



Finding a Home for a Stray Cat

Fundamentally Feline
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It's a familiar dilemma for many cat-lovers: we want to rescue homeless and abandoned cats, but we can't always keep them! Here are some tips to help you find a good home for a stray cat.

If you want a new home for your own pet...

The sad fact is that almost 80% of cats do not stay with their first owner beyond two years. Shelters usually have fewer strays than animals that have been turned-in by former owners. The reasons for giving up a pet vary, but often include allergies, moving, childbirth, and behavior problems. The good news is that you don't have to give up the cat in order to address these (and other) issues! If your cat has a medical or behavioral problem, call us for behavioral advice or to set up an appointment.

If you or a family member has an allergy problem, consult a pet-friendly allergy specialist, who will work with you to manage the allergies and allow you to keep your cat.

Are you sure the stray is homeless?

Don't assume that a wandering animal is homeless, or that she has an uncaring owner. Even careful and loving owners sometimes lose a pet. If the stray comes to you willingly and seems friendly, it may be someone's missing pet. Most cats don't stray far, so ask neighbors whether they recognize the cat. Call local shelters and ask whether they have reports of a missing pet. Check the Lost and Found ads. **Have the stray checked for a microchip ID.**

If the cat's owner cannot be found, your next task is to find her a new home.

First things first

The first priority is to keep both the stray cat and your pets safe until you can find a new home for the stray. If you have other pets, keep the stray separate from them to avoid spreading disease or parasites. Maybe you can keep the stray in a small room or a bathroom. Do not allow your pets to share the stray's dishes or litter box. If you cannot keep the cat for a few days, ask a friend to foster the cat for you, or board the cat at an appropriate facility. (Be sure to ask whether there's a discount for rescued strays!)

Make the stray more adoptable

It will be easier to place the stray if you can have a vet examine and vaccinate her, and test for FIV and FeLV. If the cat hasn't been spayed or neutered, consider having that done; there are low-cost spay/neuter programs that can help with the cost. Socialize the stray as much as possible; visit and play with her, and get her used to being petted and brushed.

Spread the word!

Print a flyer

Print a flyer with a picture of the cat and your contact information. Tell a little about the cat (she's playful, she's quiet, she likes children, she doesn't like dogs, etc.) and provide any medical information you have (whether she's been spayed, vaccinated, etc.), and why you need to place her. See the sample on page 4.

Advertise

Place an ad in local newspapers, including the small weekly news sheets; many offer free "found" ads. Post signs in your neighborhood. Put a notice in your neighborhood newsletter. Ask to place a flyer in veterinarians' offices and pet supply stores. Post a notice on the bulletin board at your office, your gym, your church, and anywhere else you can think of. Use the Internet! You can place notices on community lists and chat rooms. Many people prefer to adopt cats from private homes rather than from shelters, but you need to reach them!

Word of mouth

Talk to friends, neighbors, family members, co-workers, the clerk at the grocery store, and so on. The more people you talk to, the better the chances that you'll find someone who will provide a great home for the cat. Keep a couple of flyers with you at all times so you can give one to anybody who expresses interest.

Wanting the stray is not enough!

You may be tempted to give the stray to the first person who calls – but please don't! Carefully screen the callers until you're sure that you've found a good home. Remember that the cat's life depends on your decision. It is better to mistakenly turn down a good home than to put the cat into a bad home. You need to make sure that the person is willing and able to take on the expense and responsibility of owning a cat.

Ask to see where the cat will be living. Check the condition of other animals in the home to verify that they are well cared-for. Ask what happened to the person's previous pets. Does the potential adopter have a vet? Does the person understand the necessity of vaccines and annual exams? Will the cat be fed a high-quality diet? Will she be kept safely indoors? Does the prospective owner understand the dangers of declawing or the harmful results of not spaying and neutering?

Do not give the cat away for free. People who are willing to pay something for a pet are more likely to be serious about caring for it. Sad to say, there are also people out there who gather free animals for medical experiments, or worse.

No-kill shelters and rescue organizations

Contact the no-kill shelters and rescue organizations in your area and ask whether they can accept the stray. It is important to verify that it is a no-kill shelter, meaning that they will keep the stray until she is adopted. (Other shelters will often euthanize an animal within a few days.) No-kill shelters are usually full, and you may have to place your stray on a waiting list.

You can find the names and phone numbers of local shelters in the phone book, often under the name of the county where you live.

There's lots of information on the Internet about shelters and rescue organizations. Also refer to the Resources section below. Remember that Web site addresses may change, so try using a search engine to locate groups and shelters in your area.

Keep in mind that there are far too many homeless pets and too few people willing to help place them. If you don't immediately get a return call from a rescue organization, try again. These hard-working animal-lovers are doing their best, but there are only so many hours in a day!

Weekend adoption events

Many organizations run weekend adoption events at stores such as Petsmart. There may be a waiting list to get your stray into one of these adoption events. Many of these organizations need volunteers; perhaps you can offer to help staff an adoption event in exchange for bringing your stray cat for adoption. These organizations may also have names of possible foster parents.

Don't give up!

It often takes time to place a stray cat into a new home. There are just too many homeless animals and too few homes. Keep at it until your stray cat has a suitable forever-home.

And if you decide you can squeeze one more stray into your home and your heart, so much the better! That leaves a potential home for another stray kitty! Contact us for free advice on how to integrate the new cat into your household, or download information from our Web site.

Resources

www.spotsociety.org
www.petfinder.com

Good Mews, a no-kill shelter in Marietta <www.goodmews.org/home.htm> or phone 770-499-2287
Furkids, a no-kill shelter in northeast Atlanta <www.furkids.org> or phone 770-613-0009

Spay/neuter assistance

Spay Georgia (770-662-4479)
Friends of Animals (770-662-6033)

[Sample flyer]

Seeking a great home for a special cat!

This handsome five-year-old gray tabby was found wandering along a busy road. We would love to keep him, but our lease limits us to the two cats we already have, so we need to find him a new home quickly.

He has been examined by a vet, vaccinated, and tested for FIV and FeLV (both negative). Other than being a little thin, he's in good health. He has been neutered and treated for flea and heartworm prevention.

He is friendly and likes to play and cuddle. He seems a bit scared of children, so he'd probably be happier in a home with adults. He gets along with dogs and other cats, and enjoys watching our Video Catnip DVD!



If you're interested in adopting this kitty, please call 770-555-1234 or send an e-mail message to <myaddy@isp.com>. Adoption fee and interview required.