



ALLEN COUNTY SPCA BARN CAT PROGRAM

Barn Cat Program: How It Works

The Allen County SPCA is pleased to announce our Barn Cat Placement Program. We are looking for cat lovers who have a barn or other secure outdoor structure and are interested in adopting cats that are not suitable for life inside of a house or are unhappy living inside. Cat temperaments range from feral to friendly. In partnership with Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control and HOPE for Animals, this program is designed to find homes for cats that have traditionally been deemed un-adoptable through our "normal" adoption procedures.

Barn cats benefit their caretakers! Supporting a barn cat is the safest way to control the rodent population in your barn. There are no poisons for children and pets to get into and no need to set nasty traps. They will help keep rodents away from grain and food storage areas, and you'll enjoy watching the cats as well as have the satisfaction of giving them a much-needed home! Consider adopting a barn cat. We will assist you while the cats settle into their new home.

Due to the nature of the program, we may not have suitable cats available immediately, but will try to fill your request as soon as possible. We will maintain a waiting list, as the number of cats available as candidates for the Barn Cat Program will fluctuate. Filling out an application is the first step to adopting. An ACSPCA staff member or volunteer will contact you and a visit to the proposed location to ensure it will provide suitable shelter is optional. When we have Barn Cats for you, you will be asked to sign an Adoption Contract.

Cats that are placed into our Barn Cat Program fall under three main categories:

- Cats whose litter box habits are not consistent enough to be inside only cats and/or who have lived or spent time outside per their previous owner
- Cats who were found as strays and who may be too independent to appreciate living in a house
- Cats who are shy/fearful of people and prefer the company of other cats and animals

We will not place cats who are best suited to be house pets as barn cats and we won't place kittens under age 4 months as barn cats, unless they are feral/semi-feral without hope of becoming socialized (this may be waived on a case by case basis). A minimum of TWO cats must be placed at the same location at the same time. We will determine if the cats can peacefully co-exist prior to placement.

What will you provide?

- A warm, secure, dry barn or building in which the cats can live out their lives
- The commitment and ability to keep the cats confined to a crate or exercise pen with a wire top for up to four weeks to acclimate them to their new environment before release
- A clean litter box that is scooped and/or cleaned daily while confined
- A constant supply of dry food and fresh water. While confined and for a short while after release, you will provide a small amount of canned food daily. What cat can resist that?
- Monitoring and providing for the safety and well-being of the cats as their caretakers
- The willingness to trap and vaccinate the cats once every three years and provide licensed veterinary care in the event of a severe injury or illness
- Spending time daily making verbal contact with the cats so that they become familiar with you

What will ACSPCA provide?

- All cats will appear to be in good health and have had a brief, general exam by a vet tech
- All cats will be spayed/neutered prior to placement
- All cats will be tested/vaccinated against FVRCP and will receive a Rabies vaccine
- All cats will be examined and treated for fleas and ear mites prior to placement
- All cats will be ear-tipped
- ACSPCA will provide smaller, plastic crates to be placed inside the enclosure as a “hiding” place for your barn cat while confined
- ACSPCA will have the cats delivered and will provide detailed instructions on safely confining, releasing and maintaining the barn cats

What is the Adoption Fee?

The adoption fee for two fully vaccinated, spayed, neutered, eartipped cats is negotiable but \$30 is recommended (for both). This does not cover the cost of veterinary care that they have received, but does help to offset a portion of the costs. You are welcome to make a larger, tax-deductible donation if you would like.

Why two cats?

Alley Cat Allies recommends that at least two cats always be moved together. They should be cats who have formed a bond or at least get along with each other. The move will be less traumatic and adjustment to their new home easier if they have the security of one or more trusted companions.

Why do they have to be confined for the first 2-3 weeks?

Cats need to be confined initially in their new home for at least two to three weeks in order to familiarize the cats with their new environment, so that they will remain on the premises. Even though there are instances of cats remaining when they have escaped upon arrival, this is rare and most cats will take off, never to be seen again. Other than being dangerous for the cat, this can be traumatic for the caregiver who has usually put a lot of time, energy, money, and care into the cat.

Some people see confinement as cruel, but a short confinement period is a very necessary part of the relocation project. Not confining the cats and having them run off could mean a far worse fate for the cats. You should know that during the first day or two, the cats may struggle to find a way out. Most cats settle down in the crate after a day or two when they realize that no harm will befall them.

How are the cats confined?

The adopter should be equipped with an extra-large dog crate or with a large exercise pen covered with mesh wire (ACSPCA may be able to provide these supplies free of charge). We will also provide a small, plastic crate that will be placed inside and to the back of the larger enclosure. This provides a hiding place for the cats. These items will be returned to ACSPCA at the end of the three week confinement period. The cats will be provided with: a litter box, which needs to be scooped or cleaned daily; dry food and fresh water at all times; and a portion of canned food every day. It is recommended that a portion of the cage/crate be covered with a sheet. This will allow the cats to feel more protected and hidden.

In winter, the small crate should be bedded with thick towels or straw. Additionally, the caregiver may wish to place bales of straw around the enclosure to help maintain warmth for the confined cats. During spells of freezing weather, the caretaker must be sure to give fresh water throughout the day as the cat's water becomes frozen. There are various devices available to keep water from freezing. We can provide sites where these can be purchased. In summer, proper ventilation is vital to prevent overheating. Cats can and do become overheated.

What happens after the confinement period?

It's best to close all doors and windows in the barn, open the crate door in the evening, then leave. The cats will want to explore their new surroundings all night, as they are nocturnal. By morning they will have found good hiding places, although they may prefer the security of their crate. You can ease the transition by continuing to place their food and water in the crate for a few days with the door open. You will need to continue providing daily food and water after the crate is removed. Cats are territorial creatures. They will usually maintain a home base once their scent has been established, a continuous food source is provided and they feel safe.

DO NOT RELEASE IF IT IS RAINING or the POTENTIAL FOR RAIN

Cats find their home by scent and rain will wash it away. Waiting one more day will not hurt. Leave the crates up for an additional five days, so the cats can get back in if they want. After the release, we hope they think of that barn as home and decide to stay.

What if the cats don't like their new home?

They will like the regular food and water you provide (cats cannot live on mousing alone). They may even begin to show affection. The key to success will be your patience while they adapt to the sights, sounds and smells of their new surroundings. Continue to speak softly to them, try hand feeding treats and leave a radio on to help them get used to human talking and singing.

Get Informed: Discover the Truth about Feral Cats

A feral cat is not socialized to humans.

Though feral cats are members of the domestic cat species and are protected under state anti-cruelty laws, they are typically fearful of humans.

Feral cats should not be taken to animal control pounds and shelters.

Feral cats' needs are not met by the current animal control and shelter system because animals who are not adoptable are euthanized. Even no-kill shelters are not able to place feral cats.

Feral kittens can be adopted.

Feral kittens can often be adopted into homes, but they must be socialized at an early age. There is a critical window and if they aren't handled in time, they will remain feral and therefore unadoptable.

Feral cats can have the same lifespan as pet cats.

And they are just as healthy too. The incidence of disease in feral cats is just as low as in pet cats. They live healthy, natural lives on their own, content in their outdoor home.

Humans are the cause of wildlife depletion.

Studies show that the overwhelming cause of wildlife depletion is destruction of natural habitat due to manmade structures, chemical pollution, pesticides and drought — not feral cats.

Catch and kill doesn't work.

Cats choose to reside in locations for two reasons: there is a food source—(intended or not)—and shelter. When cats are removed from a location, survivors breed to capacity or new cats move in. This vacuum effect is well documented.

Trap-Neuter-Return does work.

No more kittens. The population stabilizes and their lives are improved. The behaviors and stresses associated with mating, such as yowling or fighting, stop. The cats are vaccinated before being returned to their outdoor home. Not only does Trap-Neuter-Return make good sense, it is also a responsible, humane method of care for outdoor cats.

You can make a difference and save lives.

Together, we can educate people about feral cats and the fact that they don't belong in shelters.