

## CommunityCatsPodcast\_Ep413\_Mossor\_210720.mp3

**Kristen Petrie** [00:00:02]

You've tuned in to the Community Cats Podcast. Ready? Let's go.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:00:13]

Welcome to the Community Cats Podcast. I am your host, Stacy LeBaron. I've been involved helping homeless cats for over twenty years with the Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society. The goal of this podcast is to expose you to amazing people who are improving the lives of cats. I hope these interviews will help you learn how you can turn your passion for cats into action. Today we're speaking with Becky Mossor. Becky is a registered veterinary technician from North Carolina. She works to educate pet owners, and especially cat owners, in cat health and behavior to help decrease unwanted behaviors that can lead to relinquishment. Becky also currently serves as the Executive Director of the Human Animal Bond Association, as a means to educate and elevate on the human-animal bond. Becky, I'd like to welcome you to the show.

**Becky Mossor** [00:00:58]

Thank you so much for having me. I am honored to be here.

**Stacy** [00:01:01]

That's great. That's great. So, first and foremost, you gotta share with our listeners, how did you become passionate about cats?

**Becky** [00:01:07]

First of all, how can you not be passionate about cats? Right? They are the best but as a veterinary technician in practice, you know, you often hear this saying "cats are not small dogs". And it was almost this thing we were just learning fifteen years ago, that we were treating cats behaviorally, nutritionally and medically as quote, unquote "small dogs" and they are not. And so it really became interesting to me to understand and to educate on the nuances and the differences in our feline friends, to make sure that they're having their very best lives.

**Stacy** [00:01:44]

That's fantastic. That's great. So, you decided to become a registered veterinary technician. Share with us a little bit about your sort of professional background.

**Becky** [00:01:54]

So, you know, I, my whole life, I loved animals. I think you find that a lot of veterinary professionals, they kind of know that they'll be in the veterinary industry very early on. My grandfather used to tell me that I would be a farmer or a veterinarian, but I don't think he knew about veterinary technicians at the time. And I was very intimidated because I felt that I loved animals so much that seeing them in pain would be very difficult for me. And it's often something people say, when they find out I'm a veterinary technician, you know, they always go to like, oh, I could never do that. I could never euthanize animals, or I could never see animals hurting and it really was something I was afraid of. I interviewed for a job in a clinic, and I actually was offered the job and we walked into the back of the hospital and there was so much equipment and so much stuff and they said, don't worry, we'll teach you everything. And I thought there's no way you can teach me everything, and I went home that day and I applied to tech school and I was accepted, and I went, and I got a formal education. It's one of the most important things I think that could come from this podcast right now, is knowing that not every individual in the veterinary practice is actually licensed to do what they do. And it's a very important step that individuals take to make sure they are offering the best care and that, you know, a lot of people don't know that not everyone in the clinic has gone and had a formal education.

**Stacy** [00:03:15]

Yeah. Can you share a little bit about the differences between, you know, what does it mean to be a certified vet tech versus someone who is, I use the word just, because then, you know, just a vet tech or just in title. What are the differences in what they can and they can't do in a practice?

**Becky** [00:03:34]

So if this is such an interesting question and it does vary from state-to-state. I think there are about six states that don't actually even recognize the title of veterinary technician at all. In most states, it is a protected title and that means if you have not graduated from an AVMA, American Veterinary Medical Association accredited college and passed the National Board, and passed your State Boards and maintain your license, you are not allowed to use the title of veterinary technician. There's a lot of infringement on that of course. Now in a lot of states, there's very loose laws around what you can and can't do without that credential. The other individuals, we

call them on-the-job-trained and they're generally in most states supposed to be referred to as veterinary assistants. And I am not knocking these guys because they have worked so hard to learn in their environment, but they are not licensed technicians and so they don't actually have the book knowledge behind the practice. Their mainly skills trained and additionally, I would say, they don't have the requirement of continued education. So veterinary technicians are required to do continuing education, to maintain their license and therefore stay up to date on the best practices which is super important.

**Stacy** [00:04:52]

So I found at some of the chain practices, they have a habit of calling their technicians “nurses”. Is that something that you are seeing happening in some of the practices that you've been involved with?

**Becky** [00:05:06]

So, this is a big can of worms. The National Association actually has an initiative called the Veterinary Nurse Initiative. The idea behind this is to change the title from technician to nurse, veterinary nurse. I'm sorry, let me be clear, veterinary nurse. To better encompass what we do and to better elevate our job because often you hear technician and you think like computers or equipment and you don't really necessarily understand that this is a medical job. This is a really highly debated move. There are clinics currently in practices calling their non-credentialed staff, and even some of their credentialed staff, veterinary nurses. And a lot of them did this as a way to whitewash the credential out of the practice and so it wouldn't be as readily identified that some of the staff were not credentialed versus some of the staff that were. I will say that in most states, the title “nurse” is protected and so a lot of these cases are actually in violation of their state Nursing Practice Act. I think it's very important for people listening, and for people who go to the veterinary clinics, to understand that the title that they're seeing, unless it says credentialed or there are initials behind their name, the individuals name, it will either be CVT, RVT, LVT, or, Tennessee has a different credential and they are RVMT's, I think, but unless you see that credential, they are not a credentialed technician and that's important.

**Stacy** [00:06:40]

Yeah, that's very important. And I mean, I think the whole veterinary profession has had an incredible amount of challenges posed to them during COVID. There were stresses before COVID. So you have your veterinarians, lots of stress there. You have your certified veterinary technicians, lots of stress there. Then you have your animal care attendants. And there are a lot of times in practices where a veterinarian or a vet tech or certified vet tech are doing tasks that really they shouldn't be doing, put it that way. Do you feel like through COVID, we're getting more tactical and using our staff the way they should be used or are those lines still pretty blurred?

**Becky** [00:07:22]

Oh, I think those lines are blurred because of several reasons. One, we have old-school veterinarians, and I shouldn't blame it all on the olds. I know some old school guys that are just phenomenal and they support credentialing so much, but I also know a lot of veterinarians who have literally said things like I trust my kennel techs to run my anesthesia. So as a consumer, you need to know that your veterinarian may very well take that individual who is working in the kennel that day and have them be performing anesthesia on your pet. And they feel like that is okay. So it comes from the consumer to demand and to be aware and educated, on the education levels of and the belief of their practice in ensuring that only credentialed staff are performing these tasks. I'm thinking, COVID it has been very difficult. I don't think because we've had, so first of all there's already a shortage of veterinarians. There's already a shortage of credentialed veterinary technicians, and then we had a mass exodus because several of our individuals had to go be parents full-time because their kids got pulled from school. And a lot of things happened that made an already short-staffed profession, even more short-staffed. On top of that we know that there was a lot of new puppies and kittens acquired during COVID. They've been busier than ever. And so I almost feel like at this point they're probably just grateful for any hands that they have in the clinic that are skilled. And I know even in the beginning of COVID, they were doing only absolutely necessary surgeries, only absolutely necessary procedures. So I think much like every other industry, you know, COVID has done some things that will benefit us long-term but mostly just made life kind of hard.

**Stacy** [00:09:10]

One of the big challenges that we felt with community cats and shelters is the fact that all of the clinics are overwhelmed. Whether they're low-cost, high volume, high quality clinics, whether they're full service low-cost, high quality, whether they're private practice, I mean, everybody is just full, full, full with regards to appointments. Capacity to care, accessibility to care, we're like at our limits. And as you just said, we have these staffing shortages, so it's not even about the money, you know, having enough money to start a new clinic. It's finding the staff. Do you have a magical solution for that question?

**Becky** [00:07:22]

Well, I will say this, I do have some solutions and they come in the form of the Veterinary Medical Boards better leveraging their veterinary technicians. If technicians and veterinarians came together and fully utilized their technicians for what they are able and qualified to do and if the Veterinary Boards supported that, there would be more ability for veterinary technicians to go about doing what they do. So possibly doing some in-home visits or increasing the number of technician visits that don't require the veterinarian to be involved, to move things through more quickly. So for example, if you just need some annual blood work, or if you need blood work to fill a prescription, if you maybe need some sutures removed, those types of things. So I think it comes to leveraging but there is really no magic solution. I think the best solution I can say for consumers to be very educated on what is and what is not a medical emergency. One of the things that puts the biggest backup in all emergency clinics, right, whether they're human or animal is, you know, the ear infections or the skin infections or the things that didn't need to be seen on emergency that kind of clog up the system. And if we were doing some better preventative medicine and the better educated a consumer is about preventing accidents, injuries, toxicities, and those types of things, the less they're maybe going to need to go to the vet. And so I think at this point, it's almost like at home survival and making sure that we are preventing the need to go to the vet as much as possible.

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**Stacy** [00:11:27]

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**Kristen** [00:12:28]

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**Stacy** [00:12:34]

Are you ready to be part of the solution for feral and stray cats in your neighborhood? If so, then make sure to sign up for our next Neighborhood Cats TNR Certification Workshop. A new workshop is held online each month, generally on the first Saturday of the month, but please check our website for exact dates. For just ten dollars, expert instructors will teach you best practices for trap-neuter and return, TNR. Learn what TNR is and why it works. We'll cover getting along with neighbors, preparations for trapping, trapping itself, including entire colonies at once, feeding, providing winter shelter and more. Take advantage of the interactive format, extensive handouts, and video footage of actual projects. Attendees will receive a certificate of attendance and gain access to an ongoing Facebook group, for networking with other TNR activists. The two-and-a-half-hour workshop is led by Susan Richmond, the executive director of Neighborhood Cats, and Brian Kortis,

Neighborhood Cats National Programs Director. To find out the date of the next workshop and sign up, just visit [communitycatspodcast.com](https://communitycatspodcast.com).

**Stacy** [00:13:37]

As we emerge from the global pandemic of COVID, fostering is emerging as the new normal in the animal welfare industry, but shelter management software doesn't provide the tools or the workflows for communicating with fosters at scale. So many organizations struggle to maintain hundreds of animals in foster homes. If only there was a system that was custom built specifically to solve this problem. Introducing Fosterspace, powered by our friends at Doobert. Fosterspace was custom built to allow you to manage hundreds of foster relationships and to communicate with them via text, email, and even Facebook Messenger. Your fosters have a portal where they can upload videos and photos and updates on their animals and organizations can schedule fosters for meet-and-greets, adoption days, or anything else they need. There's so much more to check out. Sign up for free at [www.doobert.com](https://www.doobert.com) and go to the Fosterspace tab to get started.

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**Stacy** [00:14:31]

Let's talk a little bit about the organization that you're with, the Human Animal Bond Association. You want to share a little bit about what you do and what's the mission of that organization?

**Becky** [00:14:40]

Yeah. The Human Animal Bond Association is, you know, its mission is to elevate, educate on the human-animal bond. And the fact of the matter is we, as veterinary professionals, we do see ourselves as a spoke in a wheel of human-animal bond, but we are not the entire wheel. Obviously, pet parents, guardians, whatever you like to call yourself, are in that wheel, but then we have all these amazing pet professionals out there groomers, dog walkers, pet sitters. We have so many people in the animal space, you know, even individuals who are involved with volunteering, TNR, there are so many people out there who are trying to make sure that animals have a better life, and that's because animals make us feel good as people. So, that human-animal bond is essential to mental health, physical health, emotional health. And so our mission as an association is to involve as many people as we can, who

are part of the human-animal bond, and to get as much research, education and knowledge out there and to support in as many ways as we can this very essential bond that is the human-animal bond.

**Stacy** [00:15:26]

So I would assume part of that would involve being able to keep your animals, even if you can't afford certain levels of veterinary care, and so being able to access some support for that. Are those initiatives that are of interest to your organization?

**Becky** [00:15:41]

For our organization we absolutely like to kind of have the knowledge space about who is out there helping. We don't personally support access to care through grants or other types of funding, but we do support access to care through education and through the Human Animal Bond Research Initiative, HABRI, working with them to make sure that we are part of these studies and part of the information that is being uncovered. One of the most, you know, difficult things in the veterinary space is what we call compassion fatigue and a lot of people argue we don't really have compassion fatigue, we have ethical fatigue. And what can happen in the veterinary space, I feel like, is we're educated on the very best practices of animal care. However, we're often in the limitations of the situation that might be a rescue, it might be a client, it might be, you know, a financial situation, it might be an emotional situation. We don't always get to do the medicine we choose to do. And unfortunately, there is a mentality in a lot of veterinary professionals that if you can't afford to do the very best care then you don't deserve a pet. And I really highly disagree with that. I think the human-animal bond is essential no matter what you can do and can't do. What we want to do at the Human Animal Bond Association is to help educate veterinarians and veterinary professionals on how to help their clients have access to care directly. Because we feel like if we can sort of spread those ripples, the ripples will spread further and making sure that that our professionals know that the human-animal bond is so important, so essential, that we have to compromise on care. You have to know that there's several levels of care based on the situation and economical and emotional investments that can be made, and that's a difficult balance for both sides.



**Stacy** [00:17:38]

You know, one thing I wanted to touch on in our conversation today too, when we are talking about the human-animal bond and that, you know, it's more than just thinking about human-animal bond in the house. There are many caretakers out there. Feral cat feeders, colony, community cat colony feeders out there that have an incredible bond with the cats and devotion to the cats and the community that they're feeding, they're assisting, they're trying to help with trapping them to get them spayed and neutered, you know. What are your thoughts around community cats and this bond?

**Becky** [00:18:11]

I think it's so important, right? The fact of the matter is, is there isn't a home for every single cat out there and not every single cat out there is going to do great in a home. That's all there is to it. I'm not going to dive into all of the wildlife affected and there are chain reactions to everything. These individuals who are devoting their lives to making sure that these colony cats are healthy, and that includes TNR, to make sure that these colonies are controlled. I can't even imagine what our world would look like if we didn't have these amazing volunteers and individuals who go out and do this hard work. I really truly cannot imagine. I see cats from colonies where the caretaker will bring them in and say, like, I've known this cat for three years, they don't do this, they don't, whatever it is. We might be treating a little skin infection or eye infection. These cats are still maintained, they're still healthy, they're still loved, they're still cared for and I don't see in any way that these animals are suffering. And then I think that the care that they're giving is important for the caretaker. We know that there are situations where people have been in severe cases of depression, even possibly having, you know, self-harm ideations and their pets keep them going, the animals that they care for keep them going. So these caretakers are living for these animals, and that's a beautiful thing and it's giving people purpose and it's giving these animals the best life they could possibly have and they're living quite happily. I think it's important to remember cats domesticated themselves. They make their own choices. These cats are doing what they want and these amazing caretakers are making sure that they are able to do so in a healthy happy way.

**Stacy** [00:19:52]

You know, as a registered veterinary technician, you were just talking about how some of these cats might have like an eye infection or other issues, you know. Are there preventive things that you could recommend our colony caretakers do so that, to sort of prevent the need to have to bring them into the veterinary clinic which can be really stressful for everybody?

**Becky** [00:20:13]

Well, that's a hard one, right, because we definitely don't want to be providing any kind of medical care or guessing. I will say this. There are some amazing veterinary triage virtual care access options that you can call in and explain the situation, have a conversation with a veterinary professional to find out if this is something that needs to be seen by a veterinarian or how urgently it does. So sometimes we can access some advice, some veterinary advice, before we actually end up in the clinic. Outside of that, I think it's very important to be aware of their environment. Right? Like we need to make sure that they have good nutrition, that they have access to antiparasitics, and that the environment that they're in is clean enough to prevent a lot of these types of things from happening. And again that TNR, please, please, please get those testicles off because if we can get the testicles off, we are going to have a whole lot of, these less fights. And if we have less fights, we have less abscesses and that's really what seems to get these guys bad out there on their own. So TNR. TNR is the solution to everything.

**Stacy** [00:21:25]

That's fantastic. So Becky, if folks are interested in finding out more about your organization. How would they find you?

**Becky** [00:21:31]

So they can find the Human Animal Bond Association at [humananimalbond.net](https://humananimalbond.net). We are in the process of switching our, at the time of recording, we're in the process of switching everything over so we have a brand new website about to launch. It's going to be really amazing. So we can't wait for everybody to check it out. As for me, I'm on social media. You can find me at [vet\\_tech\\_bec](#) on Instagram. That's vet underscore, tech, underscore, bec. So [vet\\_tech\\_bec](#). You can also check out, I have a couple podcasts in one pet parent facing podcast called Making Sense of Pets. And so I think for your listeners, they might be interested. There's more just

kind of veterinary technician conversations things we would love for our pet parents to know that we don't get to cover in the clinic all the time. And so I think those are probably the places they can find me or reach out to you and you could put me in touch.

**Stacy** [00:22:30]

That's great. Is there anything else you'd like to share with our listeners today?

**Becky** [00:22:34]

I think more than anything I want to say please be kind to your veterinary staff. It's a stressful time for everybody. We're all missing being in the clinic. We're all missing being able to hold our pets through the exams. They have very little control. I know that a lot of people have been really, really tough on our veterinary staff lately and we've lost six of our veterinary team members this month alone to suicide and on a monthly basis. We lose individuals every month. Please be kind to your veterinary staff. And then just thank you. Thank you for listening and being educated because you guys are the best pet parents out there. You're the ones that are trying to do the best you can and you are already part of this human-animal bond. So, thank you for what you're doing.

**Stacy** [00:23:17]

Wow. So Becky, please do pass along our love and support to everybody out there in the veterinary community and truly do try to be kind to everyone. You know, there's a lot of stress out there. There's a lot of worry, there's a lot of anxiety, but we don't need folks committing suicide. So, please, please, please do be as kind as possible as you can out there. Becky, I want to thank you so much for agreeing to be a guest on my show, and I hope we'll have you on in the future.

**Becky** [00:23:43]

Thank you so much for having me and thank you for four hundred and thirteen episodes when we recorded this, amazingness that you are doing. So, thank you so much. Stacy.

**Stacy** [00:23:53]

That's it for this week. Please head over to Apple podcasts and leave a review. We love to hear what you think, and a five-star review really helps others find the show. You can also join the conversation with listeners, cat caretakers, and me on Facebook and Instagram. And don't forget to hit follow or subscribe on Spotify, Apple podcast, Google podcast, YouTube, Stitcher or wherever you listen to podcasts, so you don't miss a single show. Thanks for listening and thank you for everything that you do to help create a safe and healthy world for cats.

**Kristen Petrie** [00:24:24]

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