

Benefits of Having Barn Cats

Supporting a barn cat is a safe and inexpensive way to control the rodent population. There are no poisons for children and pets to get into and no need to set nasty traps. This environmentally friendly pest control saves you money and prevents the horses, livestock, and dogs from being accidentally poisoned. You will most likely enjoy watching the cats, learning their habits, and communicating with them. It can be tremendously satisfying to know you have saved their lives by giving them their much-needed home. Many people appreciate the cats themselves as well as the work the cats do – keeping rodents away from electrical wires, motor homes, hay, and many other things.

We strongly recommend adopting more than one barn cat at a time. Cats are social creatures and will be more likely to stay around the property if they have other felines to socialize with. If you are interested in multiple cats we would love to adopt you cats that have come in together either from the same home or the same feral colony, we can even match non-feral working cats who get along to be adopted out together.

Cats in the barn cat program fall into these categories:

- Feral cats who must be relocated due to the unsafe nature of their original areas
- Friendly cats who have litter-box issues, thus making them unsuitable as house pets
- Friendly cats who are too independent and/or high energy which makes their house behavior unsuitable
- Cats who are shy/fearful of people, and prefer the company of other cats and animals

All of our cats in this program are fully vetted. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- All cats have been spay/neutered! You'll never have to worry about endless litters of kittens appearing on your property.
- At least 1 round of Rabies and Feline Distemper vaccines; often, these cats have had their booster vaccines as well. All have been given at least 1 round of a comprehensive de-flea/de-worm/ear mite treatment.
- Treatment for fleas and ear mites and at least one round of general de-wormer.
- Depending on the temperament the cat maybe FeLV/FIV tested and Microchipped.

Confinement Period

Why do they have to be confined for the first 2-4 weeks?

Cats need to be confined initially in their new home for at least two to four weeks in order to familiarize them with their new environment, so that they will remain on the premises. Even though there are instances of cats remaining when they have escaped upon arrival, this is rare and most cats will take off to never be seen again. Other than being dangerous for the cat, this can be traumatic for the caregiver who has usually put a lot of time, energy, money and care into the cat.

Some people see confinement as cruel, but a short confinement period is a very necessary part of the relocation project. Not confining the cat and having them run off could mean a far worse fate for the cat. You should know that during the first day or two, the cat may struggle to find a way out. Most cats will settle down in the crate after a few days when they realize that there is no harm in their new environment.

How are the cats confined?

Types of Safe Confinement:

Crating: We are talking about the large black metal wire crates used when people train their dogs. The crate needs to be large enough for food, water and a litter box*. For adult cats, one crate per cat is the norm but if cats are smaller and familiar with each other, sharing a roomy cage is acceptable. Each situation is unique. Having a cardboard box or 'hut' with straw in it makes a nice hiding place if your re-homed cat is scared at first. Covering crates with sheets gives cats an additional sense of security.

Horse Stall: Please look in corners on floors and ceilings making sure ALL four walls are totally closed up with no holes or gaps in the walls. If there is the smallest space and a cat is so inclined, he/she will escape.

Office or Tack Room: Office doors must remain closed during the animals' re-homing. If your office gets lots of traffic, we would suggest a bright colored sign on both sides of the door alerting your employees, or the public to keep the doors closed at all times.

Additionally, the caregiver may wish to place bales of straw around the enclosure to help maintain warmth for the confined cat. During spells of freezing weather, the caregiver must be sure to give fresh water throughout the day as the cat's water becomes frozen. For the summer, we recommend keeping the crate in the shade with a fan on to help keep them as cool as possible.

* Litter & Litter Boxes do not have to be the plastic kind. They can be cardboard liners you get from the grocery store that holds beer or soda cans. These make-shift litter boxes are then lined with newspaper and clay litter is sprinkled on top. Aluminum lasagna pans also work well too.

*Some cats prefer using outside and have no idea what litter is. In this case we suggest using dirt and grass with just a little bit of litter in your litter box.

What happens after the confinement period?

It is best to close all doors and windows in the barn, open the crate door in the evening, then leave. The cat will want to explore their new surrounding all night, as they are nocturnal. By morning they will have found good hiding places, although they may prefer the security of their crate. You can ease the transition by continuing to provide food (wet food for a little while) and water after the crate is removed. Cats are territorial creatures. They will usually maintain a home base once their scent has been established, a continuous food source is provided and they feel safe.

Feeding:

Alley Cat Allies suggests adding canned food to the cats' dry food during initial crating/re-homing period. Following the release of your barn cat buddy, canned food mixed with dry is added insurance for their sticking around. You can gradually decrease the wet if you chose over the course of a week or two after release. As always, have water readily available. Before letting the cats out consider where you will be leaving food and water so they know where it is and can get to it easily. Having food and water elevated on a hay bale or in a loft will help the cats get to their food and not give other animals like pet dogs a chance to help themselves.

Things to consider

Note that removing feral cats and relocating them is a labor-intensive process on the receiving end; the cats must be fed daily and safely contained for two to four weeks before their release in that area. This helps them learn to recognize their new home and know where to return for food and shelter. Most barn cats are extremely timid and fearful of people. Unless you have experience handling wild cats, do not attempt to touch them. Call a veterinarian for advice if a barn cat becomes sick or injured.

Adopting a cat through the CMHS Barn Cat program can help save the life of a cat who may not have other options. However, the care of a barn cat is still a responsibility. You will be assuming care for the cat for its entire lifetime, which may be as much as 15 or 20 years. In exchange for providing the essentials of food & water, medical care, and shelter, your barn cat will earn its keep by helping to control the rodent population in your barn!

We truly thank you for helping this forgotten population of felines.