

Feral cats



CATS PROTECTION
ESSENTIAL GUIDES



True feral cats are the offspring of stray or abandoned domestic cats. They live wild in towns, cities or rural areas and may have little or no contact with humans. As a result, they are often scared of people and will avoid them.

How do they survive?

Some people consider feral cats as pests. But many more, particularly farmers, stable owners and smallholders, value them as working mousers who protect valuable grain or feed.

A healthy feral colony is far more likely to keep vermin levels to a minimum. Despite their wild nature, to remain healthy they do need a certain level of care, including:

Regular feeding

Contrary to popular belief, regularly fed feral cats are better hunters than hungry ones.

Neutering

This has major health benefits and controls the colony population. To be neutered, feral cats need to be trapped as they are too wild to be handled. While the cats are sedated or under anaesthetic, the vet can check their health and treat them for parasites.



What about toxoplasmosis?

Farmers may be concerned that feral cats could be the source of toxoplasma, which can cause miscarriages in ewes. However, the disease can only be passed if the ewe ingests cat faeces in its feed or water. Vets agree that there is no risk to non-pregnant, healthy sheep. The main risk arises from an outsider cat or kitten coming onto your land but a healthy feral colony will naturally keep such outsiders away.

How can Cats Protection help?

In most cases, adult feral cats cannot be domesticated or rehomed as they have not been socialised when young and become too used to living wild. Many Cats Protection branches will trap, neuter and return adult cats back onto their 'territory'. Very young kittens can often be domesticated through good socialisation with humans before they become too used to living wild. Financial assistance from Cats Protection may be available to help with neutering. For more information see Cats Protection's [*Essential Guide: Neutering*](#).

Remember, cats are protected by law and purposefully killing a cat constitutes an offence. If you are a landowner seeking advice about feral cats on your land or you are worried about the welfare of a feral colony, please phone Cats Protection on 03000 12 12 12 or get in touch with your local branch.

This leaflet is one of a range provided by
Cats Protection on issues surrounding cat care.

Cats Protection is the UK's leading feline welfare
charity and helps more than 193,000 cats and kittens
each year. We rely entirely on public generosity to
finance this vital welfare work.

For more information on **adopting a cat**,
volunteering for us or **making a donation**,
visit **www.cats.org.uk**



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