

## 5 things you need to know about cats outdoors.

- 1 Stray and feral cats can live anywhere they find food and shelter.
- 2 “Feral” and “stray” are not the same. Strays can usually be adopted; feral cats cannot. Feral cats are content living outdoors.
- 3 Studies show feral cats are as healthy as house cats.
- 4 Feral cats avoid human contact, especially people they don’t know. They don’t want to interact with you or your children.
- 5 The best thing you can do for feral and stray cats is Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR).

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## Do you believe she deserves to live



## even though she lives outdoors?

**Don't buy into the cruel myths about feral cats and kittens.**  
**Discover the compassionate solution that really works...**

## It's happening right in your own backyard

*Maybe you've seen them behind a restaurant. Or in an alley or park. Feral cats live everywhere, forming colonies wherever they find scraps of food and a bit of shelter, be it in dumpsters or under a boardwalk. Tens of millions of feral cats now live in the U.S.*

### FERAL... OR STRAY?

**Feral is not another word for “stray.” A stray is a cat who has been abandoned or who has strayed from home and become lost. Stray cats can usually be re-socialized and adopted. Adult feral cats usually can't be socialized and won't adjust to living indoors or with a human family. Rather than attempting to tame one or a few feral cats, your time and effort are better spent sterilizing many feral cats to break the cycle of reproduction.**



### What is a feral cat?

A feral cat is an unsocialized cat. Either he was born outside and never lived with a human family, or he is a house cat that has strayed from home, and over time, has adapted to living outdoors. Feral cats avoid human contact. *When pet cats are forced to fend for themselves outdoors, huge numbers die from exposure or accidents. The survivors often turn feral and, if they have not been sterilized, give birth to feral kittens. The cycle continues.*

### They have a home — outdoors.

Adult feral cats are not like strays. They usually cannot be socialized and are most content living outside. On the other hand, feral kittens up to 10 weeks of age can often be tamed and placed in homes.

Millions of feral cats are killed in shelters each year because they are unadoptable.

**MYTH:** Feral cats lead short, miserable lives so it's best to trap and euthanize them.

**REALITY:** Studies show that feral cats have about the same lifespan as pet cats. And they contract diseases at about the same rate. *It is simply not humane or prudent to kill a healthy feral cat, and this practice does not reduce their populations over the long-term because other cats move in and start breeding.*

**MYTH:** Feral cats are diseased and can make pet cats or children sick.

**REALITY:** Feral cats are generally healthy. *The incidence of disease in feral cat colonies is no higher than among owned cats.* Feral cats shun human contact, especially with unfamiliar people. They aren't interested in interacting with you or your children.



Do you *really* want your tax dollars to support separating tiny nursing kittens from their mother?

## The usual animal control solution isn't a solution.

### WHAT ABOUT SANCTUARIES FOR FERAL CATS?

This may sound like a compassionate answer, but it's not a workable solution for most feral cats. Besides the fact that sanctuaries are expensive to operate, there isn't enough land or money to relocate tens of millions of feral cats into sanctuaries. Nor is it necessary.

The traditional approach to reducing feral cat numbers has been to round them up and remove them. But bringing feral cats to shelters is the same as a death sentence. Because they cannot adapt to living with humans, they end up being euthanized. *So do their healthy kittens, who, if trapped by 10 weeks of age, can be socialized and adopted.*

### Eradication doesn't work.

Trap-and-remove schemes — which must be done on an ongoing basis — are extremely costly to communities. *What's more, other cats move in to take advantage of the newly available resources and they breed prolifically, quickly forming a new colony.* This "vacuum effect" is well-documented.

Because feral cats are unadoptable, "removing" invariably equals killing.

**MYTH:** Feral cats should be taken to local animal shelters so they can be adopted.

**REALITY:** Feral cats are not pet cats and they will be killed at most shelters. Because they're considered dangerous, they sometimes don't even make it to the shelter, but are killed in the animal control truck. *Feral kittens are separated from their mothers often when they are still nursing.* While the mothers are immediately euthanized, the kittens are spared but often are not tamed by shelter workers within the critical 10-week window, so they remain feral and therefore unadoptable. *Even no-kill shelters are not able to place feral cats in homes.*

**"I couldn't bear to see these little babies dying [just] because they had been born."** — former Animal Welfare League of Arlington employee

A *Washington Post* story in June 2002 described how workers at an Arlington, Va. animal shelter were fired after they were discovered secretly taking home feral kittens slated to be euthanized. The workers hoped to socialize the kittens so they could be adopted.

**MYTH:** Feral cats are predators that deplete wildlife.

**REALITY:** Studies show that the overwhelming cause of wildlife depletion is destruction of natural habitat due to man-made structures, chemical pollution, pesticides, and drought — not feral cats.

**"We were afraid to contact anyone in animal control because we heard that they would pick up the feral cats and destroy them."**

— V. G., III.

**Discover a better way...**

There's an answer for feral cats that works. **An answer you can feel good about.**



There is a solution that not only reduces feral cat populations, but also improves the lives of feral cats: Trap-Neuter-Return. *TNR is a proven procedure in which entire colonies of stray and feral cats are humanely trapped, then evaluated, vaccinated, and neutered by veterinarians.* Kittens and tame cats are adopted into good homes. Adult feral cats are returned to live in their outdoor homes, under the watch of voluntary caregivers.

### TNR works

The breeding stops. Populations are gradually reduced. The annoying behaviors of breeding cats, like yowling or spraying, stop. The cats are vaccinated against disease, and they are fed on a regular schedule. This ongoing care creates a safety net for both the cats and the community.

Trap-Neuter-Return, the humane, nonlethal method of population control, is more effective than trap-and-kill, and is more reflective of a caring society.

**Don't be fooled.** Any solution other than Trap-Neuter-Return results, sooner or later, in the destruction of these beautiful creatures.



### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP FERAL AND STRAY CATS?

Visit the Alley Cat Allies website — [www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org) — to find lots of ways to help stop the killing of feral cats and to promote Trap-Neuter-Return, the humane, nonlethal method of population control. Above all, you can help by preventing feral cats from being born in the first place. Make sure your own pet cats are spayed and neutered. And never abandon a pet.

**"Every life is precious, whether it's rare or not."**

Dr. Julie K. Levy, Associate Professor, Small Animal Medicine Service, University of Florida

### EMBRACING LIFE

Alley Cat Allies is dedicated to stopping the breeding of feral cats without killing.