newspapers will run an ad for you in their free space and we still do that sometimes here down in Austin when we have an offer.

Flyers are free to make or cost pennies to make and I'll show you some examples of flyers as we go on here, but flyers are really, really effective and think about anywhere to post them. What I like to tell people is imagine you own ten acres of land. Where are the places that you would shop at and post your flyers there. So you might be going to farm supply stores or feed stores, your Home Depot type stores. Anywhere you might go say if you needed to buy a tractor or some fence post. Where would you go if you had 10-20 acres of land?

Craigslist is our most popular method of advertising our working class program. We post on Craigslist twice a week. We post in the pet section and the farm and garden section. You're going to get a very different audience in the farm and garden section of Craigslist than you do on the pet section of Craigslist. So on the farm and garden section of Craigslist it's all people selling tractors and livestock and hay and all sorts of things where rural if you've got livestock or you've got a farm or a ranch. It's a very different audience than the pet section. So we post twice a week in our local Craigslist for our working cat program advertising our program. And definitely look at that in your area.

Equine clubs and trail rides are another magnificent source of advertising your new working cat program. Your local horse community are all animal lovers and everyone who has a stable and horses does not want mice and rodents in their expensive horse feed. So you have a built in audience that you're ready to provide them with a service that they already need. So definitely hook up with your local equine club.

Farmer's markets and county fairs are another awesome place for you to set up a table with your organization and talk about your new barn cat program. At the farmer's markets you're going to also get an audience who is likely very interested in living with as little pesticide or \_\_\_\_\_ pesticide in their life as possible so you can present your very ecofriendly pesticide-free garden cat as a solution to their pest problem. That works great at farmer's markets.

If your local radio station has a call-in sometimes they have segments where people are free to call in and talk about things maybe they're buying or selling or swapping or what events they have going on in their communities today. That's a great, free way for you to get the word out about your working cat program. Next Door is a new way to get the word out about your working cat program especially if you are a city or municipal shelter.

Most Next Door, most of our municipal shelters can do a city-wide post on Next Door. And so if you are a municipal shelter you may have the ability to post at every single resident in your community who's on Next Door and talk to them about your new working cat program. And then all the little neighborhood groups that exist on Facebook so pet lovers or animals available for rehoming, whatnot. Look for your local pet groups on Facebook and you can post there and talk about your new working cat program and cats that you have available for working homes.

This is an example of our adoption application here at Austin Pets Alive. This is on line. It's a very basic application. I'm only asking what I really need to know. I want to make it convenient and easy for people to adopt these cats. And so it has their basic name, address, phone number, email, the type of facility they have for cats. And some of the drop downs include warehouse, farm, stable, ranch, your basic options there or maybe it's a residential home.

I like to know what type of facility people have because if they put down that they have a warehouse that is going to alert me that maybe this is an option where I can place one of those special needs cats, maybe a declawed cat or a feline leukemia positive cat or somebody who needs indoor placement but is still a feral cat. So basically if somebody puts down that they have a warehouse we're going to get on the phone and call them right away and talk more about their warehouse situation to see if they're a spot where I can put some of those special needs cats.

We ask how many cats they're interested in adopting. We adopt out a minimum of two cats at a time so you can get two or more. We find that when you adopt out two or more they have a much better success rate down the road of staying. These are cats who don't take any joy from

companionship of humans. They need species appropriate companionship. Feral cats are pack animals as you know from everyone who feeds colonies of cats. Cats run in colonies and so they do much better if they're relocated with a friend.

They're also going to be in confinement for a few weeks so it's important that they have somebody with them to keep them company, keep each other warm when it's cold outside, to demonstrate safety to one another. Cats demonstrate safety to each other so if you have one cat who is less inclined to eat and he sees his buddy cat coming out to eat that cat is demonstrating to him hey, it's safe to come out and eat too. So they do much better when they're relocated with a friend.

We ask what you're going to feed the cat because we want to make sure that you're prepared to feed the cats and they won't have to live on hunting alone. We do ask if you've lost cats to coyotes or predators recently. We want to make sure that we aren't being irresponsible on our placements of course. We started putting a new question on our application this year that asked would you be interested in special needs barn cats.

And there's a little line underneath that that says and by special needs we mean maybe it's a tripod cat who's missing a leg or maybe it is a cat who only has one eye. And it's been really enlightening for us to see that about 50 percent on our applicants will put yes, that they are interested in adopting a special needs cat. And that was something I wasn't expecting but it is – like I said, half of our applicants say that they are interested in a special needs cat.

And then the last box at the bottom of the application is my absolute favorite. It just says is there anything else you'd like us to know. And people put the most enlightening information in this section and I'm not sure if it's because it's a short, simple application and there's just a lot of info that they want me to know, but people will put more info than I could ever get from them through standard question and answer.

So this person has written down I've got one and a half acres. I've got a corral that holds horses. They will tell you everything you need to know and often a lot more. This is a really good section to have on your application. I would definitely recommend it. But whatever you're going to do it's going to be on your website. It's going to be easy to find on your website. Don't bury it under 12 paragraphs of other text. Make sure it's easy to find. If someone wants to adopt a working cat they should be able to get to your website and find it in a matter of seconds.

This is what one of our ads looks like here at Austin Pets Alive. It's got

a nice photo of a kitty looking like he's out on the hunt for some mice. And it just talks about barn cats are looking for work. And it talks about why we have a barn cat program, that these are outdoor cats who don't want to be friends. They are looking for a landlord only, if you will.

And we reiterate in all of our ads that these are spayed and neutered cats who are vaccinated, microchipped and healthy. Very few people are in the market for intact cats who are going to have kittens upon kittens upon kittens. So we want to reiterate that these are spayed and neutered cats. They're healthy. They're vaccinated. They're ready to go. That's a big appeal obviously.

This is what one of our Craigslist ads looks like and these are the ones that we post twice a week. Our team of volunteers who post these twice a week change up the wording. They change up the photo. They make it fresh all the time, but twice a week Craigslist under pets and under farm and garden. This is what one of our flyers here looks like. This is the one I really like if you're at a farmer's market or maybe a nursery or greenhouse where you've got an audience who is very interested in non-toxic pest control.

So if you think about it cats are the very old fashioned, the very first pest control that ever existed. They're certainly green and ecofriendly. So this is a nice flyer that kind of plays on that thinking. I really like to have the flyers that have the little cutouts on the very bottom where people can tear it away and take away with your website that's going to link to your address. This works a lot better than brochures because I think a lot of people are hesitant to take brochures and brochures are also going to cost you a lot more in printing than these flyers will.

So we print out these flyers and we basically put them off like I said anywhere you would think to shop if you had ten or twenty acres. And in Texas here we've got mailbox banks down at the end of our streets and boulevards and whatnot and if somebody on that street has adopted barn cats ask them to put this flyer on their mailbox bank, on their message board. This is a great flyer though for those communities who value organic living.

This is another flyer that we use a lot. We also hang these up in our regular cat adoption centers here at Austin Pets Alive because I want people to know that if they're coming in to adopt a cat but they really want a cat who's outdoors 24/7 that they can still go home with a cat today. It will just be this cat. And one of the other things we like to do is email a PDF of one of these flyers out to our volunteer or foster base and it's a very small ask.

And my email usually reads, you know, dear volunteers, don't worry I'm not asking you to take home anything that's furry and meowing today. And I'm not asking you to get out your checkbook so everyone please open this email. A small ask if you could print out five or ten of these flyers and keep them in your car. And if you're going to stop at one of these places that you think might have an audience that will be interested in barn cats would you mind hanging it up. It doesn't cost anything. It's a very, very easy ask for volunteers and fosters to do that.

Also ask them hey, can you guys hang this up in your workroom or your breakroom at work. You'll get an absolutely different audience. But flyers are still a very, very effective way to advertise barn cats and it's a really great way to reach out to your volunteers and give them an effective means of helping you advertise.

This is an example of a newspaper ad that we ran back in Illinois at my old organization there. Mice in the barn? Everybody has that issue if you've got a barn or stable or ranch so catchy little tag lines help. We talked a little bit about your friend the horse. So everybody in the world who has a horse needs a cat to keep the rats out of their grain. Horse people are already animal lovers so these are already people that are interested in saving lives. They probably already have a cat or two if not more, but they can usually take in another one.

Riding clubs are great. The horse shows are a great place. If you have a local horse show come into town it's a great place for you to go set up a table and talk about your working cat program. Go from stable to stable and introduce yourself and give them a little flyer. If you've got dressage barns or the polo clubs, riding schools, all those things in your vicinity you can certainly call them up and introduce yourself and talk about your new working cat program and see if you can collaborate with them.

One of the greatest things to help you advertise your new working cat program is going to be your local media, your local television and radio. These are media darlings. Working cat programs are media darlings. And what I mean by that is the media loves to do pieces on working cat programs. I'm sure you've seen them in the news lately.

They're kind of all the rage in animal sheltering. And I think why that is is because working cat programs really make sense to people. Most people who grew up with grandpa's farm, you know, you went out and visited grandpa's farm. Grandpa had a working cat on that farm. It was just common sense. If you have a barn you have barn cats. And the media picks up on this and the audience really likes it.

And so the media is forever approaching us looking for barn cat pieces

and how our barn cat program is doing here in Austin. And it is a really feel good piece. The media likes to throw in after all the bad things that have happened every day in the world it's nice for them to close with a feel good piece. And the fact is that most people in this country aren't aware that feral cats are being killed in our animal control centers in every state in this country.

And so when the media can talk about that and say hey, these cats are actually killed but here's this new program that's getting them out alive and is providing a really valued service to the community that's a really easy piece for the media to pick up on and run with. And so when you get your barn cat program launched when you get home this is going to be one of your allies to help get the word out to the community. And as you do that we have something that our marketing team here likes to call stunt placements. And these are really high profile placements that the media is going to be all about and you're going to get a ton of publicity for and I'll give you a few examples here.

The one on the left was Alex and Boo. This is a very large grocery store chain in Texas who adopted some of our working cats and they live out in the garden centers. They got a very large garden center attached to the grocery store and the cats are garden center cats. They've got the little sign up there and people love them and the store gets amazing feedback on those.

The feedback from the store is actually that the sales in the garden center have gone up dramatically because everyone who comes in with children wants to see the cats. So they get mom or dad to take them out to the garden center to try and find the cats. So that was a nice opportunity to do a media piece with that grocery store chain and say hey, this store chain adopted cats from Austin Pets Alive and saved a couple of cats and how it worked for them and how well it works for us and most importantly how well it works for the cat.

The photo on the top right is some of our team when we adopted some working cats to the Austin Police Mounted Patrol. And they needed some working cats for their mounted patrol stable. And that was something that the media absolutely loved. They loved that these were now official police animals. These working cats that we adopted are actually full Austin police animals afforded all the rights of any police officer and so that was a really feel good piece and the media was all about that. I think that one got national media.

But a lot of your bigger cities you're going to have mounted patrol units with your police departments and so don't hesitate to call up your local police departments' mounted patrol unit and ask if they've got some

police stables that might be in use and in need of adopting some working cats. Down on the bottom right is this cat who is lounging about in the sun and she has every right to be as happy as she looks because she got adopted by a five star resort here in Austin that has several, several acres on waterfront.

And so of course being on the waterfront they had pretty severe rodent issues and they did not want to use poison to deal with it. So they adopted six working cats from us and the one little cat is so popular she has her own Instagram account. But so this was another opportunity for us to do some co-media with that resort and the resort gets good media and publicity from this. Our shelter gets good media and publicity from this and the word gets out about how this program exists.

So these are all examples of stunt placement that your media team will absolutely love if you can line some up. And what I recommend when you get your barn cat program going just open up Google maps and kind of poke around and see what opportunities might be in your neck of the woods for some of these stunt placements. You know, do you have a very beloved, local business who might be interested? Do you have a new business that's opening up? Do you have a new winery that's opening up? Is there some really culturally important location in your community that you could co-media, co-brand with to do a stunt placement and get that media and get that extra attention?

So once we found our adopters and we've got our cats and everybody is ready to go these are the best known practices for how to actually relocate them to their new adopted home. So if they're going to live in a crate, in a wire crate or a plastic crate during their confinement period, that crate should be kept inside the location where the cats are going to permanently live. So imagine that the cats are going to imprint on this new facility that you're placing them in. So if you want them in the hay shed, put that crate in the hay shed where you want them to ultimately live.

The cat should be confined for two to four weeks. And so we say that two weeks is minimum and four weeks is optimum. We don't mandate four weeks from our adopters because we find that two weeks is about maximum that a lot of people can commit to this. Feral cats are very, very messy when they're confined which is out of frustration, but they're very messy when they're confined. So it can be quite a bit of work for folks to keep them confined in a crate for more than a couple of weeks.

Every day they have to be cleaned pretty thoroughly and if it's going to be cold or inclement weather people are going to have to go out every day and change the litter, change the food. So two weeks is about the

maximum that a lot of people are willing to keep the cats confined for. When people come adopt we'll tell them hey, two weeks is the bare minimum, four weeks is best. We ask you to do two to four based on what you can do.

We like to think of the two to four weeks as the honeymoon period. We tell people to woo the cats during that period and show them what a wonderful new adopter and a new home these cats have. It's usually by feeding canned cat food at least once a day and gaining the cat's trust a little bit and getting them into your sense of routine. And it helps if you can make a special call while you're feeding that wet food in case you want to get the cats in at night or do a head count if somebody needs to be accounted for. You can make that hear kitty, kitty call that they've come to associate with the sound of a can of cat food opening.

At the end of their confinement period the crate door is just going to be nonchalantly left open and the cats will come to leave the crate of their own free will. Sometimes the cats will continue to go back into the crate even once they're free because they've learned that is their safe zone where they get fed and watered. So if you have borrowed a crate from us at Austin Pets Alive we tell you to go ahead and keep that crate for as long as the cat is using it and bring it back when you're done. But don't be surprised if the cat continues to use it after they're allowed out.

This is what a relocation crate can kind of look like when it's set up. I call the box inside the hidey box. This is really important to have the hidey box. If you want to send feral cat dens home with adopters you certainly can use that instead of the hidey box. That's a pretty expensive proposition to get into though if you're going to be sending feral cat dens home with adopters. Instead you can use any overturned cardboard box and the important part of this hidey box is that the opening of that box is going to face away from the opening of the crate.

So on the photo on the right you can see that that box faces the side of the crate and not the crate door. And so this is so that the cat can go inside of that box and it can hide and pretend that I'm not coming in and I can open the crate door and I can change his food and bedding and water and whatever, and I can do all of that without confronting the cat head on. So he's not even going to see me. He's going to stay in his little box in there and pretend that this isn't happening and I'm going to go away as soon as possible.

If that box were facing me, if it were facing the opening of the door when I reach my hand in it would look like I'm coming right at that cat and that's when he would bolt out and run past my shoulder and escape. So really important that you have the hidey box inside there. If you

don't have a hidey box at all, exactly what I just described is going to happen. The cat's going to freak out when you open that crate door and probably escape. So definitely give them the hidey box.

Put your food and water and your litter right up front so you can get in there and change those out daily. Of course try and put as much space between your litter and your food as possible. A 42 inch, Midwest crate or a 42 inch crate of any brand is a perfect size for two feral cats. We like to buddy them up in the crate so that they have that companionship. It is not necessary for the two feral cats to know one another to be crated together.

These are cats who can communicate with one another. They speak cat if you will and adoption day is probably one of the worst days of their life where they don't know what's happening and they're terrified. And having a companion who speaks their language and understands them is of comfort to them and reduces their stress. So even if they don't know one another one of the most common questions I get is are they going to fight and the answer is no, they're not.

If they are squabbling inside the crate then I would encourage you to examine if those cats are really feral because this trick will not work with domestic cats. You put two friendly cats in a crate together they're going to of course hiss and snort and carry on. But two feral cats are both going to run into that hidey box together and bunk down with each other and use each other for comfort. So this is what the relocation crate looks like if you're going to be using crates.

So let's kind of run through the whole process, step-by-step, how we do it down here in Austin and you can start thinking about how you might want it to work where you live. So step one the application comes in. You're checking it for suitability. You're going to notice if there's any red flags and deal with those. If everything on that application looks good then the next step is that we Google map the address.

So you can easily see from Google maps what kind of a location this is. Is it off of busy roads? Does it look relatively safe? The location on the right has got lots of trees which I like to see trees. They're not required but I like to see trees because of course cats can get up those and escape predators. Google maps often has a street view which is the big picture on the left where you can get a really advanced view. You can see where the cats might be living if this looks like a fun area for the cats to live in.

So that is our step two. We just Google map the address that you've put on your application and check out that this is going to be a suitable

location for the cat. Our next step once your address and your application has checked out we send you a detailed email. It thanks you for your interest in barn cats. It covers again that these are feral cats. They don't want attention from you. They usually can't be handled. They'll need access to a barn or structure or some sort of shelter.

They need food and water and basically you're reiterating all of the requirements of adopting a cat, a barn cat or working cat, and making sure that the adopter understands what type of cat temperament they're getting. And we of course put in again that these cats are spayed and neutered, the fact that they've been microchipped, are healthy and ready to go and that there's no adoption fee. And then we throw in that these cats come from the euthanasia group, euthanasia room from animal control so you should really good about your decision to adopt some barn cats.

We close this email out with a question that says if this is all agreeable to you please reply and we'll move forward. I like to have that last little segment in there because I really want to make sure that people have read and understand the type of cat that they're applying for and the requirements of having that cat. So most of us know getting folks to read all of the information that we would like them to is *[inaudible due to barking]*. So this is a condensed form of all the information that I'm asking them. Hey, you need to reply to me that this is exactly what you want and that we're all on the same page.

So the adopter will reply to that email and here's where you're going to work out the details of whether you want to send the cat home via your own transport, whether the people want to pick the cat up. This is where you're going to make all of your arrangements. Here in Austin we schedule all of our barn cat adoptions ahead of time so that gives us time to go wrangle the kitties from our outdoor enclosures and have them loaded up and ready to go for the adopter. It also makes sure that we have the appropriate staff to go out and wrangle the barn kitties and get them ready.

You can choose to deliver the cats if you're so inclined. That's been pretty successful for some of our apprentices who have taken our barn cat apprenticeship here. And the downside to that is of course that that is a huge resource for you to be driving all around your state delivering barn cats. So you won't ever be able to adopt out the same volume if you're delivering, but it is a nice service that people did like when we did offer delivery.

And then the last step, we follow up with all of our adoptions at one week out. For barn cats we also follow up at three months and one year

out. And we send a very simple survey that just says how many cats did you adopt. Of the two adopted, how many are still with you today? And if any are missing what do you think happened to them? And we send this survey out so that we can improve our program so that we can figure out hey, how long did you keep that cat confined and what was your success rate and try and fine tune those details to come up with best practices.

But we also – it's important to know that the work we're doing has a success rate or what do we need to change. We want to be responsible of course in all of our placements and this helps us do that. This helps us track how successful they're going at three months and a year later and this is an anonymous survey that's just email based. A volunteer runs this and you don't have to do this at all, but it's very, very nice to have this data.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* Thank you, Monica. That was all great information. We've come to our fourth and our last poll question. Of cats who went missing from their adopters what is the greatest reported reason? And the answers are cat was killed by a predator, cat was killed by a car, cat is now living at my neighbor's house/elsewhere, I don't know where the cat went. Again, answer on your screen and not in the Q&A window. Give you a few more moments. Okay. And we'll advance to the answer screen.

Okay. It looks like we have 10 percent for the first one, Monica, 10 percent for the second to last one and 80 percent for the last one.

*Monica Frenden:* Awesome. So everyone's gut instincts are pretty correct here. So I don't know where the cat went is the leading response. And that's not necessarily a negative outcome. I don't know where the cat went. These are cats who are used to living outside for the most part, cats who have landed in your working cat program and just because the cat isn't present any longer is not necessarily a bad outcome, doesn't mean he's necessarily deceased.

The second most common option is cat is now living at my neighbor's house. We do get funny emails and phone calls that hey, the neighbor has stolen my barn cat again. She keeps putting out milk and tuna and all my barn cats keep going over there. That is pretty common. I've had my own colony of cats that have been led over to my neighbor's house and now live there so it's even happened to me where the cats are just going to go wherever the proverbial grass is greener. So that's really common too.

This is kind of where our pole led to some interesting results for you

guys. The next greatest reported reason is actually the cat was killed by a car. Road risk is still up there as a potential risk which is why we look at the distance to keep away from busy roads when we look at adoption applications.

The least likely answer that adopters submit when they tell us that a cat is no longer there, the least likely reported answer is actually the cat was killed by a predator. So of all the cats that we have relocated over the years, thousands and thousands, there is less than a 2 percent response that a cat was considered killed by a predator. So that is actually our least likely reported reason why a cat is no longer present at their adopted home.

So some of those surveys that we send out are really important to know that, to have that data so that we know our program is working or maybe it's not working and that data is helpful for us to fix it. But what we know from over 3,000 barn cat placements here in Austin is that our long-term success rate, our success at one year later is that 85 percent or more of the cats are still present a year later and they're thriving and they're doing well. And we know that predation has accounted for less than 2 percent of the cats who have gone missing. And the most frequent cause is that they ran away or are living elsewhere. I don't know where the cat is at.

And so while I would love 85 percent to be 100 percent I think that is a fantastic number and I always want it to get better. But I'm pretty pleased with 85 percent especially when I consider what that cat's chance of survival would have been if we had left it at animal control. So I think if I were a feral cat I would take an 85 percent chance of long-term success over an unfortunate situation at animal control.

So definitely keep data as you start your barn cat program. It's not only going to help you fine tune your program and make corrections where you need to or prove your successes, but it's also going to help you get grant funding when you look to pay for this program. Your grant funders are going to want to see how your program is working and you're going to need that data to show them.

And so I wanted to kind of talk about some of the successes of this program and other folks success with this program. Maddie's Fund and Austin Pets Alive has had a working cat apprenticeship going on for a little over a year now where we've had awesome apprentices from across the country come spend some time with us down here in Austin and we teach hands on how to start a barn cat program.

And I wanted to put in some quotes from our apprentice graduates about

how their barn cat programs are going because I'm always afraid that I give this presentation and everyone thinks I can't do it. What all these people did I can't. And I want everybody to realize that this is absolutely a program you can go home and start tomorrow morning and you can do this no matter how much funding you have, how much space at the shelter you have.

So these are some quotes from our graduates who have gone home and they've adopted out hundreds of cats. They've got a waiting list going even though their program just started a couple of months ago. Twenty eight barn cats adopted this month. I thought it was really important to reiterate that this is something you can do no matter where you are in this country. The map on the bottom right is a map of where our apprentices for the barn cat program have come from to date. And as you can see they're from all sorts of different states and different communities that have been wildly successful in getting their programs going.

Definitely take to heart that this is something you can go home and start to do right now. If you are interested in a Maddie's Fund barn cat apprenticeship at Austin Pets Alive I'm sure Maddie's has all this information right up on that website. That's going to be linked to this presentation so definitely check that out. And like I said keep in mind this is absolutely something you can do as evidenced by all these little red spaces on the map on the right and all these quotes of people that report back that they are doing awesome. Twelve weeks out and we placed 70 cats. Phenomenal. So they can do it. They've done it. You guys can do it too.

So let's talk about some FAQs before we get to our questions. Do we charge adoption fees? No, we don't. I would encourage you not to charge an adoption fee for your working cats. You're basically competing with free cats available on Craigslist or available on line so we want people to make the good decision to come adopt from your shelter and get a spayed or neutered, healthy cat for free versus to go online and get an intact cat for free from somewhere and contribute to the homeless cat population outside.

We don't charge crate deposits. If you want to borrow a crate from us we – all the years I've been doing this I've never had a crate stolen by an adopter. So we do not charge crate deposits. We don't do home checks. We don't do them for working cats. We don't do them for domestic cats in our main adoption program. Don't do home checks. And we don't ask people to do excessive hoop jumping.

So like I said the information on the application is very short and brief.

I'm not interested in what these people do for a living or how much income they have or you know, what their childhood pet's name was. I'm only interested in what I need to know, who you are, where you live. Are you planning to feed the cats and take care of the cats? Do you have a suitable location? I want to make it easy and convenient for people to do the right thing and help save these cats.

Yes, we adopt working cats out all year long even in the winter. When I was in the northern states we adopt these cats out all year long. If you are already taking cats who have lived on the streets, these are cats who already have their winter coats and they've already been living outside so absolutely you can adopt them in the winter. To boot, now you're giving them shelter sometimes in a heated barn, but these are cats who absolutely can be adopted all year long.

Like we talked about we adopt the cats out in pairs. They do better in two or more unless you have that rare alpha-type cat who will not tolerate a friend. Make the adoption super easy. Provide the tools that people need to be successful at this. So always offer your backup support if people have any questions. God forbid a cat escapes, cat gets the sniffles when he gets home. Make sure you're providing support for those adopters so that their long-term success for your cat is as best as it possibly can be.

All right. We are at that time of the presentation where we are ready for some questions.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* Thank you so much, Monica. That was all great information. I know that we got a lot of questions from everybody. We will try our best to get to as many of them as we can. With that I'm going to go ahead and start with our first question. Okay. So our first question is how do you pay for the vet care, food, litter and advertising for this program without charging adoption fees?

*Monica Frenden:* You know, that's a great question. So most of the advertising that we talked about in this presentation is all things you can do for free. You can print those flyers out. You can post of Craigslist all for free. You're going to get your information up on your website all for free. Thank God the media does not charge you to come out and do a story on your brand new program. Those are all things that are free means of you marketing this program.

As far as food and litter, all of our barn cats here at Austin Pets Alive use our donated litter and cat food that's given to us. So it's a win-win because those cats also prefer the off brands of cat food and grocery store brands of cat food, whereas out cats in our main adoption center

have a corporate sponsor who gives them nice grain-free food. So anything we get donated we're able to feed the barn cats. Not high expense there.

For the litter, the litter can be pricey. If you're having to buy litter what we like to do here is use all brands and types of litter that we don't prefer to use in our main adoption center. So if you've got, you know, the pelleted litter or the wood stove pellets, that kind of a thing that you can use and get bulk and cheap that's a great way to go about it.

Vet care is obviously the biggest expense of this program and one of the things that works really well is this. We work at Austin Pets Alive with a few shelters who do not have barn cat programs of their own but they want those cats at their shelter to get out alive. And so one of the things we've done is partner with those shelters and say hey, we can take your feral cats from you that otherwise would be euthanized in your care.

Can you get them ready for us? Can you vet them. We tell them here's what we need. We'd like them to be spayed and neutered, have a rabies vaccine, a FVRCP vaccine, you know, flea prevention, whatever it is, microchip. Whatever the vet package that you want is to reach out to those shelters and say hey, we have this new program. Here's what I need from you. And we work with a huge number of shelters who are more than happy to say we can absolutely do that. We can fully vet those cats for you if you could take them from us.

If you don't have that and you need to cover those vet care costs on your own I really strongly encourage you to look at grant funding for your new working cat program. There is a ton of grant funding available for working cat programs especially right now. Best Friends is a huge supporter of working cat programs. Obviously our friends at Maddie's Fund are huge supporters of working cat programs. Lots and lots of grant foundations exist to help support innovative programs like these.

If you're tracking your data like we talked about you're going to have a really easy time presenting to the grant foundation that if you give me \$5,000.00 I can spay and neuter and vet, you know, 200 barn cats and get them adopted. And at the end of that grant period I can easily show you that with your \$5,000.00 I have gotten 200 cats out of animal control and placed them into adoptive homes. That's something that grant foundations really, really love is to be able to support that their money is going to provable success. And so this program is really, really easy to get grant funding for. Our development team loves the barn cat program because so much funding is out there and available for this program. So I hope that that helps.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* Thank you, Monica. That was great information. We have our next question. Have you correlated the 80 percent of don't know where the cat went with the length of time spent in an enclosure acclimating?

*Monica Frenden:* Yes. So where we came up with the two week versus four week. So our data has shown that if you keep the cat confined for two weeks, down the road there's about a 75 percent chance that that cat will stay long term. If you keep your cats confined for four weeks our data jumps up to a 90 percent success rate. And so when people come adopt when they ask what's the difference, two weeks or four weeks, we'll even tell them that.

We show that if you keep the cat confined for two weeks about a 75 percent chance that cat will stay. If you can do four weeks there's a 90 percent chance that they will stay and that can help encourage people to keep them confined for the full length of time.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* Perfect. All right. We're going to move onto our next question. How do you safely remove the cats from the feral cat enclosures without chasing?

*Monica Frenden:* It is certainly interesting. Some are more cooperative than others for sure. So if you notice in our photos of the feral cat enclosures the hutches all have little cat-sized doors on them. And one thing we like to do is line up a feral cat den or cat carrier to the exit of the hutch or the cat house and we can try and shoo the cat into the feral cat den. And that's usually successful a good half the time. If they can be shoed successfully to go into a carrier on their own accord, then we do need to net the cats and we use specifically designed animal nets, not fishing nets.

The fishing nets can hurt cats so you want to get a mesh net that is available specifically for this purpose. They sell those at [animalcare.net](http://animalcare.net) too, the same place that sells the feral cat dens. So we get them to go in the carriers of their own accord if at all possible by just shoing them from their safe little hutch into the feral cat den or carrier. And if that fails then we do have to net the cats and we have specifically trained staff here at Austin Pets Alive who does that and who is trained how to do that with the least amount of time and stress on the cats as possible.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* All right. Here's our next question. How can we create outdoor feral housing at our shelter in the northeast where the temperatures for several months are brutal?

*Monica Frenden:* Awesome question. So we've had some Maddie's apprentices come from the northeast and we even had someone from Ontario come

down recently and they had the same concerns and so we've worked through this with them. Some of the things you can do is you can repurpose a 10 by 10 garden shed or whatever size garden shed you have to be your barn cat enclosure. And fence in an outdoor area for the cats with chain-link kennel or, you know, horse fencing, whatever you can. Build an outdoor area that links up to a shed or that links up to a garage bay or something.

Our apprentice friends that came from South Suburban Humane Society in Illinois hooked up, made an enclosure for their feral cats from an old garage bay that they had because they were concerned about temperatures in Chicago in the winter. And so you can have outdoor space available for the cats without forcing the cats to live totally outdoors all season round. So if you're in the northeast or you're up north where it's frighteningly cold, give them outdoor access but also where they can come into a building. The cheap 8 by 8 or 10 by 10 sheds work beautifully. As long as it has a cat door and the cats can get in and out that can be your outdoor cat enclosure.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* Perfect. Okay. How long does the working cat program keep feral cats at the shelter prior to adoption? Is there a time limit?

*Monica Frenden:* So here in Austin Pets Alive and at many of our partners who now have barn cat programs up and running most of you we actually have a wait list of people waiting, adopters waiting for their barn cats to come in. So when we have a wait list the cats are not kept at the shelter for a very long period of time at all, long enough for us to fully vet them and to assess their behavior to make sure that they are an outdoor cat candidate.

There is no time limit on any animal here at Austin Pets Alive. Every one stays until they find an adopter, but normally if you are starting a new working cat program try and get them out the door, turn around as quick as humanly possible. Time is a luxury that I know a lot of shelters and rescues don't have. So you're going to need to do the best you can at assessing their behavior and determining if they're really feral or not.

Time is a really valuable tool for that but it's a luxury that we don't always have. But our goal here in Austin is to get them placed as quickly into an adoptive home as possible and if that means we never really have to shelter them at all that's even better. So we'll have some instances where we have people on a wait list to adopt their barn cats and we know we have vetted ferals coming in that day and we'll get those cats out the door the same day that they came in as we can. So a little sheltering time as humanly possible is best.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* Thank you, Monica. Our county has a no roaming law for cats. How do I speak to that concern?

*Monica Frenden:* Yeah. That is a tough one when you get into legislative issues like that. I know Los Angeles County is dealing with the same thing. So some of the things you can do are seek places outside of your county. And one thing you might consider doing if you're going to do placements outside of your county is look for volunteers who can deliver for you. So if you've got somebody who is, you know, it's too far to come to your shelter because you're advertising outside of the area, not a problem. We can deliver those cats to you. So you can advertise outside of your county absolutely for sure.

Of course if you've got some folks are up for a legislative battle definitely befriend them but look at adopting outside of your area. And secondly you can look for indoor cat placements. There are not going to be as many of those by any account, but you can still place your cats in warehouses and storefronts, bodegas, any number of those places where they're going to be retail cats. We've placed a lot of cats as shop cats here in Austin and they're strictly indoor. That's something you can absolutely look into until you can basically get around that no roaming law in your area.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* All right. Here's our next question. If a barn cat needs veterinary care after it is adopted out how does APA recommend the adopter handle retraining? Does APA offer assistance?

*Monica Frenden:* So if it needs veterinary care after its adopted out or even if someone wants to keep the cat current on vaccines we'd recommend live trapping. So you're going to want to use true catch or have a heart, you know, a humane live trap. And when people adopt working cats from us we also give them information on our low-cost clinics in our area who do low-cost veterinary care or vaccine clinics and those clinics that we call feral-friendly.

So a lot of private vets are not in the market for providing care to a feral cat so we know who in our area is feral-cat friendly. The clinic that knows what to do when a feral cat arrives in a trap and it needs its rabies vaccine, they're not going to balk at that. They're going to be able to get it done really quickly. So we provide that information to our adopters. Hey, if you need vet care, if you need vaccines, here's who we recommend in our area. Here's the trap that we recommend how to do that.

We do offer assistance when we're needed to. So we are more than happy to offer our assistance on any of our animals for the life of the

animal. We also make a lifetime guarantee to every animal in our care. So if the animal is ever not working out we will absolutely take it back at any time. If we have to come get it we absolutely will any time. That just comes with the package for us. And something I'm really proud of here at Austin Pets Alive our barn cats get the same quality of care and follow-up and love really that our friendly cats do and that was something really, really important to me.

When I started here in Austin I was always a feral cat lady and I started at Austin Pets Alive as a volunteer for the barn cat program. That's something that I carry with me strongly in my heart that these cats are just as deserving of all of our resources and all of our time and all of our effort as a cat who lives in our house. And so absolutely we will make a guarantee to them that we will help in any way possible down if those cats ever need us.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* Thank you, Monica. Going on to this next question I also want to say to you, Monica, before I launch into it that we've also had several questions regarding if people can reuse some of your materials like your advertising promotions. So if you could address that as well that would be amazing. So here's this question. Our working cat program needs an application form for those applying for a working cat. Where can I find one or a template?

*Monica Frenden:* Yeah. So if you want to go onto our website, it's AustinPetsAlive.org and you will go to adopt a pet or adopt a cat and then adopt a working cat or adopt a barn cat. You can find out application directly on line. You can look at all of our applications or all of our questions and borrow them. Free form sites are available at a multitude of places.

You can use Google forms is free. Jot form, J-O-T F-O-R-M is something that I use and it's free. We're currently using a free form site called cognito forms and I like that one a lot, but there are a ton of free form site builders and templates on line and you can absolutely go onto AustinPetsAlive.org and take a look at our barn cat application and borrow heavily from it.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* Thank you, Monica. That was also helpful. Oh, go ahead.

*Monica Frenden:* Yeah. Let me answer your question real quick about borrowing materials speaking of that. So yeah, not only are you guys all allowed to borrow those advertising materials and what not, but we would be honored to help you advertise your new program and to get these barn cats adopted out.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* Thank you, Monica. Okay. Here's our next question. How can we mitigate the presence of predators in potential working cat program sites? In southwestern Ohio coyotes have become common. SNiP Inc. has several working farm options for feral cats but all have recent coyote sightings. Is there a way to minimize the presence of the coyotes?

*Monica Frenden:* Yeah. Great question. So one of the reasons that we always mandate that adopters have shelter for cats is because a shelter is a great way to minimize the risk of predators. If a cat can get into say a barn or shed or a garage and get up high away from the coyote that is a fantastic way to minimize that risk. There are if you've got like I talked about with trees, if there's lots of trees in the area that's easy for the cat to get up to. There are things called coyote poles. If you don't have trees in your area and it basically looks like a telephone pole just sank into the ground and they're for cats to get up and get away from predators.

There's lots of information on line on how you can deter coyotes through motion lights and what not. We have a lot of our adopters who tell us that they have guardian animals, either Great Pyrenees or donkeys or llamas even. Those are all really awesome options for people who know how to preventatively deter coyotes from even coming around.

One of the things we've also kind of discovered is that kind of a natural cycle of predators when we introduce cats to the area those cats are taking care of rodents and vermin that the coyotes are also drawn to. And same thing with our folks who adopt working cats for snake patrol. When we introduce cats to that area they're taking care of the rats and mice that the snakes are drawn to so those are all things you can look at.

Obviously you don't want to have food left out, cat food left out if there's coyotes in the area. We get this question a lot. How do I keep raccoons and skunks and what not from coming and eating the cat food. This applies to coyotes too. Make sure you just feed the cats during the day and pick up that food at night. That way other predators, other unwanted critters are not going to come and be attracted to that cat food.

So definitely Google how to keep coyotes away from your area though. Having a shelter for the cat is a good place where they can get up high away from the predators is really paramount. And then see if any of those places that you're talking about, your working farm options might possibly have or be interested in livestock guardian animals.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* All right. So this will be our final question for the night. Would you adopt out a friendly cat that was previously owner surrendered as an outdoor cat?

*Monica Frenden:* Would I adopt out a friendly cat? I'm not sure I understand the question entirely. Would I adopt out a friendly cat that was a previously an owner-surrendered outdoor cat? So I think what we're kind of getting at here is would I adopt out a friendly cat if it was used to living outside? Yeah, if the alternative is that cat is euthanized then absolutely yes. I would adopt out friendly cats to be outdoor cats. Lots of friendly cats live outside. Lots of us have friendly cats that go outside.

I don't have any ethical debate about friendly cats being outside. For us here in Austin that's not something we have to do. We're very fortunate in that case, that we don't have to look into alternative placements for friendly cats, but if I were in another city where friendly cats were still being euthanized and I had alternative outdoor placements for them I would not hesitate whatsoever to place a friendly cat outside versus have it be at risk of euthanasia. I hope that answers the question.

*Jessie Guglielmo:* I think so. Thank you so much, Monica. So with that that will be the end of our event this evening. We want to thank all of you for your time tonight and a special thank you to Monica for an amazing presentation. Before I launch into a few closing remarks I would like to ask all of you to click on the evaluation survey link that is on your screen.

While you do that here is a quick reminder to keep checking Maddie's Fund website at [www.Maddiefund.org](http://www.Maddiefund.org) for upcoming webcasts in the new year. This webcast will be available on demand shortly and we hope you will share this presentation on your social sites. From everyone here at Maddie's Fund we want to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thanks again for being here with us this evening and good night.

*[End of Audio]*