



Giving a home to a feral or semi feral cat

Definition

Fully feral cats generally live in groups or colonies and are found in places such as farms, factories, country parks, public gardens etc. They find human contact extremely stressful and won't thrive without the company of other feral cats. They are best suited to rehoming in farms or similar where they will be working cats earning their keep by controlling the rodent population. They should be cared for so that they can live a healthy, carefree life but have minimum human intervention.

Semi feral cats also thrive best in other feline company but are able to tolerate some human intervention, particularly when there is an established regime for feeding and shelter. Some semi feral cats will bond to a degree with the person taking care of them. They are best suited to stables, liveries, small holdings and estates etc.

Health check

All feral and semi feral cats adopted from Cats Protection, Bracknell & Wokingham will have been vet checked for FIV, FeLV and ringworm. They will be neutered, microchipped, treated for fleas and worms. Fully feral cats will also be ear tipped. Semi feral cats will be vaccinated if they are able to tolerate being in a cat pen for the three weeks it takes to do this.

Preparing for the arrival of a feral or semi feral cat

The cats will need to be kept in a confined area for about 3 weeks to allow them to become acclimatised to their new surroundings, feeding regime, smells and sounds. A barn, stable, tack room or shed with natural light is ideal provided it is entirely secure – these cats can escape through the smallest hole. Preferably this will become their permanent shelter and where you will feed them every day. If they get out too soon they will bolt and you may not see them again.

During this time they will also need somewhere they can hide. We can provide a cat igloo if required.

They will need one or more litter trays, depending on how many cats there are, plus food and water bowls and warm bedding. CP uses wood pellet litter so the cats may be used to this.

We can visit your premises beforehand to discuss specifics.

Feeding

While the cats are confined they should be fed twice a day, with wet food, and dry food should be left down all the time. Once they are out and doing their jobs as mousers you can probably gradually reduce this to once a day and possibly dry cat food only.

If you are adopting semi feral kittens then they will probably still be on 3 meals a day – wet kitten food twice a day and dry kitten food left down all day. They should remain on kitten food until they are 6 months old.

One tip is to make a noise or sound that the cats will associate with being fed so that you can attract them back once they are released.

Another tip is to scatter some of their used cat litter around the general area outside so that they will recognise their smell when they go out and will be less likely to wander. It also helps other animals you may have to become familiar with their smell.

After the first three weeks

Leave the door open and let them come out in their own time, best done at night for the first time. They will find their own places to hide but make sure they can access their shelter, perhaps via a cat flap or a hole? Ensure they have warm & dry shelter from the weather all the year round.

On-going care

Working cats, like any other animal, need regular feeding and vet attention when ill or injured. They should also be regularly treated for fleas and worms. Unlike domestic cats it is unlikely you will be able to use spot-on treatments, instead these will have to be administered in the cats' food. Flea treatment such as "Program" is recommended once a month and "Milbemax" or Drontal wormer every three months.

Adoption Fee

This Branch doesn't charge an adoption fee for feral or semi feral cats. However please note we are a charity totally dependent on public donations. Donations can be made at www.cats.org.uk/bracknell or by cheque made out to Cats Protection Bracknell & Wokingham or in cash.

Further advice

Cats Protection will be happy to provide advice and guidance if needed.

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