

Dealing with stray or feral cats

Are you concerned about stray cats in your neighborhood?

Most neighborhoods are bound to have problems with stray cats sometimes. With the right information the problem of stray and feral cats can be solved and nobody needs to get hurt.

So, what really works?

You know the problem. The scenario is this – cats prowling backyards and dumpsters, fighting, spraying, yowling and injuring each other. Mostly unneutered males fighting for food, mates and territory – and a major cause of cats becoming infected with the Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) from deep bite wounds.

We get hundreds of concerned calls each year. Some people don't know Furry Friends is here to help, or know how to ask for help for fear if they do, the cats will be caught and killed. Others just want the problem stopped one way or another.

Where do these strays come from?

Either they were born outside or wandered off or became lost, fending for themselves and sometimes joining others in colonies. Perhaps they started life as part of an unwanted litter or kittens and were allowed to roam. There is the sad possibility that their owner or caregiver simply packed up and abandoned them.

Ignoring a stray, injured or sick cat is not only inhumane, (it could be somebody's lost pet), but it continues the cycle of suffering, fighting and reproduction so the problem in your backyard only gets worse.

If the strays are feral (totally unsocialized to human contact), trapping and killing them, or moving them is pointless as it only allows other cats to move in and start breeding. And the new arrivals have almost no chance of already being fixed, so the problem persists. In this situation, a program called T-N-R, or trap-neuter-return is the only humane, effective solution neighborhoods across the country use. This program allows humane trapping, spaying or neutering every cat, returning healthy ferals to a caregiver in the neighborhood and finding good homes for the tame strays and social kittens. Visit www.AlleyCat.org to help feral cat colonies.

So can't strays just be taken to the humane society or my local shelter?

That is one solution, but taking a stray cat or litter of found kittens to the humane society has an extremely high chance of resulting in euthanasia, which is killing them, as a way of controlling the pet overpopulation problem and in order to make space for newly arriving homeless animals. All humane organizations, whether open admission or no-kill, are terribly overburdened by the number of homeless animals.

* Thanks to Cat Adoption Team (C.A.T.) of Sherwood, Oregon for this information.



Helping homeless and abused cats

What can I do?

If your goal is to preserve life and offer a second chance, here's the plan:

- Give temporary safe refuge, food, water and shelter to kittens or cats in need
- Use caution and get an injured cat to the vet, even if just for a brief exam.
- Post found notices with a picture
- Place found cat ads for free in the newspapers
- Report found animals to the humane societies, local vets and newspapers
- Read the lost cat notices in the papers
- Contact us so we can partner with you and help guide your rescue efforts

We can help locate a foster home, help you learn what you need to do, or assist you in finding a responsible new home.

Reporting a stray to the humane society, animal control, the local vets and the newspapers and circulating flyers while caring for the animal is the most effective way to find a lost owner.

Some rescue groups, including Furry Friends, have a small amount of funding from the county to help with spay and neuter costs, so call us and ask if you need financial help to get your cat or a stray altered. Cats and kittens can start having litters as early as 4 months, so getting them altered early is a sure way to prevent a litter. Neutering male cats will stop about 90% of the wandering and other annoying behaviors, and spaying female cats will cause her heat cycles to disappear resulting in a much more loving companion.

Join us in giving hope to homeless animals by reducing the alarming number of adoptable, treatable tame and stray cats and kittens facing euthanasia when surrendered as abandoned or unwanted in Clark County.