

Colony Caregivers Should Make Contingency Plans for Community Cats as Well as Their Pets

The COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder that we all need to have a [plan in place](#) for how our pets will be cared for in the event we become unable to do so. The same is true for community cat caregivers, whose tireless efforts ensure that community cats receive food, water, shelter, and (where practical) veterinary care.

This is more than just compassion in action, too — it's an integral part of any successful trap-neuter-return (TNR) program. As anybody who's done it can tell you, it's much easier to trap cats that are on a regular feeding schedule!

Some caregivers already have neighbors they can call on in a pinch. Others alternate feeding duties with neighbors, making it easy to find help when necessary. For the rest of us, though, now is the time to connect with the network of caregivers that exists in every community. It's true — in fact, [survey results](#) tell us that about 15% of people feed cats they assume are strays.

So, you might know these folks yet but they're out there. And again, now is the time! To find them, check with family, friends, neighbors, local TNR groups, shelters, humane societies and SPCAs. You might also consider posting a request online (e.g., via the Nextdoor app or neighborhood Facebook page) but be careful about sharing details until you know respondents can be trusted.

Information to include in a colony care backup plan

Even the best colony care backup plan is of little use if you're the only one who knows about it. Anybody you've identified as your back-up should have a copy, but consider sharing it with other people you trust as well. You might also keep a printed copy handy in a location where it can easily be found in case of emergency (e.g., entry table, refrigerator).

Alley Cat Allies has developed a detailed checklist of information to give your backup colony caregiver(s), which can be found [here](#).

As is true with all backup plans, it's probably best if you never need to implement your colony care backup plan. But, having one in place will give you peace of mind — and might even allow you to take that much-needed vacation once things return to normal.