



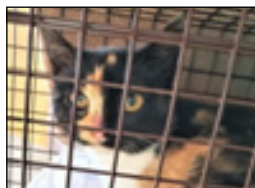
Spring 2020

# SNIPPETS

News from the SD West River Spay/Neuter Coalition

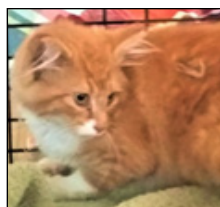
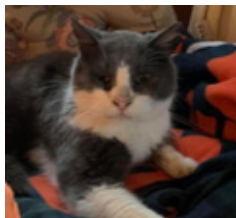
Edited by: Donna Watson  
Layout: Donnette Thayer

## Happy Tails



**Callie:** Abandoned in a field near a highway, skinny four month old Callie was seen from the road in bitter December cold. After multiple failed attempts, Shari R. finally trapped her. The kitten was fostered, fixed and a few weeks later, an eager adopter drove five hours and took her home.

**George:** Huddled behind the White-wood post office on Christmas Eve, George seemed to be waiting for rescue. Along came Lori, who picked him up and found a home for him right away with SD animal advocate Shari Kosel. Dr. Tom Huhnerkoch examined George on Christmas day, estimating his age at 15 plus with serious medical issues. After two days of warmth, good food and love, George began deteriorating. X-rays and blood panel revealed severe problems and Shari sent George off to the Bridge in loving arms.



**Trapper** was a feral four month old injured cat caught during TNR of community cats. Dr. Emond had to anesthetize him to get him out of the trap to treat his injured leg. Ginger began socializing Trapper, and after he recovered, had him neutered. While caring

for him, Ginger fell in love with the kitten and now he lives indoors with her.

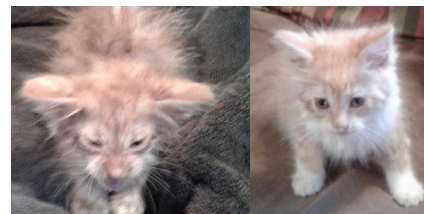
**Hank:** Abandoned in a mobile home court, eight year old Henry had joined a feral colony. While doing TNR on the colony in mid-winter, Lori caught Henry, realized he was not only tame, but very sweet, and deserved a real home. And she found him one!



## Fourteen years!

This is how long the Coalition has been offering reduced cost spay/neuter for cats in western SD and beyond. Last year we implemented the alteration of 906 cats, and just during the first quarter of 2020, 256 cats have been fixed. We anticipate reaching a huge milestone by fall: 11,000 cats! This has saved a staggering number of unwanted kittens from being born.

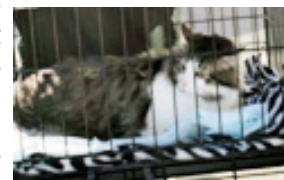
**Sugar Shack Henry:** Found hiding behind Sugar Shack on Highway 385, the eight week old abandoned kitten was severely dehydrated, malnourished and could barely see. Jennifer rescued little Henry and took him immediately to Dr. Cook. The Coalition ran a fundraiser on Facebook for medical bills, Jennifer fostered him and after Henry recovered, she interviewed adopters until she found the perfect one.



**Blackie:** Scared and hungry, Blackie showed up in a controlled Rapid City colony. We discovered after trapping him that he was tame and chipped. We traced him to Hill City, but found his owner had moved to Rapid City and Blackie got lost. We tracked down his person and she and Blackie were reunited thanks to the microchip and a vigilant caretaker!!



**Spike** seems to recognize compassionate people. Last winter, he ran up to Terri who was trapping in the area, meowing for help - matted, malnourished and severely constipated. Terri's vet removed almost four pounds of fecal matter stuck on and in him. The Coalition helped with the cost of neutering Spike once he recovered from surgery. By then Terri had grown attached to Spike and adopted him ●



# HELPING HANDS

## Not “their” cat

It sometimes happens that compassionate people glancing out into their yards will notice a bedraggled skinny cat trotting across the lawn or slipping around the corner of the house and their hearts go out to her. So even though she’s not “their” cat, they set out a few dinner scraps and are pleased to see her gobble them down. Of course, the kitty shows up the next day. Hoping for more food, she sits and stares into the window. Unable to allow the cat who isn’t “theirs” to go hungry, the kindly residents break down and buy a small bag of cat food – the poor thing is still so thin. Eventually fall arrives, and the cat who isn’t “theirs” continues to hang around, so they put a soft blanket in a box in the garage and a couple of straw bales in the barn. Soon the “stray” looks shiny and well fed and even maybe a little fat, and that’s good. But then, uh-oh, she’s suddenly skinny and the realization hits: she’s had kittens! The sympathetic caretakers had considered getting her fixed, but the surgery cost is so high and really, she’s not “their” cat. But something has to be done; it would take a heartless person to stop feeding a momma cat with tiny kittens, and where a few cats are, soon there will be many. So at this point the people who care search the web or call veterinarians for spay/neuter



Photo: Tamed feral kittens rescued by Jennifer

prices and finally they find the Coalition. With help from Coalition volunteers, caretakers tame and place the kittens in kind homes, trap the mom, take her to be spayed, bring her home and release her. Watching her shoot across the lawn, they hope, they really hope, that she’ll stick around, because after all, she is “their” cat. ●

## Kudos to Black Hills cat rescuers and trappers

Throughout the Hills and beyond we have formed a partnership with compassionate “cat people” who routinely care for cats that venture into their neighborhoods, towns, farms or ranches. These “regulars” not only provide food and shelter for any cats that come along, they spend time and money getting them fixed and healthy. We keep a list of our rescuers in Keystone, Hill City, Custer, Piedmont, Newell, Wasta, Whitewood and ranches in between, and we’re always ready to help them with the cost of fixing newcomers. Meet our dedicated trappers (Lori and Shari) and some wonderful independent volunteers who work with us.

**Lori:** Last fall we received a call from a panicked caretaker in a mobile home court in Black Hawk who was being evicted. The landlady prohibited other tenants from feeding the cats, threatening them with eviction. Lori, who has trapped 700+ cats over the years, swooped in, trapped and relocated all 10 cats with help from Claudia. Andrea Goodman, Director, Oglala Pet Project, found ranchers wanting barn cats, and Lori helped establish the fixed cats in their new homes. She also found indoor homes for two abandoned domestic cats including Hank, one of our Happy Tails kitties.

**Shari R.,** another longtime volunteer, helps folks in the Rapid City area control community cat colonies. She loans out traps, trains them on TNR, and makes herself available for questions or problems. Last summer, she helped three women with separate small colonies, all of whom lived within a mile radius of each other! She continues to do TNR in her own neighborhood as well as at a nearby camp-

ground where people regularly abandon cats. Recently, Shari trapped a young, friendly female, and after being spayed, Edie went to a wonderful home with a previous adopter.

**Nancy** contacted the Coalition two years ago when she was doing TNR in her neighborhood on her own. In the past two years we have helped her alter 20+ cats in what we call Nancy’s Valley Cats colony. She socializes feral kittens, alters ferals and finds adopters for tame cats. She provides food, water and shelter for the colony in her large yard.

**Jennifer,** longtime trapper and independent rescuer, contacted the Coalition two years ago. We enlisted her help in trapping several endangered community cats, and she found homes for all of them. She personally raises funds to cover health issues for rescued cats. In 2019, we helped Jennifer with the cost of altering over 100 cats. One of her past missions involved saving the lives of kittens whose mothers had disappeared or been killed.

**Terri:** Over the years, Terri has rescued 100+ cats in the Hill City area. She socializes kittens and finds them homes. She also fosters and places tame adult cats. Terri cares for colony cats and provides them with winter shelters. In January, someone destroyed Terri’s shelters and threw three three-week old kittens in a snow bank. Terri followed the boot prints, found the missing kittens, and although they were suffering from hypothermia, all survived thanks to her care. Her latest rescue was a partially blind kitten, now living in a safe indoor home. ●

# TAKING IT CAT BY CAT

## A Note from the Treasurer



**Coalition Treasurer  
Donnette Thayer**

Charity Navigator, a charity review organization, notes that, “a good benchmark for a worthwhile charity is having at least 75% of income spent on programs.” The Coalition always spends over 95% of donations directly to fund spay or neuter surgeries. In 2019, \$11,494 of \$11,924 or 96.4% of our expenditures went directly to veterinarians to help people fix their cats. The bulk of the remaining expenditures paid for advertising for our clinics and mail supplies for sending vouchers to clients. We are an

all-volunteer organization, and we pride ourselves on our mission to save lives through spay/neuter. All of our volunteers contribute much of their own time, money, and expertise toward accomplishing this goal. We look after every dollar because the dollar we don’t spend on something else may be the dollar that helps us save another life. ◆

**96.4% of donations pay for spay or neuter surgeries!**

## COVID-19 Update

This newsletter is going out at the height of the pandemic, and while many of our participating vets have closed their doors, some are still making spay/neuter surgeries available. Right now it’s spring breeding season, so whether you have house cats, one stray hanging around, or you’re feeding a colony of cats, please contact us for help with the cost of fixing them. By doing so you will help us reach our 11,000 fixed cat goal by the end of 2020 and more importantly save the lives of hundreds of unwanted kittens that would be born to suffer and die. ◆

**STAY SAFE.**  
**Spay and neuter.**

The Coalition thanks Tru-Catch in Belle Fourche for their generous donation of nine traps!

We also thank Maria Trainin for many years of providing hand-made cat-themed cards.

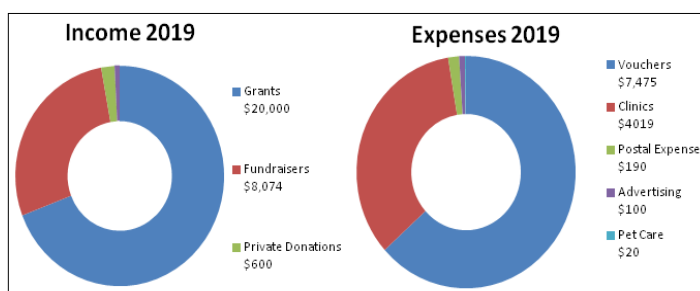
### Contact us by mail or through our website or Facebook page

South Dakota West River Spay/Neuter Coalition  
P.O. Box 286  
Deadwood, SD 57732  
605-593-5550

<http://spayneutercoalition.com/>



Like us on Facebook!  
West River Spay Neuter Coalition



## TNR

In the past few years we find our efforts directed more frequently to TNR (trap, neuter, return) of feral and/or barn cat colonies in mobile home courts, apartment complexes, on farms and ranches, and behind stores where they rely on rodents and food in dumpsters. TNR requires patience, time, effort and significant funds, since most caretakers generally can contribute only a small portion of the cost of altering multiple cats. The Coalition loans out traps and trains caretakers on how to use them. In special circumstances our volunteers do the trapping and transporting. ◆

### What makes a good barn home?

Sometimes in the course of doing TNR, the “return” aspect of trap, neuter, return is impossible. If a caretaker moves or dies, or if the building the cats have been living in is being razed or for any number of other reasons, the unsocialized cats must be removed. Although finding barn homes and relocating cats to a safe environment falls outside the scope of our mission, we could never in good collective conscience leave the cats to disburse, suffer and die. So we seek out country dwellers, farmers and ranchers looking for working cats.

And what are we looking for exactly? Well, a good barn home is one where cats, preferably two or three, have a safe, protected place to live, whether a barn, shed or garage. The adopter must agree to routinely feed the cats decent quality food and to provide veterinarian care when necessary. Our volunteers carefully vet any farmer or rancher. In return, the cats provide the best rodent control available.

**Our participating veterinarians care enough to contribute considerable time and resources to save cats' lives through spay/neuter. Please consider choosing these compassionate, caring veterinarians for your pets' future needs.**

All Creatures Veterinary Hospital	Rapid City, SD
Animal Medical Center	Gillette, WY
Belle Fourche Veterinary Clinic	Belle Fourche, SD
Cook Veterinary Clinic	Rapid City, SD
County Cats	Lead, SD
Country Vet	Hermosa, SD
Faith Veterinary Clinic	Faith, SD
LFC Veterinary Service	Custer, SD
Northern Hills Veterinary Clinic	Sturgis, SD
Spearfish Animal Hospital	Spearfish, SD

**We are proud to be an all-volunteer nonprofit organization**

**Dedicated Volunteers:**

Rapid City: Shari Rose  
 Lead: Donna Watson, Marshall Raeburn  
 Deadwood: Sarah McEvoy, Dianne Verba, Donnette Thayer  
 Belle Fourche: Carol Markeson, Sandy Kringen, Beth Morey  
 Custer: Laurie Kampfer  
 Whitewood: Lori Tetreault

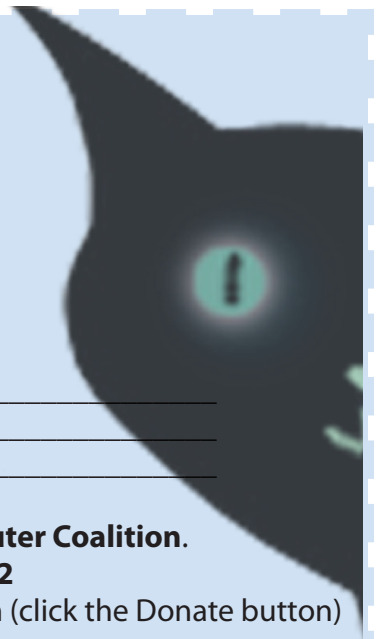
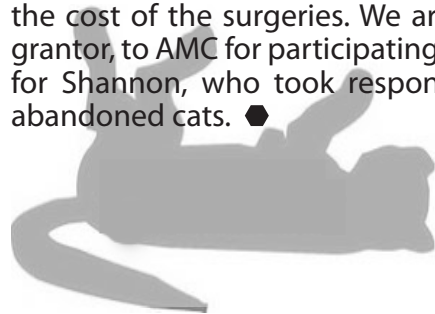
**Reaching out in West River**

We're pleased to announce partnership with three new vets!

**Dean Falcon, DVM, All Creatures Veterinary Hospital**, has a strong commitment to saving the lives of feral and barn cats, and offers a reduced cost for altering them through our voucher system. We are overjoyed to have another Rapid City veterinarian helping to curtail the community cat population.

**Tammy Winger-Merriman, DVM, Faith Veterinary Clinic**, agreed to offer a spay/neuter discount to help Sandy, a rancher near Perkins, control her large barn cat colony. During the past two years Dr. Winger-Merriman has generously offered reduced alteration costs to other farmers and ranchers in the Faith area interested in stabilizing cat colonies.

**Animal Medical Center, Gillette, Wyoming**, came to the rescue when Shannon called to say that the farm she had purchased near Moorcroft came with a barn full of unaltered cats and kittens. Not wanting to drive so far to our area vets, she searched and found the AMC, which offers across the board reduced cost spay/neuter. They agreed to accept Coalition vouchers, and a generous grantor covered the cost of the surgeries. We are so grateful to the grantor, to AMC for participating in our program and for Shannon, who took responsibility for the 30+ abandoned cats. ●



**Yes, I want to help.**

My gift amount is: \_\_\_\_\_

My gift is given (optional)

- In memory of (deceased - cats OK!): \_\_\_\_\_
- In honor of (living - cats OK!): \_\_\_\_\_
- I would like my gift to be anonymous.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your checks payable to **South Dakota West River Spay/Neuter Coalition**.  
 Send to: **The Coalition, P.O. Box 286, Deadwood, SD 57732**  
 Credit card donations can be made online at [www.spayneutercoalition.com](http://www.spayneutercoalition.com) (click the Donate button)