

FOOD & NUTRITION & ELDERLY CATS

Food: A good quality of food, both dry and canned is always recommended. Some types of raw food are also good and there are ways to provide this. We recommend the book, "The New Natural Cat", by Anitra Frazier as an excellent guidebook for cats in general. The many recipes and nutritional information will be a worthwhile investment in your feral cats.

Your financial circumstances will determine what type of food you are able to provide your colony. We want the best for our feral cats. Being informed about negative ingredients in certain types of cat food and how it is manufactured is important information everyone should know about. Most of us are familiar with the ingredients label – i.e. the first ingredient is the major portion of the food and so on. Even with inexpensive food, the first ingredient can be a factor to consider such as a by-product vs corn meal as the first ingredient in dry and wet food. Your choices will be determined by how many feral cats you feed and what you can afford!

I will share with you a personal experience. FCCC receives most of its food through donations. The donated food would probably not be considered high on the food list compared to quality brands. **But, before I offer you my formula for health on a limited budget, I want to share a comment made by a 20-year veteran trapper who has seen hundreds of feral cat colonies. When she visited my colonies, this year, I was told she had never seen such big healthy cats in all of her years of trapping. Each week I use 100 pounds of dry and 30 cases of wet + supplements.**

Feral Cat Health on a budget:

1. **Cleanliness of bowls is number one.** I wash all of the food bowls in the dishwasher to destroy bacteria. If you feed in plastic containers, either discard or use soap and water for cleaning. Be sure they do not blow around and the cats can easily get to the food. The bowls are set in either D-earth or soapy moat.
2. **Never add fresh food to old food (wet).** Clean bowls are supplied for each feeding and water containers are washed out with soap and water. Large gallon bottles are filled with tap water. Provide plenty of water. Water bowls get slimy and should be wiped out and cleaned when replenishing.
3. I mix the food in a large four-quart container and add supplements into the mix. In the winter, I bring two large thermos bottles filled with boiling water to warm the food and hot chicken broth.
4. Dry feeders 10-20 pounds, kept clean, free from ants, protected from the elements and out of sight!
5. I give the cats wet food treats, such as Fancy Feast, human grade tuna fish and Mackerel, boiled chicken, turkey and other goodies. They enjoy a change from the boring caldron of food I prepare for them. **It is good for their spirits, as is a tasty meal for us.**
6. **I determine if there is enough food, by what is left over.** If there is no food left over, I add more until not all of the bowls are completely cleaned. It assures me that everyone has been fed adequately and no one arrived late to find an empty bowl. I use the same formula for the dry food. If there is wet food left over **consistently**; the amount needs to be reduced. Not relevant with the dry.
7. **It is vital to have wet food for the cats to provide supplements.** Elderly cats may not be able to eat the dry. I have seen nearly starved older cats come to my colonies in search of food. Sometimes they would spit out and almost choke on the dry, but were able to eat and survive on the wet
8. **My personal formula is to extend good thoughts to the cats while you are feeding them.** Their food is special to them. A loving attitude can go a long way in promoting health. Providing the only food you can afford and doing so with a negative attitude and guilt benefits no one.

Supplements: L-Lysine, pure garlic powder, Vitamin C, Brewers Yeast, Fish oil capsules, donated supplements of various types, enzymes and whatever else we find to be beneficial. **Caution:** Don't load up the food with too many supplements, as they may not eat it. Spread them out over several feedings.

