

**LONG-TERM MANAGED CARE**  
**NEGOTIATING FOR AND RELOCATING FERAL CATS**

*"Feral cats and kittens have a right to life and a right to be humanely cared for"*

**MANAGED CARE AT HOME SITE LOCATION**

One of the most important factors in creating a safe and well-managed environment for feral cats is that everyone involved be knowledgeable about their care. There can be situations where the caretaker is not familiar with information essential to maintaining a safe home site for the ferals they are caring for. What usually begins with feeding a cat or two can escalate into an explosion of cats and kittens over a short period of time if TNR with managed care is not in place.

Feral cat caretaking is a long-term commitment and it is necessary to understand how to do it successfully. There are circumstances where the caretaker, unknowingly, creates difficult situations that could have been prevented with the proper information and action. Every citizen who is feeding feral or stray cats should be informed and educated as to the implementation of trap, neuter, vaccinate and return with long-term managed care. This must be carried out as an essential part of caretaking. *We recommend our "Sanctuaries Without Walls, Feral Cat Community Workshops for anyone caring for feral cats and kittens. We conduct ongoing workshops in the Los Angeles area. See our website for their location and dates!"*  
[www.feralcatcaretakers.org](http://www.feralcatcaretakers.org)

Nothing is more time consuming and stressful for a caretaker than being confronted with a situation where the "cats must be gotten rid of" because of complaints and circumstances that might have been avoided. Educating yourself and being proactive can be the key!

**FEEDING**

Many complaints are directly related to feeding. Since feeding is one of the most important aspects of care, special detailed information as to how this can be accomplished successfully, is the first objective. *Refer to Instructions for Feeding Feral Cats document*  
[www.feralcatcaretakers.org](http://www.feralcatcaretakers.org) on the **Caretaking Menu**. No matter how friendly the immediate area, feeding should be done with utmost discretion, even if you are feeding on your own property and it is completely safe and protected. Also, not all of your neighbors may be friendly to your endeavor. Permanent feeding stations should be protected from the elements, placed out of sight and, if necessary, camouflaged. Dry food and water containers can be placed inside Rubbermaid storage bins covered with dark plastic material, heavy duty black tarps and duct tape or sprayed with an exterior brown, dark green or black paint. Be careful not to spray paint on the food and water surfaces. Four sided box type structures can be easily made to enclose a feeding station. Any sturdy material that can be cut and put together with duct tape and glue and covered with heavy black plastic garbage bags or other dark plastic materials, with an opening to place food and water during the winter months, usually hold up well.

If the cats are being fed on a daily basis, do not draw unnecessary attention to where and when they are being fed. This is especially important in unfriendly territory. *Never use white paper plates.*

*You might as well put up a sign that cats are being fed here.* Do not leave plates with food unless they are out of sight and protected from the elements. Dark plastic plates or anything that blends into the surrounding environment for all feeding is recommended. Feeding from cans and leaving empty cans and food containers will create an unsightly mess. This can jeopardize the cats and your ability to provide food and care for them. ***Many a colony of cats have been jeopardized because of improper feeding methods.***

There are numerous innovative ways to safely feed on a daily basis, without drawing unnecessary attention, if permanent feeding stations are not an option. Look around the area and locate the most discrete protected place. Feeding under your vehicle or one safely parked, in the bushes, behind dumpsters, in small corners of buildings, abandoned areas and buildings, alleys with little or no traffic, behind structures, near fences, etc. You may need to move the feeding areas around until you find the safest and best place to feed. ***However, having permanent feeding stations that are out of sight and functional ensure that all cats have access to food.***

***Feeding stations that are blatantly in sight, are for the most part, unsafe for the cats. It is better to have a few small ones discretely hidden, than a large obtrusive one. People who do not like cats have open season with large, in view feeding stations. This type of feeding may be more convenient for the caretaker, but can put the cats in jeopardy. There are some areas where larger feeding stations are permitted and agreed to. In these cases, they still need to blend in with the location.***

Feeding Stations can be created from inexpensive plastic storage bins that have been painted or can be purchased in brown, green or black, covered with black plastic material and can be placed in discrete places out of sight. To make them more waterproof, flap-like awnings made from heavy plastic sheets or garbage bags and duct tape can further protect the food and provide camouflage. There are numerous ways to make good shelter for feeding stations. Sometimes, only a few boards propped up against an existing structure will do well. **Refer to Sheltering and Feeding Stations document and our video on [www.feralcatcaretakers.org](http://www.feralcatcaretakers.org)**

***It is important not to discuss, with strangers, how many cats there are and where they are being fed.*** Keep your conversations confined to your circle of trusted friends. When you feed, check the surroundings. Does it feel and look safe? If not, wait a while before you bring out the food.

If the feeding areas have not been properly maintained and this is the only complaint, follow the proper guidelines. Go out of your way to assure anyone complaining that you will make every effort to maintain a properly cared for area. If you show respect for the cats by your actions in caring for them, others can see this as a good example. ***Always be polite and identify yourself as being the person in charge and who can make the changes. It only takes one complaint to put the cats in jeopardy. Your decisions and choices should be made with this in mind.***

## **FOOD**

We recommend, if possible, a good quality of dry and canned food. Inexpensive food will fill an empty belly, in the short term, but in the long term, you can have malnourished unhealthy cats and

kittens, susceptible to disease and sickness. We suggest that if you purchase a less expensive food, such as Purina Cat chow, mix it with a higher quality of dry food. Look at the ingredients and be sure the first ingredient is not a corn product. Poultry by-products would be your first ingredient when purchasing a less expensive dry food such as Purina Cat Chow. You can also go to the food banks and get sardines, tuna and other fish human products and mix with the wet food, if it is also an inexpensive brand. Use your imagination and research and put together a nutritious meal for your cats.

Feral cats, living out of doors are under considerable more stress than the cats living inside your home. They require extra nourishment to maintain a healthy immune system. Depending upon your financial resources, you may need to contact local pet stores and animal welfare organizations for food donations. Garage and bake sales, car washes and other ways of raising money can be helpful. If you know other people who are feeding or you have friends who could get together and form a group to help transport food and feed, this can relieve some of the burden. Do not hesitate to ask at the local markets, or other organizations and other places for donations for food. Use every resource you can think for assistance. Initially, you may be the only person the feral cats and kittens have to care for them. You can also put tiny amounts Vitamin C powder. **We have used NaturVet pure garlic & Yeast powder for 15 years for fleas and also as a good supplement.** It can be found in any Pet Store. We mix this into the wet food and also the dry. Don't be shy, ask stores that carry such supplements if they can donate or give you a discount for the cats. You are doing a service to the community, so don't be hesitant to ask.

## **CLEANLINESS**

Feral cats living in close proximity to private residences, public places, businesses and so on, roam around the immediate areas. They will also use these areas for their litter boxes. This can be another very serious complaint, and reinforce the "myth" that "cats are dirty and unhealthy." People do not take kindly to picking up noticeable and odorous cat feces in their area. In some problem areas, litter boxes can be used or sand can be dumped in a secluded area. The litter boxes will need to be covered and kept clean.

**We do scheduled "poop patrols"** in all areas where the cats reside. Mix a spray bottle with full strength white vinegar (very inexpensive) and clean the areas of cat feces and then spray with the full strength vinegar. This will keep the area fresh and clean. You will become familiar with their hot spots and be sure they are sprayed well. You will never have another complaint if you keep to this schedule. In our colonies of numerous cats, there is no cat odor to be found.

If males are spraying on cars and other public places, a spray bottle with white vinegar should alleviate the problem. **Spraying is reduced considerably after neutering.**

We also recommend car covers for unwanted paw prints. Cleanliness and neatness can circumvent any unnecessary problems from occurring and your willingness to be responsible and open to solving the complaints is a must.

**Feral cat caretaking requires commitment and responsible choices. The rewards far outweigh the time and effort. You can feel proud to be an integral part of an enlightened**

**group of individuals who are making an essential and compassionate contribution to the welfare of the cats and to the communities in which they live. Your commitment and dedication is priceless. Without it, the cats could not survive!**

## **NEGOTIATING FOR THEIR RIGHT TO STAY AND BE CARED FOR**

There are circumstances when the caretaker is confronted with a hostile situation and ***negotiations*** for the feral cats right to stay and be cared for at their home site is an urgent priority. Their very lives might be in jeopardy. If the caretaker, or person who has taken the responsibility of caring for the cats, does not have the necessary skills or is too emotionally involved to negotiate, a friend or experienced person may be required. Some situations can be so emotionally charged that an intermediary who can negotiate a rational and informed presentation becomes necessary. However, always stay involved as your knowledge of the situation is essential.

***Make a list of what the issues are confronting you and what you need to do to resolve the situation? Write a detailed record of the problems and carefully consider what steps are required to resolve the situation. You may not know all of the answers, but you can do research. THINK!***

***Complete the Questionnaire and distribute For All Interested and Concerned Persons is a good place to start.*** The more educational printed materials you have, the better your chances are to shift from an emotional and aggressive stance to a more linear approach. ***Record all of the pertinent information in the Questionnaire. This will be your basis of your negotiations.***

If the cats are not spayed or neutered, there could be a problem with kittens, mating, spraying and yowling and other disturbing behavior. ***Refer to Instructions for Humane Trapping of Feral or Rescued Cats and Kittens.*** Other issues can include health concerns, fleas, sick kittens, and nursing mothers, paw prints on cars, cats using open public or private areas as litter boxes or persons who just "want to get rid of them". It can be construction, the absence, death or illness of a caretaker. Every situation is unique and there are countless circumstances that will warrant negotiations and action of some nature. Some will require a simple and straightforward solution, while others will be more complicated. However, each one should be carefully evaluated and acted upon according to the prevailing circumstances. Research online and contact other organizations for good ideas.

***You may be giving the most important presentation of your life.***

Keep a detailed record of the complaints and those complaining, with names and phone numbers. Be calm and professional in your demeanor. After you have gathered the pros and cons of the situation, you need to decide what action to take. Go over each complaint and determine what can be done to remedy the situation. If there are persons who are cat friendly, form a group of volunteers and advocates from them. If there are no cat friendly people on the premises, then you may need to bring in animal organizations, friends or volunteers to help, ***depending upon the circumstances.***

At the start of negotiations, come prepared with selected documents and information and be well versed in what you need to know about the issues. Pertinent and professionally presented materials

are essential. Arrange all of the documents in colorful folders with your card or name and phone number. Be professional and neat. Bring plenty of portfolios for everyone. No one should leave empty handed.

*A well thought out and sincere presentation can change situations that seemed hopeless into circumstances that will allow the cats to remain and be humanely cared for at their home site. The informational documents are all on our website [www.feralcatcaretakers.org](http://www.feralcatcaretakers.org) and will provide you with a good start, but research!*

### **TRAPPING NOT REQUIRED: MOVING FEEDING STATIONS TO NEARBY RELOCATION SITE FOR ONGOING CARE**

***Trapping not required*** - If negotiations are not successful for the cats to remain at their home site, or the area is being demolished, under construction or there are other hazards present, moving the feeding stations to a nearby location could be a *valuable option*. In many cases, moving the feeding stations off the property in question or on the same property to a safer location may be all that is required. Canvas the area and talk with persons in the adjacent and surrounding areas as to the possibility of locating permanent feeding stations and shelter.

Distribute *For All Interested and Concerned Persons* document and other educational materials with your name and phone number or create your own document or flyer for that particular situation. If indicated, talk to managers, tenants, neighbors, homeowners and businesses in the area, but stay within a reasonable radius. ***Remarkable moves for relocation have been made over large safe areas, by moving feeding stations and providing shelter.*** In cases where the area is industrial or commercial, private homes or small businesses adjacent to the larger areas can be good places for a permanent move. Peripheral locations away from problem areas can also work. Be creative. Talk to other caretakers, your local pet rescue organizations, get advice and assistance. Try not to be intimidated. Be friendly, informative and persevere. More importantly, no matter how the circumstances present or how bleak they may look, ***always personally question everyone and make your own contacts and come to your own conclusions after the situation has been thoroughly assessed. We have had people tell us the situation was hopeless, no one would ever cooperate and so on. The results were just the opposite once we began personally talking to people in the area and presenting our case and documents!***

***Example:*** Over the past six years, we had been successfully feeding and caretaking a colony of about 23 cats at an industrial location with business offices, warehouses and garden areas. The cats were residing in the area where the offices are located, and some of the employees enjoyed feeding them, even though there were being fed daily by a caretaker. They were all spayed and neutered and no kittens were present. The management of the property did not approve of the cats being on the property and from the beginning of the TNR program it had always been a challenge to protect the cats for continued managed care. One of the large and successful businesses decided to relocate and moved out, along with the main caretaker who had been a strong and verbal advocate for the

cats. She was an employee. The cat friendly business and her presence had kept management from taking any serious steps to harm the cats. Within a few days before they moved management issued an edict that the cats must now be taken off the property within 30 days or they would be trapped and taken to the shelter. Anyone feeding the cats would be punished or evicted. The discrete feeding station that had been in place for 5 years was destroyed along with a small shelter for two.

There were many businesses on the 12-acre property. One business, about one block away from the location where the cats were in jeopardy was an ideal place for relocation. Negotiations began with the owners of this business. Even though they were reluctant to go against the edict from management, they were high profile tenants and understood what had been done over the past years and did not want to see the cats destroyed. They also enjoyed the rodent control by them being there.

**An important rule is – you can move the feeding areas but if the cat's safe place for shelter is at the unfriendly area, they will gravitate back there for shelter. Always provide shelter in new area.**

We immediately began to feed the cats about 50 feet from the original feeding area. After a few days at this area, we moved another 20-30 feet and so on. *In the meantime, we constructed five shelters (with drawers that could house 2-3 cats each) and began to install them discretely in the bushes about a block away from their original home. We also set up their permanent feeding station in the same area where the shelters were located, but continued to feed wet food each night, moving them gradually to the new location. About ¾ of the way to their new location, most of them were already there with a few remaining left. After about 3 weeks, the cats were moved to their new location and all during the winter they were seen coming out of their new shelters.* The problem is solved and the cats are now in a safer place. They stay where the food and warm shelter is located. The complaints have stopped. *Have all of the shelters and feeding station in place long before the final move. When you are about halfway to the final destination, some of the cats will start scouting their new home and begin eating at their new permanent feeding station and inhabiting the shelters.*

Once you have found a nearby area that is safe, and the parties involved have agreed to the move, you can proceed. Feed daily and monitor the feeding, feeding stations can be moved approximately 20-40 feet at a time until you reach the new location. A temporary enclosure can be made to cover the feeding station for protection and make it less noticeable if the area is exposed. After most of the cats show up to eat, just keep feeding and moving the location. However each situation is different and there may be a time constraint. Use your good judgment in moving feeding stations, it could take more or less time. Use tuna or a tasty canned food for each move to draw their attention to the new area, as well as dribbling some treats along the path.

No matter what precautions you take, feral cats are free roaming and will go where they please. The most important aspect of this endeavor is that they are not being fed on the property in question and new shelter is available for them. There may also be adequate shelter in the area where they are being moved. Enclosed places that are dry and can be made warm for the winter are best. We have placed heavy duty black plastic and waterproof tarps over wooden pallets that were stacked up

permanently and then slid cut up pieces of cardboard in between the openings on the bottom. The cats were already hiding in the wooden palates for shelter and this just made it waterproof and warmer. Everything was easily replaced. Look around and enhance their shelter area is available. *Refer to Sheltering and Feeding Stations*

*This method does not require trapping, unless the cats have not been spayed or neutered.* If this is the case, surgery can be performed either before or after the final destination. Circumstances vary and the decision as to how this is coordinated into the move should be made by the caretaker and persons involved in the welfare of the cats,

## **WRITTEN AGREEMENTS**

Once any form of agreement has been negotiated, take the necessary steps to implement whatever has been agreed to. It can be a verbal agreement, a simple written agreement, or a more comprehensive agreement. A written agreement can be a valuable reference when negotiating as an example of success and trustworthiness. It can also act to absolve the caretakers of any liability while caretaking. It outlines specifically what is being done and by whom and is a good accumulative record of successful projects. *Refer to Agreements.*

## **RELOCATION TO AREAS WHERE TRAPPING IS REQUIRED**

If there are no other options and the cats must be removed from their present location, your only alternative will be to trap and relocate to a pre-negotiated and safe place. Trapping and relocation can be as close as a mile away to a residential area in backyards, to farms, horse ranches or any rural area or city area that is safe and a permanent caretaker and shelter is available.

*OR, you may decide to take them with you as so many caretakers have. Follow guidelines for relocating feral cats.*

There are several ways to make contact with persons who will accept feral cats for relocation. You can advertise in the local and rural newspapers, write letters to farms, horse ranches and other suitable areas. Contact your local humane societies, rescue groups and other animal welfare agencies for contacts and information. Talk to all of your friends who may have backyards or know of a safe place to relocate.

## **An invaluable tool for many situations can be a flyer**

*Flyers can work miracles:* Asking people in person and making phone calls is absolutely essential, but things tend to be prioritized or forgotten. Any person you speak to about relocation should also be provided with a flyer. It can be given in person or mailed.

Flyers can be used to find homes for cats and kittens, announce a neighborhood meeting, to organize a group of concerned citizens about feral or stray cats. Locate persons who would help with feeding, trapping and other issues. Lost cats and other animals. Used for local donations for food and help with the feral and stray cats in the neighborhood or if you are soliciting for food from the local

markets and pet food stores. To locate the owner of a stray cat in the neighborhood or find it a home if abandoned. Even if there is no place to put it, ask if could be shown to people who come into the place of business.

**Create a very colorful and special flyer**, if possible, with a picture of a cat or cats on it. Be clear and passionate about what the need is and the urgency of the situation. Contact your relatives, friends, neighbors, school children or any other persons who would be willing to distribute the flyers in their neighborhoods. **When creating a flyer for relocation, it should indicate the gravity of the situation and that help is urgently needed.**

Flyers can be put on cars, door steps of homes, in mail boxes, on telephone posts, at religious organizations, restaurants, libraries, bulletin boards at markets or other public places, book stores, boutiques, pet stores, vets offices, especially your own personal vets, hair dresser, manicurist, doctor, chiropractor, or any organization or public place that you can think of. Take them to your place of work and where your friends work. Leave plenty of flyers and create some with the strips that can be pulled off with your name and phone number. ***The more flyers, the better your chances are of finding someone. Depending upon the urgency of the situation, the cats may need to be boarded after trapping in a safe temporary place until a permanent situation can be found! This is the worse case scenario for the caretaker, as places to relocate cats are very difficult to come by and most places are filled to capacity. It is a heart-wrenching situation that confronts caretakers every day in our neighborhoods and workplaces! Vets offices and other temporary boarding areas may need to be used.***

Since feral cats form colonies (families) that are very close, a lot will depend upon how many will need to be relocated. It is always better to relocate at least 2 together from a colony, if not more, depending upon how much space is available and the number of cats. Relocation is worrisome and stressful for all concerned and should only be considered ***if all else fails***. If the cats have not been spayed or neutered, this will need to be done prior to relocation.

After you have made contact with a prospective relocation area, an agreement will need to be negotiated as to where and how the cats will be cared for. Inquiries as to what dangers there are at the location, such as coyotes and other predators are important. Relocation to places where the cats will be preyed upon is not acceptable. If the cats are going to a backyard for the 4-6 week enclosed relocation stay, check the surrounding areas for dogs or unfriendly persons. Get some information about the neighborhood from the person who will be offering a home before you decide.

## **RELOCATION GUIDELINES**

During the journey to their new home, even if it is a short distance, make the trip as stress free as possible. Keep the noise level at a minimum while traveling with the cats. Be sure there is enough ventilation in their carriers, crates or whatever safe enclosure you have them in for the trip. Under no circumstances put a cat in the trunk or open bed of a truck. They must be protected from any condition that will create stress. Depending upon the length of their journey, be sure they are provided with water and food, even though they may not partake. Make them as comfortable as possible and keep them covered appropriately to lessen their fear of being enclosed and in a strange environment. Check on them frequently to be sure they are not suffering from carsickness or



hyperventilating. Cats do not adjust easily to change and this change is a very serious one for them to adjust to. If they have recently had surgery, make sure they have recovered sufficiently before the journey. Keep in mind that they are being taken to an entirely strange and frightening place where there are no familiar smells or landmarks. **While they are enclosed for the FOUR to SIX week period, every effort should be made to make their confinement experience and journey as calm and protective as possible.**

***Their new home must be adequately prepared before their arrival.*** The confinement period should be in a safe, enclosed, *waterproof and escape proof dwelling, on the premises.* It can be also be a large dog cage, two story playpen, (<http://petcreatesdirect.com/cat-playpens.html>) guestroom, laundry room, garage, barn, outbuildings, storage areas, spare rooms or any place with light and good ventilation. **Keep in mind that the place where the cats will be confined, should also be their safe haven when released until they find their own safe places. If they are boarded in a playpen or large dog crate, leave it available for them to return to for a while even if you have provided safe shelter for them on the premises.** If they are staying in the cage or playpen for the duration of their confinement, customize the space with a carrier or cardboard box inside and make a comfortable bed and a place to lie on top. All Crates and Playpens must be covered. Provide a litter box and place for food and water. **For additional personal detailed information if you are TAKING YOUR FERALS WITH YOU TO YOUR NEW HOME contact Dona Baker at [feralcatcenter@aol.com](mailto:feralcatcenter@aol.com)**

While the cats are being confined this gives the opportunity to become familiar with the smells and sounds of their new location. Create safe places for them. If the room is small, place bedding and boxes for them to hid and sleep in. Cardboard boxes or carriers with fleece bedding make good hiding places and are warm for sleeping. They can also be covered with blankets or towels to make them cozier and feel safer. If the area is large, put their boxes, carriers, litter box and food in a more confined space, rather than scattering it about. Keep everything away from the door and away from drafts during the winter. Be sure there is plenty of ventilation if the weather is warm. When entering and leaving the area, create a barrier in front of you and behind you, such as a piece of cardboard, towel, etc. Enter and leave carefully to see that no one escapes. Most of the time the cats will hide and stay as far away as possible, but there may be a brave one who will try to escape. It is best to do the caretaking in daylight hours.

***If the cats are being kept in a house in a room that does not open to the outside*** and the backyard will be their permanent home, before they are released, put the litter boxes and all of the things with their smells in the area where you will be feeding and sheltering outside. It could be your carport, porch, or any safe and secluded area on your property. Be sure that you have provided them with **safe shelters and places to hide before you let them out.** They may need to be trapped or put into a carrier for the release to the outside. Release the cats into the safest and most secluded area you have chosen for their permanent outdoor home where their food and shelter is located. The sounds and smells of the house will be familiar, but the outside area will need to be explored. Feed them wet food daily and leave dry food and water at their feeding station. **If you are confining the cat in a large dog cage in the room and they are not staying inside, set the crate outside, covered on all sides except for the front for at least 2 weeks before final release.** ***A trap should be available at the relocation home site along with trapping instructions.*** If a cat escapes to the outdoors, create a safe and dry shelter with special wet food and water next to

the place where it escaped from and set a trap. Put things with their smells on it, and perhaps the carrier or crate used during the trip next to the trap. **Re-trapping the cat should be attempted right away.**

**Example** - One relocation that we accomplished resulted in a little gray tabby (very) feral female named Gracie not wanting to leave her new found home (the bridle room for horses) where she had spent several more than the usual required four weeks. The cat door was opened then the big door, people came and went, horses walked by. No amount of coaxing with food or anything else could get Gracie to leave the bridle room. When all was quiet, she would sun herself by the big window and when people came, she would hide. Finally, after three months, a big towel was wrapped around her and she was pushed and squeezed into a carrier and taken to a beautiful guesthouse furnished with priceless antiques. There were eight other special felines living in this luxurious (indoor only) guesthouse. Gracie has lived there for three years now and still no one can touch her. She sleeps on a very expensive antique bed and is quite content. However, the other cats at the relocation site, after their confinement period was up, flew out the door and have remained on the property in barns and in other safe dwellings. Not Gracie, she had her eyes on that guesthouse and lives there in absolute luxury and safety. **If given time, most feral cats adjust quite well to life indoors. They may not become lap cats (although many do), but they are safe and settle down at their bidding.**

### **CARETAKING AT THE NEW HOME**

**A vital aspect of relocation is caretaking.** Caretakers should be totally committed and responsible in assuring the feral cats will be properly cared for. Spend some time talking to them and a radio on **very low volume**. The need to become familiar with the smells and sounds associated with their new home. This will reassure them. After they have been allowed out of their initial space following the **four to six week period of confinement**, openings should be available for them to enter and leave their original shelter area. If the cats have been confined inside then outside shelter needs to be available to them. They can become easily frightened and will require access to the only safe place they know. They may also find other safe shelter area, in existing buildings on the property if it is a ranch or large area. Don't count on it. **If you are relocating by taking them with you to your new home, you must provide shelter for them prior to any release unless they will be living inside.**

When released, whether to a backyard, ranch or other places, close observation is necessary. Keep a daily head count and watch for any signs of problems. Plentiful wet food along with dry food on a daily basis is a necessity. The food should be of good quality and fresh water available at all times. If they are participating in rodent control, they will still require daily feeding with nourishing food. **Contrary to popular opinion, cats will not remain healthy on a diet of rodents and few will eat them. Rodent control is accomplished by the presence of the cats and their scent!**

Most ranches and farms have dogs living on the premises. **It is important the dogs see the cats as residents and are not allowed to harm them once they are out of their shelter to roam around.** Carefully evaluate any situation where dogs are present and the possibility of them harming the cats. It may be necessary to confine the dogs for a reasonable period of time, to allow the cats to become accustomed to their new surroundings, before being confronted with the dogs.

Feral cats do not take kindly to dogs as they have been living out of doors in unsafe conditions, and are exposed to all types of dangers, including dogs that kill cats and kittens. It will be a big enough adjustment for them to familiarize themselves with their new home, without being chased or frightened unnecessarily, even if the dogs would never harm them. **Their new home must be safe.** Gardeners working on the property should be informed about the use of harmful pesticides. Persons on the premises need to be notified of the cats living there and every effort made to create a safe and compassionate environment.

The persons or organizations who brought the cats to their new home should be in contact with the new caretakers during the weeks while in confinement and then weekly following release, to be sure they are all accounted for and adjusting well. Continued follow-up is important.

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