



June 15, 2020

TO OUR VALUED CONTRIBUTORS AND VOLUNTEERS:

I have received many questions about a practice known as “Trap, Neuter and Return,” particularly AWL’s participation in such programs. Because of this widespread interest, our board of directors asked AWL’s attorney to prepare a letter that we could share with you discussing our concern with the legal aspects of TNR. I am very pleased to provide you with a copy of that letter as an attachment to this memo.

Although AWL has been compelled to end its involvement in the release of feral cats, we remain concerned about neglect and overpopulation of all animals in our community. As a part of our core mission, we continue to offer free spay neuter services to cats if we are satisfied that when they are returned to those requesting this service, the cats will be given the care they require and not simply released.

We have taken what we believe to be a principled and ethical position with respect to TNR based upon current Virginia law and scientific concerns about TNR programs. This decision has been made by AWL, with a keen sense that donations and proceeds from thrift shop sales must be used in a scrupulously honest fashion that does not violate the law or risk a regulatory violation and potential fines. By reaching these decisions, we are by no means critical of other organizations in the community that have reach contrary conclusions. Each group must find its own way.

A recent article in the Rappahannock Record may have implied that a charitable donation by AWL to a TNR group constituted an endorsement of its TNR programs. It did not. The contribution was made to support cats which that group assured us would be adopted and not released into the wild.

Animal welfare issues rightfully excite great passion. AWL’s view is that our response to the humane needs of animals must be practical, thoughtful and ethical. I hope that you will carefully consider the attached legal summary of the TNR issue. Our board has relied on this advice as we pursue AWL’s mission, which has always included the humane treatment of free roaming animals.

FOR THE AWL BOARD

Sara Ford, President

