

## WILLIAMSON COUNTY ANIMAL CENTER COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAM

### Eartipping as a form of identification

#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

##### **What is eartipping?**

Eartipping is a standard practice for community cats around the world. No other method of identification has proven to be safer or more effective. If a cat is “eartipped” it means that the top 3/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch of the left ear has been removed during surgery.

##### **Can I opt out of the eartip for a community cat?**

As a matter of policy, Williamson County Animal Center performs eartips on ALL community cats that receive a free spay or neuter surgery from our agency.

##### **Why eartip a cat?**

If a cat is eartipped, it means that they are a sterilized cat that lives outdoors, either part-time or full-time. An eartipped cat should not be removed from where it is seen, as it is already spayed or neutered, and lives nearby.

If the eartipped cat ever gets caught in a live trap for the purpose of TNR (trap-neuter-return), the eartip can be immediately recognized, and the cat can be released. This ensures no unnecessary removal or anesthesia.

##### **Does the eartip hurt? Isn't an eartip animal cruelty?**

The eartip procedure is painless, with little bleeding to the area. Eartipping is performed under sterile conditions while the cat is already anesthetized for spay or neuter surgery. This procedure is considerably less invasive than the spay or neuter that is performed.

##### **Why not use other methods of identification such as microchip, tattoo or collar?**

If a microchip is the ONLY means of identification, an outdoor cat still has to be caught/removed and brought to a vet clinic or shelter to be scanned for a microchip. Tattoos are not easily seen. Collars easily fall off, and can choke and kill the cat if it gets caught on an object.

All of the cats that participate in the community cat free spay/neuter program at WCAC do receive a microchip for tracking purposes.

##### **Aren't eartips just for feral cats?**

No, eartips are useful for all cats that spend time outside! Often, people mistake a friendly pet cat that goes outdoors with a lost, abandoned or feral cat. An eartip signifies that although a cat may seem friendly, it is NOT lost and belongs exactly where it is. Eartips keep cats out of shelters, where untipped and unmicrochipped cats are reclaimed by owners at a rate of only 2%.

