

General information on feral and stray cats

Is there a difference between feral and stray cats?

Feral, stray, and pet cats are all members of the same species; they are all domestic cats. But stray cats and feral cats are also different from each other in a very important way—in their relationship to and interactions with people.

Pet and stray cats are socialized to people. Feral cats are not socialized to people. While they are socialized to their colony members and bonded to each other, they do not have that same relationship with people.

What is a feral cat colony?

Feral cats tend to live in colonies, or groups. Often, as many as three or four generations of a family will live together. A colony is a population 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.

These feral cat colonies can be found in either rural or urban type areas and are prolific breeders, they are elusive and do not trust humans. One female cat can have up to three litters per year, with up to five kittens per litter which in turn can start breeding in six months.

What to do with feral cats

People should not try to care for feral cats as they are conditioned to look after themselves.

- Avoid feeding stray and feral cats. Feeding healthy cats that haven't been spayed or neutered can result in larger litters that increase the feral and stray cat population.
- Do not bring stray and feral cats into the shelter unless they are sick, injured, or aggressive cats that could pose a danger to the public.

Can feral cats be domesticated?

Feral kittens can make good house cats if removed from the colony early enough and socialized with humans. Older feral cats can sometimes adapt but they generally resist domestication and are reluctant to trust humans.

Why should we be concerned about feral and stray cats?

Concerns about feral and stray cats include:

- A growing population.
- Feral and stray cats hunt and scavenge for food in areas shared by foxes and skunks, the two most prolific carriers of rabies.
- Often inhumane conditions for feral and stray cats.
- Homeowners that do not want feral or stray cats in their neighbourhood (noise from yowling, fighting and spraying).