

Feral, Stray, and Community Cats

A feral cat is a “wild” cat that is not domesticated, they are like any other wild animal. These are cats whose past relatives were good old fashion strays but they had kittens who never came in direct contact with humans and now they are grown up and are unable to be touched or handled. **Humans have created the cat problem.**

If you have noticed feral cats in your neighborhood, trapping them and bringing them to a shelter is not a humane solution. Studies have shown that cats are in a location for a reason – usually a food source. If you humanely trap those that are “wild” and take them to a shelter, you must trap every single one and stop the food source. If you only trap a few, the cats that remain will instinctively breed at a much higher rate in order to maintain the natural balance. **Bringing cats and kittens to the shelter each year will not solve the problem.**

Feral cats are usually euthanized in local shelters when they don't have to be. Studies have shown that they can live out their lives in the environment to which they have become accustomed. If you remove them, another group of cats will eventually show up to take over the food source that may still remain. Then you have the same problem all over again. By keeping those cats you currently have in their colony setting, they will keep other cats from intruding on their food and remain static in size until they die off of natural causes. Over time the colony will reduce in size and no longer exist.



Members of the Community:

Community cats are a part of the local ecosystem. Community cats live outdoors and thrive in an outside environment. They have lived outside majority of their life and are naturally skilled at finding resources for themselves such as finding shelter and food without the help of people. Community cats do not generally thrive in a shelter environment or as an indoor cat. Community cats will get stressed in these environments and that will cause potential sickness for them or any behavioral issues that this may cause; which they would not have developed if left alone in their outdoor home.

Community cats can be very friendly; most of the cats are stand offish of people. Even though some are stand offish, does not mean they should not be in the environment. Even if you do not like cats you can help them by leaving them where they are at, their home. A great way to help is the TRN program. Keeping them in the community will also prevent the “vacuum effect.” When taking the cats away from the environment new cats will fill in where the missing cats were with the existing resources (food, water, etc.). TNR will allow cats to be there without allowing the colony of cats to grow.

Double Life:

Outside cats will live a double life. They will travel from place to place just for food or attention from different people and at the end of the day will go back home. That means a cat can appear to be living at your home but when you do not notice they go somewhere else. This is the case for many cats in this

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area and the best thing is to keep the cats where they are and they will go back to their home. The national percentage for cats that come to a shelter and get reclaimed by their owner is only 5%. There is a much greater chance for them to be reunited with their owner if they are left alone so they can go back home.

Health Concerns:

Some people may be concerned about the cat's health when they are solely outside. Majority of them do not want to be around people so it is almost impossible for them to transmit diseases. Many studies have shown that community cats are just as healthy as regular pet cats. If you do notice a sick cat, seek veterinary help or bring to your local shelter.



TNR:

If there is a feral, community, or an unowned stray cat that you want to help out, the best thing would be to TNR the cat. TNR (Trap-Neuter-Release) is a way to help stabilize the cat population in the area and allows them to be healthy. TNR means a cat is neutered or spayed and released back where they were trapped. A cat will be vaccinated and tipped ear as well. This tipped ear is a universal symbol to tell if a cat has been already in the TNR program. If there is no ear tip, the cat has most likely not been neutered/spayed.

TNR helps by reducing stresses of mating and breeding and the vaccines will keep them healthy from diseases. TNR also helps shelters to not get overloaded with cats and helps them focus on adoptions. TNR is an effort for people and the cats to coexist happily. By stabilizing the cat population and keeping shelters from being overcrowded it also saves tax payers' dollars. TNR will save a lot of cat lives where there are kill shelters by keeping the shelters at a lower level number of cats.

TNR will help prevent other behavior like yowling during mating, fighting. Territorial spraying is also diminished or completely eliminated once a cat is spayed or neutered.

The Pittsylvania Pet Center Community Cat program is predominately funded by individual donor and grants. As long as funding exists, we will offer spay/neuter vouchers to assist citizens. Individuals can sign out traps after some basic training on humane trapping practices from the Pet Center. The SPCA of Pittsylvania County, and a few dedicated community cat advocates are willing to assist citizens as needed and the Pet Center will be happy to coordinate assistance as needed.