



Relocating Feral Cats

Thank you for contacting the Community Cat Coalition. We are an all volunteer organization made up of independent rescue people as well as various animal rescue organizations, all working to simply find ways to help not only the community cats, but the people in our communities. Community cats are made up of free roaming cats, and can include friendly stray or abandoned cats as well as feral and semi-feral cats; there are many ways to deal with them, and the following information is provided to help you understand the best way to **relocate a feral/free roaming cat**. Relocation is a difficult process, and if not done properly will result in the cats being lost, possibly coming to a bad end. This document is only a brief overview, and it is highly suggested you talk to a volunteer who is experienced in doing relocations before you begin. At the end of this document is a contact address if you are interested in coming to a free class on how to do TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return), or would simply like to be connected to a mentor to help walk you through the process.

If you absolutely cannot leave the feral cats where they are, and must relocate them, you must first find a suitable place to relocate them. Barns, sheds, outbuildings on private or industrial properties are commonly used. Ask people who might be looking for a mouser – you will be surprised at the number of people willing to take on an outdoor cat to keep mice down. Make posters and hang in the local co-ops (or ask the co-op if they would like one for their supply room!) and anywhere people with barns may hang out; place them on grocery store bulletin boards, any public display board. Put an ad on craigslist – that gets a lot of attention. If you know someone with a work “newspaper” (i.e. Boeing) ask if they will include a posting for you there. Yes, it does take work to do this – but in the end, you will find a home and the cat will be taken care of. But absolutely do not take the cat to a new home without stopping to get him altered first! Most people will not take unaltered cats, thankfully – the problem does not need to continue. And it is free to have him altered at the organizations I have listed at the end of this document – find the home, take him to be altered, and when you pick him up afterwards just continue on to his new home.

Here is the process for relocating a cat – while you may not be the one to do the actual relocating, you can give this info to the people taking the cat in. The most important thing is to be sure they have an escape proof holding area for the cat – he needs to be held in confinement for 2-3 weeks before they let him go free, otherwise he will simply run in panic and be lost.

1. Take the cats to the escape proof holding area, have dry food available 24/7 along with water, and feed soft food once a day. Feral cats are masters of escape; they can get out of a hole that is about 2" square. If there is any doubt about the place they will be held, use cages - and the cage should be big enough for a hiding spot (have a large carrier in the cage for them to go in, and with 3 cats there should be at least 2 hiding spots), a litter pan, and food/water. 2 large dog kennels may be zip-tied together for 1-3 cats, each kennel is 4' long so there is at least 8' of floor space for them. 2-3 weeks is a long time to be caged, making it as pleasant for them as possible means it is less likely to stress them and cause them to run away when released. Put a scratching pad and some toys in the cage, although many ferals will ignore toys. The cardboard scratchers with some catnip on them will be a good thing.

2. When canned food is provided, make a sound (we suggest a bell, or tapping the side of the can) to get the cats used to that as a positive reinforcement to come. The soft food should be given the whole time they are confined, and for at least 2 weeks after they are let loose; after that, it is at their desire/plan. While canned food has been shown to be healthier for the cats, many barn situations are not prepared to feed this, and it is not an absolute requirement. We do suggest they give at least occasionally, and do not stop abruptly if they do stop – go to every other day, every 3rd day, etc.
3. Take care of the litter box daily, throw out the poop and sprinkle used (urine containing) litter around the perimeter of the barn/shed. Use **regular clay litter (not the clumping)** for the confinement period as clumping turns to goo, and too many cats do not like the pellets. If there are a lot of cats, tell them to start with clay litter and add a scoop of pellets daily, they can transition to that and make it more environmentally sound, plus it will smell better. Spreading the peed on litter in the vicinity puts the cat's scent in the area, when they are released it helps them know this is their territory.
4. Talk to the cats when in with them, and if they have time go see them a couple of times a day to get them used to the sound of their new human's voice.
5. Keep them confined for 2-3 weeks; if they have a large area, go 3 weeks. Hopefully they have made several hiding spots inside for the cats.
6. Make sure there are safe places for the cats to run outside when they are released; in some barns, we have leaned boards up against the side of the building to create an easy hiding spot, the cats run outside and immediately go under the board. If there are no nearby safe spots, they may run too far and not come back. Make several, and tell the people they cannot change them for a couple of months at least. No major changes in the first 6 months should be happening, that can spook them off.
7. The day of release sprinkle catnip all around the opening they will be going in/out; use catnip liberally inside during the confinement, it can give them more confidence. (However, if there are multiple cats being relocated, save the catnip for release as it can make some cats aggressive, and being confined would not be a good thing.)

Make sure nothing is around to spook the cats the first week out, especially dogs. Try to keep the routine as normal as possible and avoid any changes near their living quarters / territory. Keep the feeding up, and monitor how much food is going – that tells you if they are still there.

For more information or to connect with a mentor, please contact us at communitycatcoalitionwa@gmail.com. Thank you for caring!