

## Be part of the Solution

- ❖ Have your cat spayed or neutered
- ❖ Do not allow your cat outdoors unsupervised
- ❖ Ensure that your pet is properly identified using a collar and tag, and a microchip or tattoo
- ❖ Ensure that your cat's vaccinations are always up to date.



Information contained herein is provided courtesy of  
Cat Care Society,  
CFA Policy Statement on Feral Cats (1998)  
Save a Dog Save a Cat (SADSAC)  
Tufts University, Center for Animals & Public Policy

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## PORTSMOUTH ANIMAL CONTROL

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# ANIMAL CONTROL

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## *Feral Cats*



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## What is a feral cat?

A feral cat is one that may or may not have started out "domesticated" but is no longer comfortable with or around humans. A feral cat is considered to be wild as it once was in its natural state. These cats will run frantically when cornered and may become extremely aggressive.

## Is there a difference between a feral cat and a stray?

Yes, a stray cat is called a stray because no one knows where he/she belongs and who his/her owner is. A stray cat can become feral. They are also called "strays" because they have strayed or wandered from home or were abandoned.

## How can I tell if a cat is stray or feral?

Observe the cat's appearance and behavior. A stray cat is likely to approach you, although usually not close enough for you to touch him. If you put food down, a stray cat will likely start to eat it right away. A stray cat is often vocal, sometimes talking insistently, and may look disheveled, as if unaccustomed to dealing with conditions on the street. A stray cat may be seen at all hours of the day.

A feral cat is silent, will not approach humans, and generally will be seen only from dusk to dawn, unless extraordinarily hungry and foraging for

food. A feral cat has adapted to conditions and is likely to be well groomed. If you put food down for a feral cat, he will wait until you move away from the area before approaching the food.

## Can a feral cat be tamed?

It really depends on the cat and the caretaker. Generally speaking, the younger the cat, the better the chances of domesticating. The degree of domestication will vary from cat to cat. Some become friendly, some tolerate human presence, and very few become extremely friendly, again depending on the individual cat and its situation.

## Why are feral cat colonies a problem?

An unmanaged feral cat colony can be viewed as a problem by humans due to their sheer numbers and the possibility of spreading disease. Most colonies are subject to abuse because they are viewed as a nuisance and as a possible threat to people from rabies.

As long as there is a food source available, the cats will continue to breed and exist in a particular environment. They are unable to "take care of themselves" and do not know how to control their population. Feral cats generally live very short lives, often the victims of disease, nutritional deficiency,

or they may be killed by vehicles or become prey for other animals.

## I would like to find good homes for the feral cats I have been feeding. Is this possible?

Generally, no. Adult feral cats usually cannot be socialized and will not adjust to living indoors. A great deal of time and effort can go into attempting to tame an adult feral cat, with no assurance of success.

If you have adult feral cats near where you live, you should call Animal Control. Traps can be set for the animals and they can then be transported to an animal shelter. Sometimes it is possible for the shelter to re-home adult feral cats into 'barn' situations, but unfortunately, often there is no suitable placement and they are humanely euthanized.

Stray cats and kittens up to eight or ten weeks of age can usually be socialized and placed in homes. If you should find a litter of feral kittens you should contact Animal Control so the kittens can be brought to a shelter and placed into homes.

Feral cats can also be a hazard to other animals, pets, humans, and bird life. The **most common threat can be Rabies**, but feline leukemia and feline immunodeficiency has been found to be **carried by feral cats**.