



Feral Cats



Feral versus stray



The term *feral* is sometimes used to refer to an animal that does not appear friendly when approached by humans, but the term can apply to any domesticated animal without human contact. Hissing and growling are self-defence behaviours, which, over time, may change as the animal (whether "feral" or "stray") begins to trust humans that provide food, water, and care.

Feral cats that are born and living outdoors, without any human contact or care, have been shown to be adoptable and can be tamed by humans.

Life span and survival

Because of the dependency on human influence, domestic animals (such as cats and dogs) cannot properly fend for themselves for any significant length of time. Thus, the average life span of a feral cat that survives beyond *kittenhood* is about two years for independent cats and five years for cats in a cat colony. In contrast, a cat that lives indoors under proper human care has a life expectancy of 15–22 years. Almost all cats that are left to survive outdoors will succumb to starvation, thirst, disease, parasites or predation.

Another threat to the life of a feral cat is weather. Cats are sensitive to conditions of cold and heat. A cat's normal body temperature is between 100.5 and 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit (38.2 and 39.2 Celsius). Cats do not sweat as humans do, and they regulate their body temperature through panting and licking their fur in hot weather. Numerous cats living outdoors, whether feral or tame, die each year due to hyperthermia or hypothermia.

Population



A **feral cat colony** is a population (or "clowder") of feral cats. The term is used primarily when a noticeable population of feral cats live together in a specific location and use a common food source. The term is not typically applied to solitary cats passing through an area. A colony can range from 3-5 cats to about 100 cats. Their locations vary, some hiding in alleyways or in large parks.

Members consist of adult females, their young, and some adult males. Unneutered males in a colony fight each other for turf and for females. Some will be driven out to find another place to live.

Feral cats who have been trapped in many warm areas where fleas exist are usually found to have a large number of fleas, causing them to be anaemic. Both the fleas, and the food source, if limited to garbage and rodents, cause the cats to have intestinal microorganisms (such as coccidia or giardia) and other parasites (commonly known as roundworms, tapeworms, and hookworms), which lead to diarrhea and subsequent dehydration. They also can have ear mites, ringworm, and upper respiratory infections. Others are wounded in mating-fights and die from the infected wounds. Still others eventually contract *feline immunodeficiency virus* or *feline leukemia* due to the constant transmission of blood and bodily fluids via fighting and sexual activity.

While all of these illnesses are quite treatable, there must be humans to intervene to stop these illnesses from becoming fatal. Due to the number of health problems to which they are subjected, and their fragile immune systems, kittens in the colony sometimes do not survive.

This information is provided to you as a courtesy by:



(905) 649-8282

Second Chance

Wildlife Sanctuary

www.second-chance.ws



Feral Cats



How many ferals are there?

There are very few studies on the feral cats, and even fewer statistics kept anywhere. Hopefully with websites such as this, we may bring light to the question and be able to put together information from sources all over Canada.

Where do they come from?

Quite simply, Ferals are the product of human irresponsibility. Unneutered domestic cats are allowed to roam freely or are "disposable" commodities dumped when they become too inconvenient. These unneutered domestics produce offspring who have little or no direct contact with humans - these are ferals.

What to do with them?

Feral cats deserve our compassion and protection. Cats, whether feral or domestic, deserve the right to be recognized as a unique and important species and to be treated as equal members of the animal kingdom.

Most importantly, feral cats have the right to be free from cruelty and abuse.

Compassionate caregivers work diligently to improve the life of feral colonies by providing aid and comfort, including food, water, shelter and medical care.

The Past

For decades the solution has been to trap & kill feral cats. Has it been successful? Obviously not as proven by the statistics from local animal control facilities. Individuals have been out practicing the trap-neuter-release or relocation method for several years. These valiant efforts are wonderful but relatively ineffective when faced with the seemingly unending amount of kittens on the streets every spring.

The Future

Mass spay/neutering.

Just one pair of breeding cats X 2 to 3 litters a year X 5 kittens averaged per litter X 7 years = 420,000 cats. To combat this prolific rate, a mass spay/neutering program is the most efficient and cost-effective way.

The situation can be referred to as an "over-flowing bathtub". Past methods have concentrated on dealing with the overflow itself. The "simple" solution is to turn off the taps first.

It IS that easy. The hard part is to convince others of it's simplicity. Actively **DOING** spay/neuter eventually shows concrete results that prove it's effectiveness beyond a shadow of a doubt. **Just Do It!**

Come On Canada! Join organizations and individuals nation wide in their successful work towards the lowering of the euthanasia percentages, the lessening of the on-street population, and the health and well-being of the feral cat colony populations!

Link with a site and keep in touch!

- <http://www.quadrant.net/streetcat/>
- <http://www.feralcat.com>
- <http://www.alleycat.org>

This information is provided to you as a courtesy by:



(905) 649-8282

Second Chance

Wildlife Sanctuary

www.second-chance.ws