



# Barn Cat Placement Information

**Please Note:** Because we are a very small group of volunteers, we must limit our barn program scope. As a result we do not have the resources to relocate your cats. We are set up to find homes for the cats that our organization already has in foster homes and cats that we have agreed to move from dangerous locations as part of our Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) program. We hope to expand our program in the future. **We are always in need of more volunteers, which will allow us to do more!**

If you are looking to relocate cats to another outdoor environment, please search the internet to learn how to relocate cats successfully. Moving cats to a new place takes careful planning and must involve confinement at the new location. Please inform yourself before attempting to relocate cats. Failure to properly relocate cats will most likely mean death for the cats.

Because of the volume of outdoor community cats, the best option is to trap, spay/neuter, vaccinate and then return them to their original location where they will be fed and monitored under the watchful eye of a caregiver. Sometimes we cannot return the cats to their environment for the following reasons: no caretaker/ feeder, dangerous environment, threat of harm by neighbors, or outdoor cat is friendly but has a behavioral problem that prevents them from being an indoor pet. We work diligently to find new, outdoor, safe homes for these cats. In most cases these cats go to barn homes, but given the right circumstances and dwelling, cats may be located to sheds, outbuildings, and other dwellings.

## What Is A Barn Cat?

We use the term "barn cat" to refer to any cat that is not adoptable as an indoor pet. We classify these cats into the following categories:

- **Feral:** they were born and raised outside with little or no human contact. You will not get to touch these cats, and you may not even see them. But have no doubt that they will be around mouse-ing for you, and they will be eating the food and drinking the water you leave for them.
- **Semi-Feral:** they may have been domestic pets at one point but have survived on their own for long periods of time. Sometimes these cats will let you touch them, usually at feeding time, but they rarely will let you pick them up and may avoid you at non-feeding times.
- **Friendlier Indoor-Outdoor:** they may be friendly enough to pet and picked up and played with. Usually they have issues that prevent them from being an indoor pet, such as: failure to use the litter box, spraying, too high-energy, or other behavioral issues.

One very valuable contribution all barn cats provide is environmentally friendly rodent control, or **“green” rodent control**. These cats will keep your barn free of mice and other rodents, snakes, and other non-wanted critters.

Note that barn cats do not eat or live on the rodents they catch – they must be fed a balanced cat food diet to remain healthy and strong and receive proper nutrition. **Without proper nutrition, cats will not have the energy to hunt for rodents.** Feeding cats a balanced cat food diet will not decrease their desire or ability to hunt for rodents. In fact it will increase their ability to do so because they will remain healthy, strong, and energetic.

## Our Barn Cat Program

We deliver barn cats at no charge and provide all supplies needed for their orientation period. Our delivery area is within a 2-hour radius of the Baltimore, MD area. We do go a little farther on occasion.

All of our barn cats fall into one of the three classifications listed above. The cats we place are spayed/neutered, vaccinated for rabies and distemper, and healthy. More importantly, they are in desperate need of safe, outdoor homes; many are at risk for being euthanized in shelters, starving due to not having a caretaker and food, or horribly mistreated on the streets.

By adopting barn cats, you are providing them a second chance at life, and they will have the benefit of living where they are truly wanted, rather than being considered a nuisance and living in danger. Cats fit in nicely with other outdoor animals, and they provide companionship for each other. They thrive on rural or semi-rural properties where they can put their natural hunting abilities to good use. Those that tolerate or desire human companionship also do well in homes where they can spend most of the time outside but can come indoors for food and warmth in severe weather.

These cats will earn their "keep" by providing **GREEN RODENT CONTROL** and reducing rodent and snake populations - a win-win situation. Owners of dairy farms, stables and other properties where grain is stored will confirm that cats are a must to avoid rodent infestations! **Please note that barn cats CAN NOT live on rodents and require daily food and water to remain healthy and survive.**

Please help us provide safe and much-needed homes for these special cats so they can continue to live out their lives and be productive in an environment where they are wanted. If you own property or have permission for long-term placement and would like to learn more about this program, please contact us at 410-796-7327 (-SFCR) or email us at [sunshinescatrescue@gmail.com](mailto:sunshinescatrescue@gmail.com).

### What we Ask of You

When adopting barn cats from us, we ask you to agree to the following:

- Provide a secure place to keep the cats confined for 2-4 weeks while they adjust to their new environment and to you.
- Make a commitment to provide your new cats a forever home.
- Provide daily food and water. Cats generally do not eat the rodents they kill; even if they do eat them, they will not receive proper nutrition without a balanced cat food diet. Without proper nutrition, the cats will not have the energy to catch rodents – **a well-fed cat will catch more rodents than a hungry cat.** Most cats love wet food and will wait for it at feeding time. IN addition to feeding cats dry cat food, please consider giving your cats some wet food as it provides protein and also acts as a deterrent to them running away looking for it elsewhere.
- Provide adequate safe and warm shelter in barns, buildings or stables to keep cats safe from predators and warm in cold weather.
- Provide long-term veterinary care as applicable. Annual vaccines are critical to keeping the cats in good health, and all out door cats should be dewormed at least once per year. Vet care may also be needed if the cat becomes injured or sick.

## How Our Barn Cat Program Works

**Step 1:** If you are interested in adopting barn cats, we may ask you to complete a brief barn cat application / agreement. This will allow us to assess the sincerity of the applicant, and it will also provide us with pertinent background information that will help us select the most appropriate barn cats for your specific location. We almost always attempt to place at least two cats from one colony together because they are already bonded, and the move will be less traumatic for them. Adjusting to their new home will be easier if they have the security of familiar companions.

Note that barn cats require daily food and water, as well as basic, long-term veterinary care to keep vaccines current and treat medical needs should it become necessary.

**Step 2:** Once we review your application / email request / Facebook request, we will be in touch with you to discuss your specific situation and environment. We may also ask you to send a few electronic pictures of your barn or outdoor safe haven. This will help us to determine what we need to bring when we deliver the cats and will also help us to select the most appropriate cats for your location. We know the backgrounds and personalities of our cats and will select the most appropriate cats for your specific location. The pictures help to save time and in almost all cases eliminate the need for a pre-delivery barn inspection.

**Step 3:** We provide approval for your barn cat adoption and schedule a date and time to bring your new cats to your location.

**Step 4:** Your cats are placed in your location. We will provide the appropriate materials so your cats will adjust properly and safely to their new home.

## Acclimation Process

Cats will be placed in a large (42" or 48" dog cage) for 2-3 weeks. Depending on the specific cats and situation, we may place two cats in one cage, or we may place each cat in a separate cage. If you adopt more than two cats we will determine the number of cages needed and how best to add cats to a specific cage. Also in the cage will be a comfortable box the cat can hide and/or sleep in, food and water bowls, a litter box, some towels / blankets, and possibly some toys.

It is critical that the cats remain in their cages for the recommended time. Depending on your specific cats and environment, we will recommend a specific amount of time for your cats to remain in the cage. This allows them to bond with their new caretaker and become familiar with their new surroundings and recognize their new home so they know where to return for food, water, and shelter. Some barn cats may also be timid and fearful of people, and they will feel safe when they are able to hide in their cages.

If possible, after the confinement period, keep the cats in an enclosed room or stall for another week or two. This gives them extra time to adjust. This type of room is also ideal for keeping the cats in at night.

If you have an outdoor shelter other than a barn and are using winterized totes, work to get the cats used to using the totes.

- Tape the flaps open if necessary, until they are used to going in and out of them.
- We recommend filling the totes with straw. Hay is not recommended as some cats have hay allergies. Blankets and other fabric materials are not recommended because they will get cold, and if they get wet the cats will not use the totes. Toss the straw around every week or so to keep it lofty and comfortable. Once the straw is dirty, replace it with fresh straw.

## Tips for Acclimation Process while Cats are in the Cage

### General

- Successful confinement periods range from 2 to 4 weeks. A longer confinement period, such as three to four months, is unnecessary and can be harmful to the cats and to the relocation project.
- New caretakers should make contact with the cats daily by talking to them or by playing a radio softly so that they get used to human voices. Usually those people who make the effort to communicate with the cats will have the most successful relocations.
- If you adopt feral or semi-feral cats, they will be more afraid of you than you are of them. They may hiss or spit and stamp their paws at you when you are close to them. This is their nature and they should not be scolded or yelled at for it. The cats will often sense your emotions and can tell if you get angry with them. Always talk to them in a gentle and soothing voice.
- There are few barns that really are escape-proof. Cats will escape through the tiniest hole if they get out of their confinement crate. Try to plug all holes, if possible, until after the cats are released.
- New cats can be relocated into an already established colony. Introduce them slowly, as you would any new cat into your home. In a colony setting, confine the new cats to a large crate or cat playpen in an area where the established cats sleep and eat.
- After a two to three week period, the cats will be quite familiar with each other and they all should live together in relative peace when they are released.

### Environment

- If possible, provide a source of light at night. Emergency droplights work great for this and can be hung near the confinement cages and will make it easier for you to check on the cats after dark. Flameless candles on a timer work well too. It's also a good idea to keep a flashlight handy.
- Make sure the cage / confinement area is located near a place where the cats can hide once they are allowed out of the playpen. Once they are allowed out of the cage, they sometimes are afraid to leave the cage right away. But eventually they will dart out and hide in the first place they can find. Make sure they can see hiding places before the cage is opened.
- Ensure that the cats have a box in the crate to hide in. The size of the box depends on the size of the cat. The cat should be able to hide in the box and feel safe.
- If a cat does escape, set food and water out and sprinkle their used litter (for scent) around the barn. Cats often hide for a period of time but will often stay on the premises. Leave them plenty of food and water to prevent them from leaving in search of food. It is very rare for a cat to leave a steady source of food and water – if you don't see them for a while they may be hiding, but they most likely are still in or close to your barn and will continue eating the food you leave for them.
- In cold weather, the confinement crates may need to be covered with extra blankets and a heating source provided nearby, if possible.
- Introduce other animals, especially dogs, slowly. The cats should be given time to adjust to any dogs on the property. If the cats feel threatened or are chased by dogs, the cats may leave your property and not return.
- Placing pieces of cardboard on the cage floor will act as insulation. They can be easily swapped out when they get dirty.

### Feeding and Cleaning

- When necessary to open a cat's crate (to give them food or water or to take out the litter box for cleaning), always keep one hand on the door of the crate so that you can close it quickly if the cat makes an attempt to escape. Always remember to move slowly when the cage door is open and you are reaching in to place food/water, take out the litter pan for cleaning, or changing out soiled towels or newspaper. **Never turn your back on an open cage door – the cats will do their best to escape!**

- Keep a trash can close by the crates during the confinement period to easily dispose of used litter and newspapers from the crate.
- Newspapers or small towels are good for keeping the confinement cage from getting too dirty. Sections of newspaper can be placed around the box in the crate without disturbing the cat too much (they will mostly crouch down in their box to hide) and the newspaper can then be pulled out and replaced as needed.
- Please scoop litter at least once per day. Twice is preferable.
- As the litter scatters in the cage, you can use a dustpan and hand-held broom or a small brush to sweep it up.
- Changed soiled newspaper and/or cardboard as necessary.

### **Step 5:** Long-Term Care once your cats are out of their cages

We remain in touch with you to provide any needed support, and we will come pick up the cages once the cats are finished with them.

We will remain in contact with you over time to provide additional support and guidance if needed. We also LOVE to get happy updates and pictures from you! This provides the “fuel” that helps keep us going! Please feel free to post updates and pictures on our Facebook Page – “Barn Cat Placement”. We have many followers who love to follow along.

Almost all barn cats settle into their new territory well. They may disappear for a day or two on exploration trips, but will return for food. Continue to put food out as normal. If the cat does go missing, please let the rescue organization know, and also continue to put food out because it may return hungry!

As your cats are settling in, try to get into a routine, and your cats will adapt! Try to bond with them and they will usually become very comfortable very quickly.

**REMINDER:** Cats may disappear initially once out of the cages. This is not uncommon, and they may hide until they feel safe. Please continue to feed for at least a month if your cats disappear. Please contact us and we will work through this with you.

### **Ongoing Cat Maintenance**

- Annual Rabies and Distemper vaccines are extremely important to your cat’s well-being.
- Wellness checks – if you have access to a vet, annual vet exams are a very good idea.
- Annual de-worming (ideally outdoor cats should be de-wormed twice each year). You can purchase the de-worming solution from a pet store or from your vet. It is a white milky-like liquid that should be squirted directly into their mouths with a syringe. It can be mixed in their food also, but it is not as effective in this case.
- Flea treatment – recommended monthly, especially in the summer and fall months. There are many types of flea treatments available.
- In summer, put water bowls in the shade to help keep them cooler. Change water at least once per day.
- In winter, put water bowls in the sun and change frequently since the water freezes quickly. Heated water bowls are great if you have electricity to plug into.
- Vet Care – if your cat appears injured or is behaving differently, chances are it requires a vet visit. Please consider getting your cat the required medical attention. Changes in behavior that may require a vet visit include but are not limited to: a change in eating habits, change in appearance, hair loss, congestion, coughing, sneezing, repeated vomiting or diarrhea, soft or runny stools, or other noticeable changes.

## Community Resources

There are many organizations and resources within the community – each of the web sites below provides a wealth of information that may help you with your cats’ ongoing care as well as community cats in your area.

In addition to the web sites below, you can go to Google and search on “community cats”, “unowned cats”, “feral cats” and other similar topics, and you will find a wealth of information, articles, and advice on how to help community cats. If you have taken the time to read this document, then you care about cats - PLEASE DON’T GIVE UP TRYING TO HELP THEM. There are many ways you can help cats in need; use the internet to help with your research.

<http://www.alleycat.org/>

Alley Cat Allies

<http://www.communitycatsmd.org/>

Community Cats Maryland

<http://bestfriends.org/>

Best Friends Animal Society

<http://sunshinescatrescue.org>

Sunshine’s Cat Rescue and Sanctuary