



Five FAQs About Stray and Feral Cats

From Alley Cat Allies

1. What is a feral cat?

A feral cat is a cat who has lived his whole life with little or no human contact and is not socialized, or a stray cat who was lost or abandoned and has lived away from human contact long enough to revert to a wild state. Feral cats avoid human contact and cannot be touched by strangers.

2. Are stray cats and feral cats the same?

No, stray and feral cats are not the same, and the terms “stray cat” and “feral cat” are not interchangeable. A stray cat is a domestic cat who was abandoned or strayed from home and became lost. Because a stray was once a companion animal, he or she can usually be re-socialized and adopted. Adult feral cats usually cannot be tamed and are not suited to living indoors with people. They are most content living in their established territory. Feral kittens up to about 8 to 10 weeks, however, can often be tamed and adopted.

3. How can I tell if a cat is stray or feral?

Observe the cat’s appearance and behavior. A stray cat is likely to approach you, although usually not close enough for you to touch him. If you put food down, a stray cat will likely start to eat it right away. A stray cat is often vocal, sometimes talking insistently, and may look disheveled, as if he is unaccustomed to dealing with conditions on the street. A stray cat may be seen at all hours of the day. A feral cat is silent, will not approach humans, and generally will be seen only from dusk to dawn, unless extraordinarily hungry and foraging for food. A feral cat has adapted to conditions and is likely to be well groomed. If you put food down for a feral cat, he will wait until you move away from the area before approaching the food.

4. I would like to find good homes for the feral cats I have been feeding. Is this possible?

Generally, no. Adult feral cats usually cannot be socialized and will not adjust to living indoors. A great deal of time and effort can go into attempting to tame an adult feral cat, with no assurance of success. This time and effort is far better spent sterilizing feral cats to break the cycle of reproduction. Stray cats and kittens up to 8 to 10 weeks of age can usually be socialized and placed in homes.

5. I discovered some cats outside. Who can I call to come and get them?

The first step is to determine if the cats are tame or wild. If the cats are tame, they may belong to people living in the neighborhood. Many citizens have indoor/outdoor cats and often do not put ID on their cats. Observe the cats to determine if this is so. Post “found cat” flyers throughout the neighborhood. After a day or two, if you get no response and you decide they are lost or abandoned, you can bring them to the Rancho Cucamonga Animal Care and Adoption Center (RCACAC) if these cats live within the city limits.

If the cats are feral (wild), please contact RCACAC to get more information on how to participate in the Rancho Cucamonga TNR program. Because RCACAC funds the TNR program through donations, at this time we can only assist residents with feral cats that live in Rancho Cucamonga. This program is free other than a deposit to rent a trap and some effort on your part to coordinate getting the cats to RCACAC and back home.

Feral cats live in colonies and congregate near food sources. Feral cat colonies can be managed with a non-lethal method called Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), in which cats are humanely (painlessly) trapped, given vaccinations, spayed or neutered, and returned to the area they were trapped in, where residents/caregivers provide them with food, water, and shelter. TNR is the only chance feral cats have of living safe, healthy lives without reproducing. Returning feral cats to their “homes” prevents new cats from moving in to the area and maintains a small but stable population of cats that cannot reproduce, preventing thousands of unwanted kittens. But TNR is a hands-on project requiring commitment from one or more volunteer caregivers. Please refer to Alley Cat Allies website for information or contact RCACAC directly if you’d like to participate in this program.



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