



Feral cat veterinary care – summary

Most of the feral cats brought to you will be part of a trap, neuter and return (TNR) project. The following summary will guide you through what to do.

Feral cats have not been socialised to people nor are habituated to the domestic environment, therefore confinement for treatment will be extremely stressful to them.

Note: Cats Protection also issue vouchers and grants for members of the public who are able to TNR themselves – this funding only covers the neuter.

Confining in pens or cages at the veterinary practice

No attempt should be made to handle feral cats manually unless they are anaesthetised.

Feral cats should not be confined in pens or cages for longer than 24-48 hours.

If a feral cat requires confinement for treatment for more than three to five days, euthanasia should be considered as a better welfare option.

Surgery should take place either the same or next day after trapping. It is best for surgery to take place in the morning so cats can be released the same day if fit.

Minimise stress by covering, keep in a quiet environment and maintain room temperatures 15-26°C.

Clinical examination

A quick visual check can be carried out before you begin. A feral cat that has been clearly ear-tipped indicates that they have already been neutered and should be released back to site.

Obtain a weight for the cat: (weight of cat + cage) – cage weight = weight of cat.

Feral cats should be presented in a trap transfer restrainer to allow safe administration of general anaesthesia without direct handling, by intramuscular injection. See Cats Protection's [Veterinary Guide](#) for anaesthetic dose rates for kittens.

A full examination should be performed under general anaesthesia as follows:

- scan for a microchip. Do not place a microchip in feral cats. If a microchip is found, please follow the stray policy found in Cats Protection's [Veterinary Guide](#)
- a full health check prior to surgery. See Cats Protection's [Feral Guide](#) for further details

Euthanasia and treatment decisions

Decisions regarding treatment of sick or injured cats should be made immediately, prior to neutering or recovery from anaesthesia. Euthanasia should be considered for cats with conditions that cannot be resolved with one-off treatments.

It is important to discuss the possibility of some cats not being returned after TNR with relevant stakeholders to manage their expectations.

Record all findings and treatment for each cat in a separate 'Cats Protection feral work' record.

FIV and FELV testing

Ideally all feral cats should be tested but please check with your local Cats Protection representative.

As a minimum, all sick cats or any cats you are suspicious of carrying disease should be tested. In addition, the first 25% of any feral colony. If a positive result is returned, the whole colony must be tested.

If positive for either FeLV or FIV, feral cats should be euthanased without confirmatory blood tests.

Please see Cats Protection's guidelines for FIV/FeLV testing and instructions for how to perform the test [here](#).

Vaccination

All feral cats should be given a single vaccination while under anaesthesia against FHV, FCV and FPV.

Parasite control

All feral cats, while under general anaesthesia, should be treated topically for fleas, tapeworms and roundworms using a preferred Cats Protection product.

See Cats Protection's '[Parasite control procedures](#)' document for current recommended products.

Neutering

Feral cats are neutered as soon as they are weaned.

Females

- Spay by left flank approach, using dissolvable skin sutures
- Pregnant females should be spayed to protect their welfare and to control a colony's population more effectively
- Lactating females should be trapped, neutered (left flank approach), and returned to site as soon as possible

Males

- If one or both testicles are absent on clinical exam, the presence of penile spines would suggest the cat is cryptorchid
- Cryptorchid males should undergo exploratory surgery to locate missing testicle(s), provided the cat is in good health

Feral cats must be identified as neutered by ear tipping, with a 10mm straight-line amputation of the tip of the left ear in adults (slightly less in kittens).

Support available for vets

- Cats Protection's [Veterinary Guide](#)
- Cats Protection's [Feral Guide](#)
- Information about [Cats Protection's veterinary discount schemes](#)
- You can find Cats Protection's veterinary protocols, advice for adopters, CPD Academy and information about our EMS placements [here](#)
- Our team of Field Veterinary Officers are available to discuss cases and offer additional support. They can be contacted by emailing veterinary@cats.org.uk