

## Tango's Tale

*Furever Friends Cat Rescue is a non-profit organization based in Altona. We operate with volunteers, donations, and support from our community. Our mission is to rescue the lost, abandoned, and homeless cats in our community. We are dedicated to the care and wellbeing of our local feral cat population and to help educate the public on the need to spay/neuter pets, the prevention of animal cruelty, and the importance of responsible pet ownership.*

*We are grateful for this opportunity to use this column in a number of ways: featuring cats that are available for adoption, sharing stories of cats that have already passed through our rescue (happy ones and sad ones, because those happen too), announcing fundraising events, and providing educational content.*

**M**y name is Tango. I'm a TNR cat. I learned that stands for Trap-Neuter-Release. I've learned a lot about the TNR program that is run by Furever Friends Cat Rescue and the Town of Altona.

First of all, they have cat shelters all over town for feral cats like me. I found one this past winter. So cozy! I went through a door on the side and it was full of fluffy straw to dry my wet feet, and a little heat pad to lay on to help keep me warm. It was so nice to rest and sleep in this shelter, especially during those winter cold snaps. On the other side was another little door, with a great big feast inside! Kibble, wet food and fresh water. It was like I found an oasis in the desert...a cold, snowy, winter desert.

I slept in this shelter every cold night after I found it. I thought I was being sneaky, showing up after all the lights in the adjacent house were dark and slipping out early in the morning before the people were up. But I wasn't as stealthy as I thought, because they noticed me!

One day, when the weather started to warm up and I was getting ready to go make kittens with all my cat girlfriends, I noticed the food was inside a cage. I had seen a person trying to blend into the shadows, but they weren't bothering me so I stepped in to eat and WHAM! The cage door shut on me and I panicked, until that person threw a blanket over

the trap. The darkness helped calmed me. They obviously planned this and were just waiting around the corner until I let my guard down and stepped into the trap. I won't be so trusting next time!

I ended up in the town pound, where they took pretty good care of me. I had a box to hide in and fresh food and water, but I didn't belong inside and just wanted to be back outside in my territory. Volunteers came to "test" my tameness. I was born wild and there is nothing tame about me. Even though I am a feral cat, I would never attack people! That would go against everything my feral momma taught me. She said run, never fight. She said be still and quiet, like a silent shadow and try not to get noticed. Sorry, Mom! I should have listened better because they spotted me. Probably on that little camera that was clicking every time I went into the shelter.

Next, I had a trip to the vet for a neuter, vaccinations, tattoo and treatments. Scariest day ever! After that vet trip, they brought me back to my territory. They opened the kennel door and released me right by the shelter that had kept me warm on those cold nights. I ran as fast as my legs would take me! I sprinted outta there and didn't go back for days. I started to feel calmer as the testosterone was disappearing (a side effect of the neuter).

The Furever Friends volunteers told me my life would get easier now. I wouldn't feel the need to mark my territory, find girlfriends, make kittens, or fight with the other male cats. They were right! I'm not so worked up about mating anymore. I have plenty of time to hunt mice, voles and even those pesky rabbits that are eating the lettuce in everyone's garden. I'm back to being a silent shadow. I still come to eat at the shelter every once in a while, to get more energy for hunting, which is my sole pastime now. So nice to be able to do your hobby as a job! I see people in the windows of the house by the shelter, and they wave at me. I know they probably report my activity to Furever Friends, but that's okay. They're just looking out for me...and their food is still very tasty! It's a good life and I'm glad my tale has a happy ending.

