

How you can help them



Feeding is not enough

Two unaltered cats and their offspring can produce dozens of cats within a few months. Please, never just feed feral cats—doing so contributes to the overpopulation crisis and forces shelters to kill homeless animals. Remember that in the eyes of the law, when you feed cats, you “own” them, and when you “own” them, you are responsible for providing them with food, water, shelter, sterilization, medical care, and euthanasia to prevent suffering.



Feral cats are not wildlife

They are domestic cats, just like the ones who share your home. Despite their wild and independent appearance, feral cats rely on kind people to provide them with basics like food and water; to keep them safe, and to make responsible choices for them. Altering feral cats spares future generations from the perils of outdoor life, but in most cases, it does not improve the quality of life for those who are already struggling to live on the streets. Throughout the year, they endure extreme weather conditions, and in



If you live in an area with temperate weather, Cat Fence-In, a netting kit that attaches to the tops of fences, could make your large, fenced-in backyard into a safe haven for a few cats. Find out more at www.catfencein.com.

the winter, shelters and animal hospitals routinely see injured and dying cats whose bodies were cut by fans when they tried to seek warmth inside automobile engines.

It's a jungle out there

The life expectancy of a feral cat is less than five years, and many die even younger. Minor cuts and puncture wounds can easily turn into raging infections, and parasites, such as worms and fleas, often lead to anemia from blood loss. As soon as you notice that your own animal companions are suffering from worms, ear infections, urinary tract infections, or other illnesses, you rush them to a veterinarian for treatment, but most feral cats do not receive veterinary care for their painful injuries and ailments because they have



no one to closely watch and tend to them. Free-roaming dogs and even wild animals attack, injure, and kill feral cats, and cruel people who consider cats to be a “nuisance” shoot, poison, and throw things at unattended cats. If the cats you feed are considered to be a nuisance by anyone and are not welcomed by all members of your community, they are in danger.



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In a properly managed feral cat colony, the following are true:

- Every cat is altered.
- Cats are isolated from roads, people, and other animals.
- Caretakers monitor, feed, and water the cats daily and provide veterinary care as needed.
- Cats have access to a secure, warm, dry shelter and are not subjected to harsh weather conditions.
- Cats are kept away from other animals so that they do not injure or kill wildlife.

Resources

For more information on what you can do to help feral cats and other animals, please visit HelpingAnimals.com.

You can order humane live traps through the following companies:

- **Animal Care, Equipment & Services (ACES), Inc.**
1-800-338-ACES
www.animal-care.com
info@animal-care.com
- **Tomahawk Live Trap**
1-800-272-8727
www.livetraps.com
trapem@livetraps.com



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The following procedures will help you humanely trap feral cats:

- If the cats are not on your property, **get written permission from the owner of the property where they live.**
- **Obtain a trap.** You can borrow or lease one from your local animal shelter or refer to the “Resources” section of this brochure for ordering information.
- Before setting the trap, **place an unset trap with food in it outside for a night or two so that the cats get used to it.**
- **Set the trap on firm ground** to prevent it from wobbling when the cats walk inside.
- **Line the trap with a small, light towel** or piece of folded newspaper, being sure not to interfere with the trap mechanism.
- **Place a tiny bit of food at the trap’s entrance** and a thin trail of food leading to a large amount of food all the way at the back of the trap. Do not put the food in a bowl or leave it in a can because a thrashing cat can easily be injured by these containers. Use paper or part of a paper plate instead.
- **If you plan to alter the cats, trap them the night before the surgery** so that they are not forced to sit in the trap for too long, and make sure that the veterinarian knows that you are coming!
- **Never, ever leave a trap unattended.** A trapped cat is an easy target for other animals and cruel humans.
- **As soon as the cat enters, cover the trap with a towel or sheet to reduce stress.** If it is a hot day, use a lightweight sheet, and make sure that there is enough air.
- **Gently and quietly carry the trap to your vehicle.** Avoid anything that could easily frighten the cat, such as talking loudly, playing music, slamming car doors, and so on.



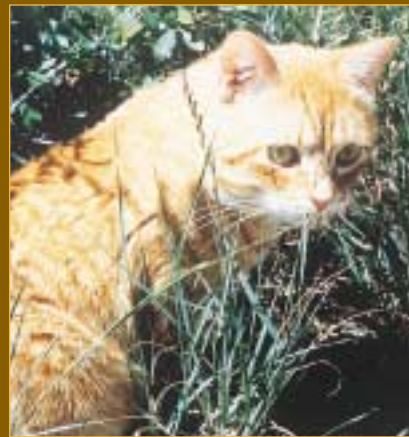
A Benton, Ark., man was convicted of cruelty to animals for firing a pellet gun at three feral kittens, injuring all three and killing one.



In Fall River, Mass., the caretaker of a feral cat colony lost more than 14 cats in just a few months. “It’s like there’s a bounty out on them,” she told the local paper in October 2003. “Nine got hit by cars in one week,” and “[c]ountless cats have been poisoned.” The caretaker found a kitten whose skull had been bashed in, an adult cat who appeared to have been beaten to death, and, in a nearby yard, cat bones and a piece of cord.



In Fitchburg, Wis., a state fish-hatchery employee was charged with animal mistreatment for beating a feral cat to death with an aluminum bar. Prosecutors later dropped the charges after determining that the man, who had been bitten by the cat as he tried to capture the animal, “reasonably” believed that he was at risk of contracting rabies from the cat.



In Melbourne, Fla., a man was charged for the shooting death of a female cat. “The wound was right through the ribs,” the colony caretaker told *Florida Today*. Sixteen other cats were missing, and two were found dead. The cats were all altered, and the killing came as the local shelter was preparing to launch a program to trap, alter, release, and monitor the animals.



A University of Hawaii professor found a 4-inch dart-like needle embedded 3 inches into the leg of one of the colony cats on campus. “It was obvious to me that this projectile had been fired from some sort of gun,” the professor told the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. Campus officials stated that this incident was “not the first time someone [had] done mean things to campus cats.”

“This is a terrible biological loss,” said a Hawaii state wildlife biologist after feral cat attacks nearly wiped out a rare colony of almost 100 native Hawaiian sea birds in two weeks.



All animals can feel pain, and all animals can suffer

Feral cats terrorize and kill wild birds and other animals. Feral cats are non-native predators who disrupt ecosystems. Many of their victims are native songbirds and mammals whose populations are already stressed by habitat loss and other factors. Cats can also hurt native predators by competing with them for prey.



“The dog picked him up ... shook him with great vigor until he broke his back, and then dropped him. This was all in a matter of seconds.”

—A Deland, Fla., resident whose 14-year-old cat—along with 11 other cats and one kitten who had been bitten in half—was killed by a pack of wild dogs

Every situation is different. If there are feral cats in your area, consider the following options very carefully:

- 1 **Humanely capture and surrender the cats to a reputable shelter.** Euthanasia that is performed by caring, skilled professionals at a shelter may be the only way to ensure that feral cats have a peaceful release from an uncaring, dangerous world that is likely to doom them to short lives and traumatic deaths.



- 2 **Humanely capture kittens and social adults, alter them, and place them in permanent, carefully screened homes. A word of caution: Truly feral cats suffer severe emotional distress when they are forced to become animal companions.** Many such cats have spent

their entire lives hiding behind radiators and refrigerators or under beds, creeping out only to eat and drink when the coast is clear. Forcing these cats to live as animal companions is sometimes just as cruel as leaving them to face the dangers of outdoor life, so adoption is only an option for kittens and adults who are already socialized. (Please read PETA’s brochure “Finding the Right Home for Your Companion Animal” for information on screening potential adopters.)

- 3 **Become a model caretaker for a feral cat colony. Maintaining a feral cat colony requires time, patience, resources, and years of commitment.** There are no holidays for feral cat caretakers—the cats need care 365 days a year. If you decide to take on the responsibility, you will need to trap the cats, have them vaccinated and altered, provide them with safe housing, and monitor them for life. You will also need to get the consent and understanding of your neighbors and/or landlord and the services of a cooperative and skilled veterinarian.

For more information on minimum standards for colony maintenance, please read PETA’s factsheet “Trap, Neuter, Return, and Monitor Programs for Feral Cats: Doing It Right.”