

# Animal Services Commission



*Issues Surrounding Community Cats in Ventura County*

*September 8, 2021*



# Estimated Number of Community Cats in Ventura County\*

The University of Wisconsin's Outdoor Cat Population Calculator estimates the number of cats in an geographic area based on human population size

Estimates for our eight (8) contracted cities and unincorporated areas of Ventura County:

- Indoor Cats: 1,052,017
- Indoor/Outdoor Cats: 701,345
- Outdoor Community Cats: 1,001,921

\*Does not include the cities of Santa Paula or Thousand Oaks





# Overview of VCAS Feline Services

1. Sheltering Services to Stray or Owner Surrendered Cats/Kittens
  - *Provided to eight contracted cities and unincorporated areas of Ventura County*
  - *Intended for pet/companion cats*
  - *Intake, Veterinary Care, and Placement (Adoption, Transfer, or Working Whiskers)*
  - *Paid for through city contracts and county costs*
  
2. Trap/Neuter/Return Surgery to Feral/Community Cats
  - *Provide approximately sixteen (16) surgeries per week to cats brought in by community members or local trappers.*
  - *Intended for feral or community cats (unowned cats)*
  - *Includes surgery and vaccinations*
  - *Cats are brought to shelter in the morning and returned to person that afternoon*
  - *Paid for through vouchers from Herman Bennett Foundation and subsidized by county costs*



# Types of Cats

## **Stray Cat or Kitten**

- Brought to Shelter by Community Member
- Generally Friendly
- May be Injured or Pregnant
- Impounded/Stray Holding Period
  - No ID---3 days + day of intake
  - ID—10 days and attempt to contact owner
- Service = Provide shelter and find appropriate placement
  - Adoption
  - Transfer
  - Working Whiskers Program
- Paid for by cities based on address of community member

## **Feral/Community Cat or Kitten**

- Brought to Shelter by Community Member or Trapper
- Generally Unfriendly/Unsocial
- May be Injured or Pregnant
- No Owner ID
- Not Impounded—No Holding Period
- Service = Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR)--Provide Spay/Neuter Surgery and Return to Outdoor Home
- Not paid for by cities—Funded through Herman Bennet Foundation and VCAS



# Timeline of Activities to Enhance Feline Services

1. August 1, 2019--Discontinued the impound of feral cats for spay/neuter surgery and implemented single-day TNR surgery process as a “service”
2. January 23, 2020--Hosted/Facilitated Community Information Event with Dr. Kate Hurley from UC Davis, Koret Shelter Medicine
  - *Approximately 60 people attended*
3. June/July 2020—Facilitated meetings with members of the Community Cat Coalition, other providers and key trappers to establish a Community Cat Task Group dedicated to strategically addressing the community cat issues
  - *Group continues to meet despite several community member being unwilling to participate. Current participants include VCAS, HSVC, Herman Bennett Foundation and Community Cat Charities.*
4. August 2020—Revised our TNR process to be more user friendly. Implemented online surgery appointment scheduling offering sixteen (16) appointments on a weekly basis



# Timeline of Activities to Enhance Feline Services

5. September 2020—Established Feline Care Coordinator position dedicated to overseeing the care and pathways for cats within the shelter
6. October 8, 2020—Hosted/Facilitated Community Information Event by Zoom with Christi Metropole from Stray Cat Alliance in LA
  - *Approximately 10 people attended*
7. October 2020--Updated/Finalized VCAS Website to provide clear and comprehensive information regarding cat/kitten services and resources
8. March 2021--Received funding from CDFA
  - *Going Home with a Cone Program—Spay/Neuter for RTO Animals (\$23,500)*
    - *Will serve 300 animals*
  - *Community Mobile Spay/Neuter—Partner with Simi Valley SN Mobile Clinic (\$7,500)*
    - *Will serve 100 animals*
9. June 2021—Implemented VCAS Cat Trap Loan Program (free with \$75 refundable deposit)



# VCAS Spay/Neuter Services

1. VCAS On-Site TNR Surgery (Community Cats Only)
  - *Provide approximately sixteen (16) surgeries per week at Camarillo Shelter*
  - *Funded by Herman Bennett Foundation and subsidized by County*
  - *Temporarily suspended due to staffing issues*
2. VCAS “Home with a Cone” Program—June 2021 – May 2022 (Reclaimed Pets)
  - *Provide surgery to 300 intact animals being reclaimed by owners*
  - *Funded by Grant from CDFW*
3. VCAS — Mobile Clinic Events--June 2021 – May 2022 (Owned Pets)
  - *Provide surgery to 100 intact pets in the community*
  - *Four (4) clinics to be held and provided by Simi Valley Spay/Neuter Mobile Clinic*
  - *Funded by Grant from CDFW*



# VCAS Spay/Neuter Services

4. VCAS — Mobile Clinic Events—Ongoing (Flexible)
  - *Partner with Simi Valley Spay/Neuter Mobile Clinic*
  - *March 2021—Port Hueneme & August 2021—Simi Valley*
  - *Additional Dates to be Scheduled*
  - *Funded by VCAS Spay/Neuter Trust Fund*
  
5. VCAS — Community Cat Spay/Neuter Subsidized Surgery—Ongoing (Flexible)
  - *Partner with Simi Valley Spay/Neuter Mobile Clinic*
  - *Appointments to be available at clinic in Simi Valley*
  - *Dates to be Scheduled*
  - *Funded by VCAS Spay/Neuter Trust Fund*
  
6. VCAS—Spay/Neuter Vouchers for Owners—Ongoing
  - Subsidy to help cover costs for private veterinary surgery for owned animals





# Community Resources

## TNR Funding

- Herman Bennett Foundation
- Spay Neuter Animal Network (SPAN)
- VCAS

## TNR Surgery

- Humane Society of Ventura County
- Mercy Crusade Spay Neuter Clinic
- Private Vets
- Simi Valley Spay Neuter Mobile Clinic
- VCAS

## Shelters/Rescues

- Humane Society of Ventura County
- Santa Paula Animal Rescue Center (SPARC)
- VCAS
- Approximately 10 Rescue Groups

## Network & Education

- Community Cat Charities (CCC)
- All Organizations



Let's  
Talk  
Kittens!





# I FOUND KITTENS!

Everyone loves kittens! Therefore, it's safe to say you would help any kittens you found in the neighborhood. However, we need your help before you begin taking action. Please consider the following: All kittens have mothers and their mothers are their best caregivers. She provides lifesaving milk, fends off predators, and keeps her little ones warm. Kittens should only be removed if it is warranted. So, when is it appropriate to move or remove kittens? Please use this helpful guide to determine your course of action. If you are unable to provide care for kittens you find, don't worry, we are here to help! You may bring them to the Ventura County Animal Services for care.

## DO THE KITTENS APPEAR SICK OR INJURED?

**YES:** Bring them to a veterinary clinic or VCAS for immediate help.

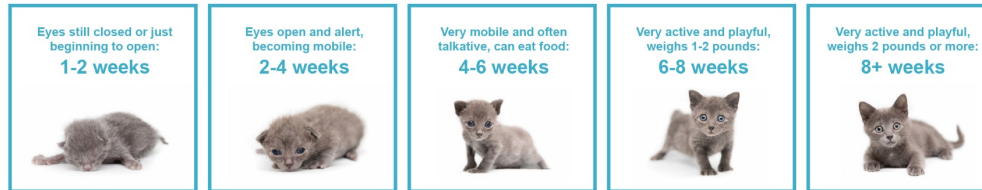
**NO:** Estimate the kittens' age by what they look like and continue below.



### EXAMPLE OF ILLNESS IN KITTENS

Dirty, crusty eyes, underweight, etc.

Visit [kittenlady.org/casa](http://kittenlady.org/casa) for additional information.



## DO YOU SEE A HIDING OR NESTING AREA?

**YES:** Leave the kittens where they are. Avoid handling them, and watch them from a distance to ensure mama cat returns after **6-8 hours**. Leaving them with her greatly increases their chances of survival.

**NO:** If you don't see a nesting area or if the kittens are close to a street, gently move them to a safe place and observe them for **6-8 hours** to ensure mom has returned.

## IF MAMA CAT HAS NOT RETURNED.

Choose **OPTION A** or **OPTION B**.

### OPTION A: Care for the kittens as a Good Samaritan.\*

- GATHER SUPPLIES.** Bottles, nipples, formula, heating pads, etc. VCAS offers *free* KITTEN STARTER KITS for those in need. They are available at VCAS.
- HEALTH.** Take the kittens to a veterinarian for a check-up and vaccinations.
- EDUCATION.** Learn how to bottle feed, how to handle bathroom business, and all other aspects of essential kitten care, at [kittenlady.org/kitten-care](http://kittenlady.org/kitten-care).
- SPAY/NEUTER.** Kittens who are 8 weeks or older should be spayed/neutered before being adopted out. If you need no-cost or low-cost spay or neuter options, please visit [vcas.us/communitycats](http://vcas.us/communitycats) for a list of local organizations.
- FRIENDLY?** Visit [kittenlady.org/orphaned-1](http://kittenlady.org/orphaned-1) to learn how to socialize your kittens if needed. Some kittens over 8 weeks of age may remain feral. But don't worry, these cats will always have a place in our community! Visit [vcas.us/communitycats](http://vcas.us/communitycats) to learn about the TNR (Trap Neuter Return) program and our VCAS Working Whiskers program.
- ADOPTION.** You may bring the kittens to VCAS to be adopted or you may find them loving homes on your own. Visit [kittenlady.org/pickingadopters](http://kittenlady.org/pickingadopters) for helpful tips on finding loving homes for your kittens.

\***Financial Responsibility** – If you choose to be the Good Samaritan, please be aware that you will be financially responsible for any costs associated with the care of the kittens.

### OPTION B: If you are unable to care for the kittens.

If you are unable to care for kittens, don't worry, it's a big responsibility and we are [here to help!](#) You may bring the kittens to the shelter and we will care for them.

Thank you so much for caring about cats and kittens in need! If you have questions or need assistance in any way, please call us at (805) 388-4341. Experienced staff members are standing by! **Ventura County Animal Services**

VCAS  
Website  
Information

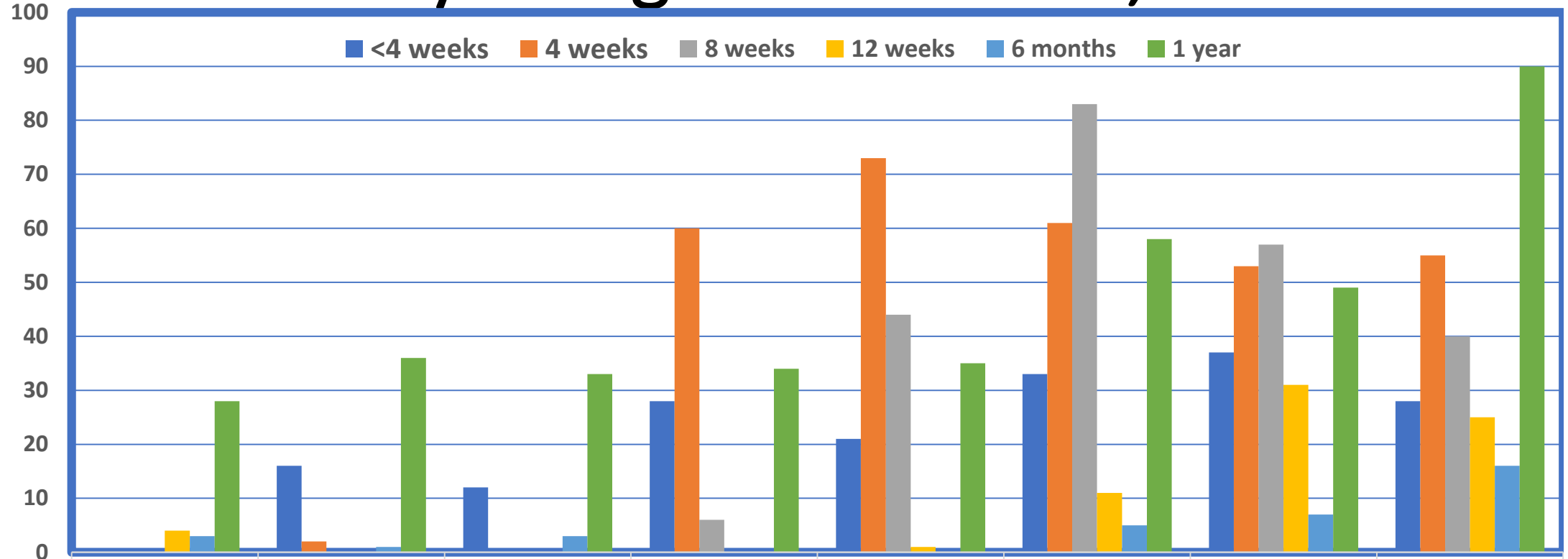
Resource for  
Community  
Members



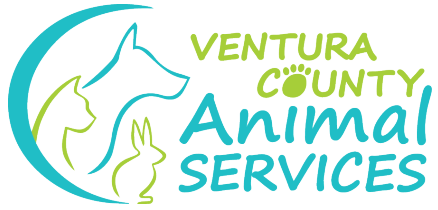


# Kitten Intake for 2021

## January – August: Total = 1,179



|          | Jan | Feb | March | April | May | June | July | August |
|----------|-----|-----|-------|-------|-----|------|------|--------|
| <4 weeks | 0   | 16  | 12    | 28    | 21  | 33   | 37   | 28     |
| 4 weeks  | 0   | 2   | 0     | 60    | 73  | 61   | 53   | 55     |
| 8 weeks  | 0   | 0   | 0     | 6     | 44  | 83   | 57   | 40     |
| 12 weeks | 4   | 0   | 0     | 0     | 1   | 11   | 31   | 25     |
| 6 months | 3   | 1   | 3     | 0     | 0   | 5    | 7    | 16     |
| 1 year   | 28  | 36  | 33    | 34    | 35  | 58   | 49   | 90     |



# VCAS Kitten Foster Program

- Two (2) full-time staff
  - *Foster Care Coordinator*
  - *Off-Site Foster Assistant*
- Approximately forty (40) foster kitten homes
- At any given time, each kitten home has approximately three (3) to four (4) kittens in their care
- Foster families provide 24-hour care (often every 2 hours for bottle babies)
- Kittens are medically treated, transferred to the foster home and receive veterinary rechecks every two (2) weeks until adopted
- Spay/Neutered at eight (8) weeks old and placed up for adoption
  - Direct adoption by foster family
  - Placement at store site
  - Returned to VCAS for adoption



## VCAS Foster Facebook Posts



*Hey all, we got in a queen with her 5 kittens last night and they need a foster. Mom is doing a great job taking care of the babies. And they look very close to being able to be weened. Please let me know if you can help this scared momma and her babies out. She really needs out of the shelter.*

Hey everyone!  
We just got in 7 bottle baby/gruel kitties that are in need of a Foster by tonight. If I can find 2 fosters that would be awesome, that way we can split them up.



*Singleton female bottle baby. One day old. Good latch/appetite. Needs foster TODAY.*



*3 - 3 week bottle babies need foster by TONIGHT, PLEASE!!! A foster can take them tomorrow, can anyone help these cuties for tonight?*



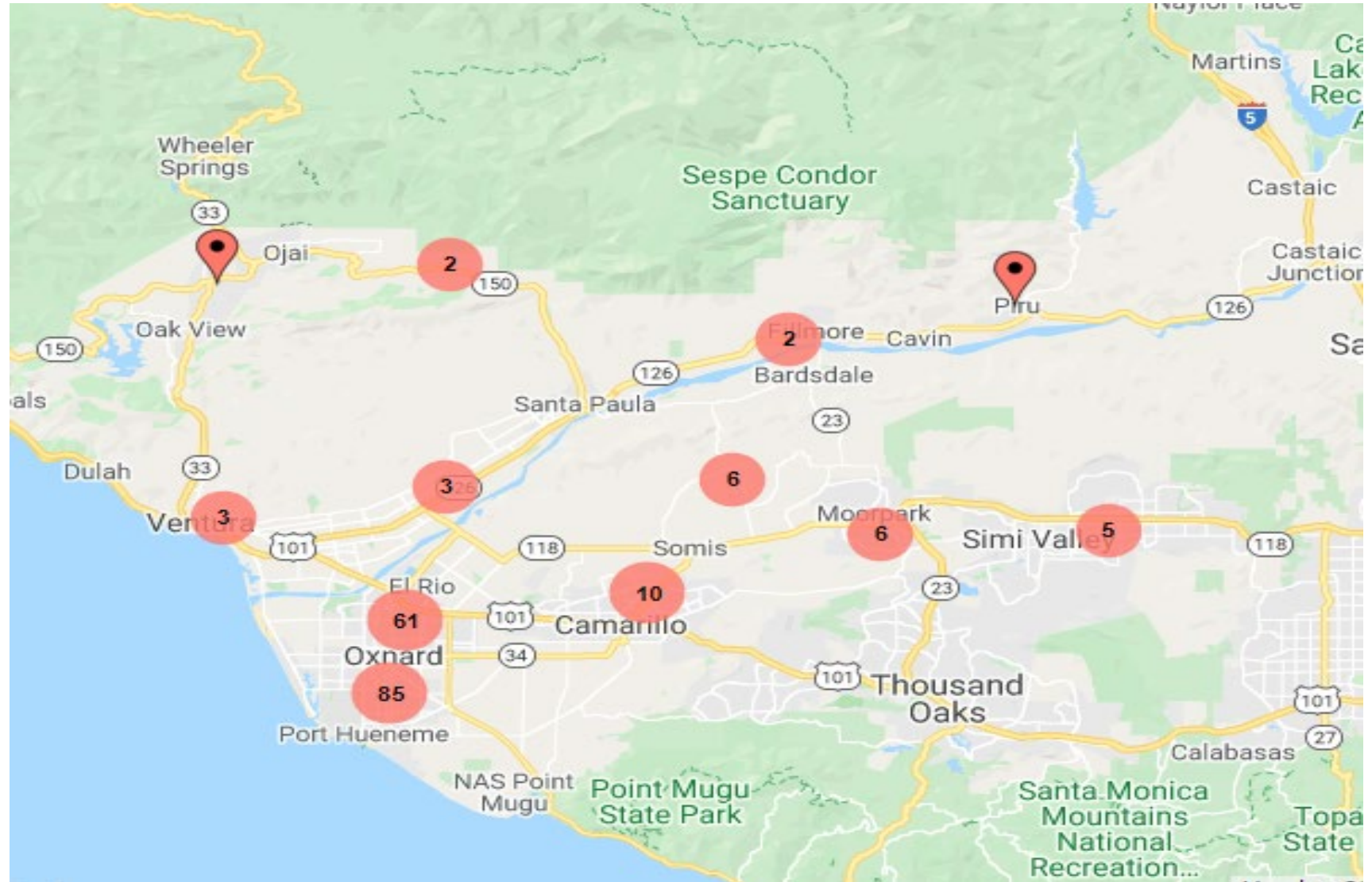
# Orphaned/Underage Kitten Intake Sept 19, 2020- May 30, 2021

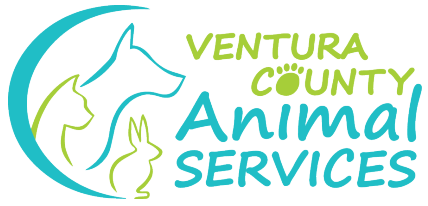
Data provided  
by Community  
Cat Charities.

Does not include  
kittens brought to  
other shelters/rescues.

Each pin  
represents one  
(1) to seven (7)  
kittens

183 Litters  
=  
380 Kittens

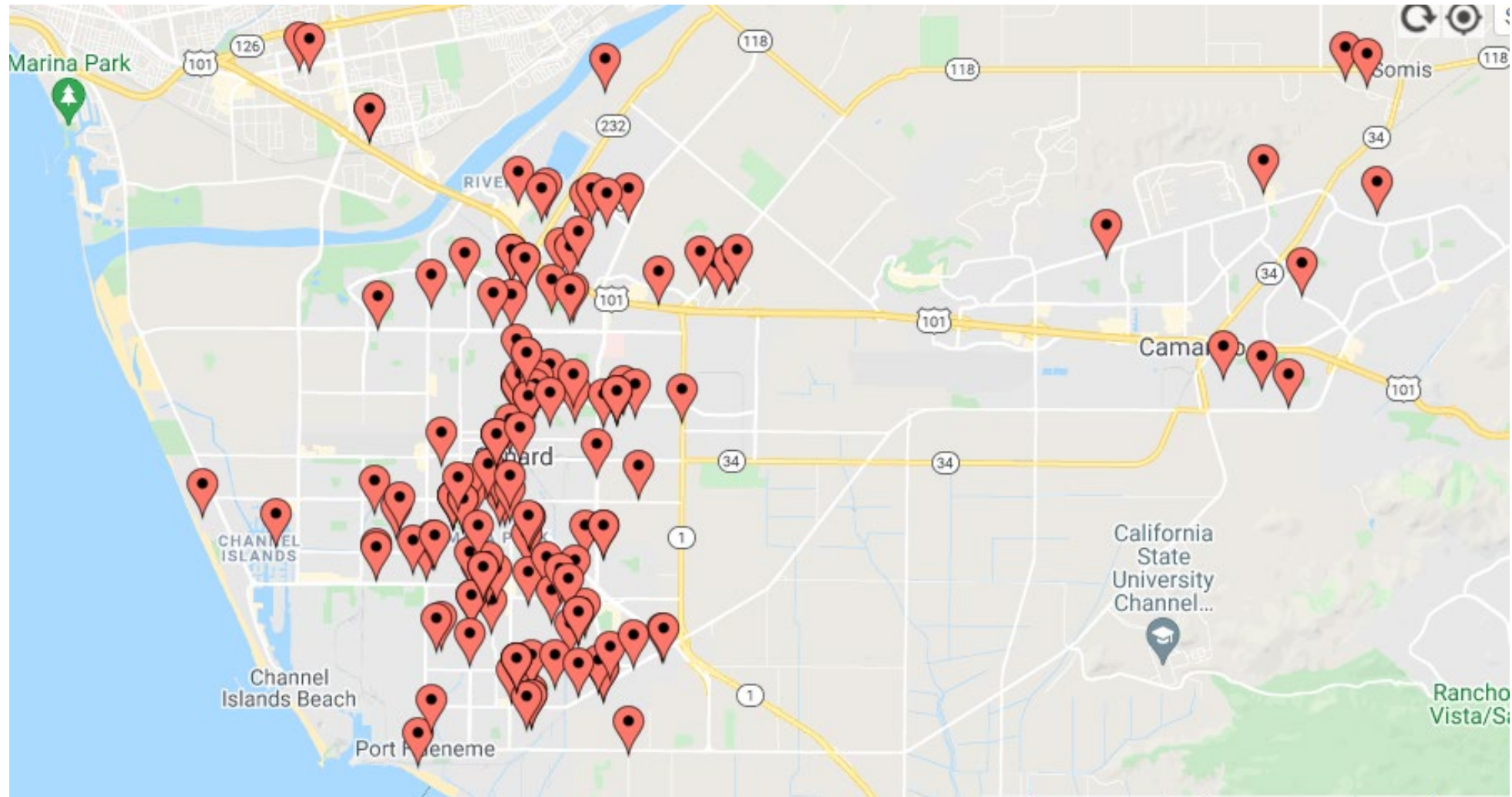




# Orphaned/Underage Kitten Intake Sept 19, 2020- May 30, 2021

Highest Concentration:  
City of Oxnard

Each pin  
represents one  
(1) to seven (7)  
kittens







# Key “Take-Aways”

1. We all agree that there is a need for enhanced services to address and support the cats in our community. No one wants cats/kittens to suffer!
2. Many passionate and dedicated community members working tirelessly to help the cats.
3. Multiple organizations involved with various services/resources. This is an extremely complex issue and requires multiple pronged approaches to adequately address the needs of individual communities.
4. Average National RTO Rate for Cats is Estimated to be 2% to 5%.
  - VCAS = 5% RTO Rate
  - Estimated that 65% to 85% of friendly cats brought to shelter are owned and being cared for by someone in the community---Bringing them to shelter actually displaces them and drastically lessens chance of reunification.
  - Cats usually don't travel very far
    - Indoor Cats – Average 50 yards (2.5 houses from home)
    - Outdoor Cats—Average 344 yards (17 house from home)



# Key “Take-Aways”

5. Effective TNR Services are Targeted and Strategic
  - Non-Targeted service may benefit the individual cat(s) but does not have long-term or sustainable results
6. Lack of Adequate Resources for Services
  - Funding and Availability of Spay/Neuter Locations
  - Funding and Availability to Provide Shelter Care to Kittens Brought in by Trappers
7. Lack of a Strategic Approach to Address Community Cats
  - No funding dedicated to this activity
  - No designated staff member(s) to coordinate efforts
  - Differing opinions and expectations which leads to frustrations and conflicts