



Allen County SPCA Working Cat Program

Working Cat Program: How it works

The Allen County SPCA is pleased to announce our Working Cat 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 and 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.

Working Cats benefit their caretakers! Supporting a working cat is the safest way to control the rodent population on your property. 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 working cat. We will assist you while the cats settle in to their new home.

Due to the nature of the program, we may not have suitable cats available immediately, but we will try to fill your request as soon as possible. This may take as long as a week. Filling out an application is the first step to adopting. An Allen County SPCA staff member will contact you once that has been received and processed. When your Working Cats are delivered our staff will also bring your adoption contract for you to sign and go over.

We will not place cats who are best suited to be house pets as Working Cats, and we won't place kittens under 4 months of age as Working 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 Working 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 cat condo (we will provide) for 2-4 weeks to acclimate them to their new environment before release

- A clean litter box (we provide) that is scooped daily while confined
- A constant supply of dry food and fresh water. While confined and for a short while after release, will provide a small amount of wet cat 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 provide licensed veterinary care in the event of a severe injury or illness.

What will the Allen County SPCA will 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, vaccinated with a 3-year rabies, microchipped and ear-tipped prior to placement.
- Cat condos, hidey boxes, bedding, food dishes, litter boxes, food and litter for you to use while your Working Cats are confined during the relocation process.
- Detailed instructions on safely confining, releasing and maintaining your Working Cats

What is the adoption fee?

The adoption fee for a vaccinated, spayed/neutered, microchipped and ear-tipped Working Cat is \$15. The cost becomes \$10 if you adopt 3 or more Working Cats. This does not cover the cost of the veterinary care they have received, but it does help to offset a portion of the costs. You are welcome to make a larger, tax deductible, donation if you would like.

FAQ

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 2-4 weeks?

Cats need to be confined initially in their new home for 2-4 weeks in order to familiarize the cats with their new environment, so they will remain on the premises. Cats are very territorial animals. With some of these cats not being very social, it also teaches them that their adopter is where food comes from and can be trusted. This also allows the cats and other animals maybe already living in the barn/outbuilding to meet each other without

being face-to-face. When they do finally meet face-to-face, the introductions will go much smoother. "Hey! I know you!"

How are the cats confined?

Working Cats from our program are delivered to your property along with their relocation towers. The towers are 4 feet tall, 3 feet wide and 2 feet deep. They come equipped with shelves, a hidey box, litterbox, toys and food/water dishes. Food/water dishes attach to the walls of the cage to prevent spilling, and some food and litter will be provided to get you started. It is recommended that a portion of the tower be draped in a sheet to help the cats feel more protected.

In winter months, it is best to put a bed of straw in the bottom of the tower. Adopters may wish to place bales of straw around the area where the cat towers are kept to help maintain warmth. During spells of freezing temperatures, the caretaker must be sure to give fresh water throughout the day as the cats' water becomes frozen. There are various devices available to keep water from freezing. We can provide information about where these items 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 cage 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 still prefer the security of their cage for a bit. You can ease the transition by continuing to place their food inside the cage for a few days with the door remaining open. You will need to continue to provide daily food and water after the cat condos have been 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 condos up for an additional 5 days, so the cats can get back in if they want.

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

They will like the regular food, water and shelter you provide them. (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 humans talking.

Get informed: Discover the Truth about Feral Cats

A feral cat is not socialized to humans.

Though feral, or semi-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 and shelters.

Feral cats' needs are not met by the current animal control and shelter system, because animals who are not adoptable are euthanized. Until programs like this existed, that was the fate for Working Cats.

Feral kittens can be adopted.

Feral kittens can often be adopted in to 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 habitats 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 2 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 (TNR) 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 homes. Not only does TNR 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.