

5 easy steps for helping outdoor cats

- 1 Determine whether the cats are stray or feral. If feral...
- 2 Get advice, support and equipment for doing Trap-Neuter-Return through the feral cat "grassroots" network in your area. *It's there!*
- 3 Line up a vet or spay/neuter clinic to perform spay-neuter surgery free or cheaply. We help you find one.
- 4 Trap the cats. It's easier than you think. We help you every step of the way.
- 5 Return the cats and provide simple, long-term care. We show you how.

For more information:



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Easy ways you can help feral cats

Plus inside...

3 "solutions" that are really deadly traps

EVERYONE'S DOING IT.

A judge in Phoenix is doing it. So is a teacher in Detroit. Even an assistant at the Pentagon is doing it before work, in high heels and manicured red nails.

Every day, compassionate people across the country are providing care to feral (outdoor) cats. They're following the simple steps of Trap-Neuter-Return. So instead of the cats being rounded up and killed, they're living out their lives in health and dignity.

Maybe you see cats living outdoors. Maybe you're already feeding them. How can you help them and also end the cycle of feral kitten births, helping prevent thousands more cats each year from living outdoors? This flyer will show you how easy it is.



We invite you to join thousands of others in taking small, easy steps toward the life-saving and just solution these beautiful wild creatures deserve... away from cruel and deadly practices that don't work. **The resources are there for you.** And the good feeling you'll get is beyond compare!

Just follow these simple steps ▶



STEP 1

STRAY OR FERAL?

You see a cat or several cats. Maybe a kitten or two. First off, find out if they're feral or friendly strays. **Strays** have been pets. They're tame, friendly, and can be adopted into homes. **Feral cats are not tame...they can't be socialized, can't be pets, and are not adoptable.**

Here's how to tell: Establish a daily feeding routine — same place, same time — for at least two weeks. Watch the cats' behavior. A **stray** will let you get close, and may even allow petting. Strays are vocal (they "talk"), having lived with humans. They're more curious than cautious. On the other hand, **feral** cats will run away when they see you. **Even as you keep feeding them, they will continue to avoid you.**

Get nosy. Every stray cat is a possible lost cat. So ask neighbors if they've lost a pet. If you can't re-unite her with her owner, try to find her a home. Put up flyers. Call local rescue and adoption groups. If necessary, bring her to a reputable no-kill shelter. For more tips on finding a home, see "How to Find Homes for Homeless Pets" at www.alleycat.org/resources__care.html

WHAT IS TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN?

TRAP: Humanely trap all the feral cats in a colony.

NEUTER: Take the cats in their traps to a vet to be spayed or neutered, eartipped, vaccinated, and treated as needed.

RETURN: Take the cats back to their established outdoor area. Provide food and water daily, make a simple shelter, and keep an eye on their well-being.



Wait! Don't make... the well-meaning call that may kill.

You see cats outside. What to do? Why, you pick up the phone to ask the friendly folks at the local shelter or Animal Control to "take care of" them. **WAIT.** You need to know the grim consequences of that call: **Your shelter will pick up feral cats, but because they're not adoptable (and never will be), they will be immediately killed.** Don't worry. This flyer will show you easy alternatives.

WATCH OUT FOR 3 "SOLUTIONS" THAT MAY BE DEADLY TRAPS

- 1 Bringing feral cats to a shelter. Almost all feral cats are killed in shelters because they are unadoptable.
- 2 Contacting animal control to trap the feral cats and kittens. They will be killed because they are unadoptable.
- 3 Borrowing a trap from a shelter or animal control. You may have to bring the cat or kitten in, and they will be killed—because they are unadoptable.

If they are feral... you are ready to proceed to STEP 2. Please read on! ▶

STEP 2

GET THE HELP YOU NEED. IT'S THERE FOR YOU.

You're not alone. Get advice, support and even the equipment you'll need by plugging into the feral cat "grassroots" network in your area.

Find friends — nearby. Our national **Feral Friends Network** hooks you up with experienced volunteers near you, who are happy to "mentor" you through the Trap-Neuter-Return process. **Check out www.alleycat.org/orgs.html to see if there are Feral Friends and other feral cat groups in your area. (Remember, you can access our website through your local library's computer.)** Our email is alleycat@alleycat.org. Or, call us at 240-482-2585 with your mailing address and you'll receive a packet of helpful information.

Rescue groups and vets can help. Try asking them, "Are there any local folks doing Trap-Neuter-Return?" *Be careful to keep your questions general. If you reveal the presence of feral cats nearby, the person you speak with may have them removed, that is, killed.*



ON YOUR OWN?

No Feral Friend in your area? Don't worry, we offer lots of information online to help you, as well as a video you can order to get your own private step-by-step training. You'll find both at: www.alleycat.org/resources.html. Other people have learned just with our help. You can, too!

STEP 3

SPAY/NEUTER ON YOUR BUDGET.

Before you trap even one cat... have a plan. Line up a vet or clinic familiar with treating feral cats or willing to learn. **Your trapping should coincide with the clinic's ability to spay/neuter right away, so the cats don't remain in their traps for long.**

Don't worry — you may find vets or spay/neuter clinics that offer this service free or cheaply at www.alleycat.org/orgs.html. Once you find a sympathetic vet, you can provide them with our training videos and extensive information through www.alleycat.org/resources_vets.html

The power of planning. Find out how many of your cats the clinic can accommodate on a single day, and let this guide your trapping activity. Each cat will need to be spayed or neutered under anesthesia, given a rabies vaccination, and eartipped. They may also need ear cleaning and flea treatment.



Some vets offer discounts because you're providing a community service. If they don't offer, always ask.

What is eartipping?

It's painlessly removing a quarter inch off the top of a feral cat's left ear while the cat is anesthetized for spay/neutering. Eartipping is the universal symbol of and only proven way to permanently identify a feral cat who's been evaluated, vaccinated and sterilized. It ensures that a sterile cat won't undergo unnecessary repeat trapping and surgery.

STEP 4

YOU-YES, YOU-CAN TRAP!

As you read through this overview of trapping, you'll see it's definitely something *you* can do. Even if it feels awkward at first, you'll quickly gain skill as you do it. The steps below are far from a complete guide, so before starting, make sure to see our "Humane Trapping Instructions for Feral Cats" at www.alleycat.org/resources_care.html

1. This step assumes you've been feeding feral cats on a regular schedule. Now withhold food from the cats you intend to trap 24 hours before trapping. Continue to offer clean, fresh drinking water.

2. Prepare one humane box trap per cat, lined with newspaper on the bottom, and baited with canned tuna in oil, sardines in oil, or mackerel.

3. Bait and set your traps, then place them on the ground where you normally feed. Partially cover the traps with a large towel except for the entry. Move away so you're out of the cats' sight, yet don't ever leave the traps unattended. If not every cat shows up within an hour or two, try again another time for the rest. Good news: If you follow steps 1-3, usually all goes like clockwork, with the hungry cats going right into the traps. Chances are, you'll trap them all within an hour or less!

4. After a cat has been caught, help her feel safe by quickly covering the rest of the trap with the towel. Relax... it's normal for cats to thrash about inside. The cat will calm down once you've fully covered the trap. When you've trapped as many cats as you can, bring them in the traps to the clinic either that day or the following day, depending on which the clinic prefers, *keeping the trip there as calm and quiet as possible.*

REMEMBER! The number of cats you can trap at one time is determined by how many cats your clinic can sterilize in one day. Also keep in mind, it's best to try to trap all the cats in the colony the first time.



STEP 5

CARING FOR THEM IS SIMPLE.

OK. You've successfully trapped nine cats, sterilized them, eartipped them for identification, and returned them to where you found them. Great! You've prolonged their lives and definitely improved their health. And you've stopped the cycle of breeding. *Now what?*

Now you'll care for the colony in easy ways that don't take much time – yet offer great rewards to the cats, to you, and to the community. You'll find caregiving basics below. For full information, please read our factsheet, "Tricks of the Trade, Essential Feral Cat Care," which you'll find at www.alleycat.org/resources_care.html

You don't have to go gourmet. Feed adult cats 1-1/2 to 2 cups of dry food a day, and pregnant or nursing cats twice that. Remove uneaten food so it doesn't attract wildlife. Also provide fresh drinking water daily.



It's cold out there! Some colonies find shelter for themselves. If yours hasn't, it's important to provide it. One route is to create a simple wooden shelter that's waterproof, elevated off the ground, *and whose door is big enough only for cats.* Use only straw or hay for bedding as these are naturally water-resistant. Not a do-it-yourselfer? Relax — you'll find ready-built cat shelters in stores or online. Or, put ads in the paper requesting used doghouses and you may net a few — free.

EASY LID TRICK To protect food from birds and the weather, place it in a sheltered spot. Or build a simple canopy by attaching a domed plastic garbage can lid to three or four wooden posts. Place food and water below. Keep the neighbors happy by keeping your feeding station clean. That creates a win-win for everyone, most importantly your cats.

FREE FOOD!

Often your local Humane Society or human food bank will give you surplus food. Ask the pet supply store for unsaleable torn dry food bags or dented cans. Vet clinics may donate surplus or just-out-of-date premium pet foods. It pays to ask!

There! You've done it — something positive. You feel GREAT.