

Case Study

Alley Cat Allies Saves Cats' Lives at Norfolk Naval Shipyard *Successful Publicity Campaign Ends Killing, Wins Shipyard's Support*

In July 2000, Alley Cat Allies learned that officials at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, Virginia had banned a local longtime caregiver from feeding and providing veterinary care for cats living at the shipyard. Officials planned to contract within weeks for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wildlife Services to trap and kill the cats at a cost of over \$21,000 in taxpayer dollars. To make matters worse, the trapping was planned during a period in which there was a serious risk of separating lactating mothers from their young kittens.

Alley Cat Allies quickly took action, contacting shipyard officials and offering educational information about the benefits of colony care—including neutering and vaccination for the cats—and pressing for the caregiver's access to the cats to be reinstated. It noted that catch and kill was not only cruel, but expensive and ineffective, and that some U.S. municipalities had begun embracing Trap-Neuter-Return as a cost-effective and humane program for feral cats.

After initial requests to meet with shipyard officials were ignored, Alley Cat Allies launched a publicity campaign aimed at mobilizing the

public and pressing the shipyard to end the catch and kill plan. Alley Cat Allies spearheaded a letter-writing effort in which thousands of supporters wrote to the shipyard's leadership protesting the plan. Alley Cat Allies also organized a public demonstration outside the shipyard gates that garnered the attention of the local media.

The shipyard leadership remained skeptical, but the publicity surrounding the campaign persuaded them to sit at the table with Alley Cat Allies. After days of negotiations, the shipyard agreed to a formal contract with Alley Cat Allies to carry out a nonlethal—humane—plan for the shipyard colonies, saying they would “defer to [Alley Cat Allies] as the experts.” Alley Cat Allies became the

first animal protection group in the nation to hold a formal contract with the U.S. military.

Under the contract, Alley Cat Allies organized a comprehensive program alongside a local feral cat group to train local volunteers in trapping and ongoing colony management; assisted the volunteers in constructing permanent feeding stations in designated areas; and provided veterinary services to neuter and vaccinate the cats.

In recognition of the fact that Trap-Neuter-Return has stabilized the population and allowed the cats to co-exist peacefully alongside shipyard operations, the Norfolk Naval Shipyard continues to support humane programs for the base cats.



Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, VA.