

## **Daufuskie Island Feral Cat Services**

For at least 20 years the feral cat population on Daufuskie Island was managed by random trapping, drowning or shooting. Typically, feral cats have no owner and are not desired for adoption. In 2005 a group of island residents recognized that the feral cat population was unhealthy and the management tactics were ineffective and inhumane. So the Daufuskie Island Feral Cat Project DI-FCP was created in 2006. In the past 12 years, over 180 Daufuskie Island cats have been trapped and taken to the Hilton Head Humane Association (HHHA) where they receive FIV/FeLV testing (feline AIDS/feline leukemia), spay/neuter services and rabies vaccination at no charge. Many of these cats were euthanized due to disease, several cats were adopted by island residents and most cats were returned to managed free roaming colonies on Daufuskie. The management of our cats include daily feeding, tracking for new cats, routine vaccinations, routine medications and medical care. In 2011 several factors threatened the well being of the cats and the challenge of relocating them increased. The opportunity of creating an enclosure would meet this challenge. In 2012 and 2014, with the receipt of two important grants from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and Beaufort County Animal Services, a Habitat for feral cats was built and improved. To qualify for the grants, the DI-FCP was asked to take in 25 feral cats that had been removed from dire situations. These cats were the initial occupants of the sanctuary on Daufuskie, a fully enclosed rescue facility on 1/2 acre of private property. Our ongoing trap, neuter and release operation conforms to the Beaufort County Ordinance for the Management of Feral Cat Colonies. To serve the residents of Daufuskie we offer transportation to Hilton Head Humane Association's Lowcountry Spay/Neuter Clinic, flea medications and consultations if cat issues arise. We are now organized as the Daufuskie Island Feral Cat Services DI-FCS.

*The best indicator of the program's success is that there have been NO kittens born to feral cats within our managed colonies on the island in over 12 years. Today, there are six free roaming feral cats currently under the program's care, and 78 feral cats residing in the sanctuary*

Several area veterinarians visit the sanctuary, make recommendations and offer their services.

"You are one of the most responsible feral cat colony caretakers I know. It seems there are signs that our sterilization efforts are having a positive effect county wide."

Matthew Dixon D.V.M. Hilton Head Humane Association - Lowcountry Spay/Neuter Clinic.

"The Daufuskie Island Feral Cat Sanctuary can serve as a model for other communities."

Laurel Berry D.V.M. Hilton Head Humane Association - Lowcountry Spay/Neuter Clinic

Although the free roaming feral cat population is declining due to attrition, the total population of cats inside the sanctuary can fluctuate due to the entry of feral cats from non-managed colonies on the island which often include cats who have been historically fed by residents who have since left the island, or managed feral cat colonies that need to be displaced due to development or construction.

### **Education, Management, and Prevention are the 3 key objectives of the DI-FCS.**

- Create greater awareness of the DI-FCS role in managing and reducing the feral cat population in a humane manner.
- Provide a safe enclosure with shelter, enrichment activities and supervision for feral cats to live out their lives without reproducing.
- Facilitate the trapping, sterilization, and vaccination of both domestic cats and feral cats on Daufuskie.

### **Funding for the Program**

We are supported by the Hilton Head Humane Association and by contributions from our supporters.

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