



Barn Cat Program Info Page

Humane Educational Society

212 N. Highland Park Avenue | Chattanooga, TN 37404 | (423) 624-5302
www.heschatt.org/barncat | barncat@heschatt.org

OVERVIEW

Some of the cats that come in our door at the shelter are not suitable for adoption as house pets. This may include cats whose litter box habits make them unsuitable as house pets, feral cats who are shy/fearful of people, cats who cannot tolerate being in a cage or being confined in a room with multiple cats, or cats who are just too independent. To prevent euthanizing these cats, we have developed a barn cat program.

PLACING A BARN CAT

Cats eligible for the barn cat program:

- Must not be declawed
- Must not be kittens

Your "new" barn cats will receive all tests and vaccines an indoor cat gets. They are spayed/neutered; vaccinated for rabies, distemper and other diseases; tested negative for feline leukemia and FIV, and their ears will be "tipped" to indicate that the cat has been altered.

We recommend placing barn cats as pairs when they are feral or semi-feral unless the farm family already has one or more barn cats on the property. We may require this with certain cats, as barn cats tend to be more successful in pairs.

LIFE WITH YOUR BARN CAT

Shelter must be available 24 hours a day with a high spot (like a shelf) for the barn cats to be able to get away from predators. Fresh food and water must be provided daily, year-round. We recommend that you feed the cats a quality dry and canned food for extra water consumption and balanced nutrition. A healthy cat is a happy cat.

If it is possible to capture the cats, please get annual check-ups, worming and vaccinations.

REQUESTING A BARN CAT

Anyone interested in becoming a farm family must complete an application. As cats become available meeting the above criteria, shelter personnel/volunteers will contact the interested farm family.

We don't always have suitable cats available, so we keep a waiting list and will fill your request as soon as possible.

For more information about the Barn Cat Program, please call (423) 624-5302 ext. 228 or 248.



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ACCLIMATING YOUR NEW BARN CAT

- It is preferable for the cats to be kept in a secure place, such as a tack room, livestock stall, or spare room with food, water and a litter box (cleaned daily) to acclimate the cats to the barn for at least two weeks (four weeks is preferable). If you do not have a secure indoor containment area to keep your barn cat in during the acclimation period HES will provide you with a custom crate setup that must be returned to us after the containment period is over. The room where the cats are to be acclimated needs to be temperature-controlled if the weather is very hot or cold.
- Establish a routine for feeding twice per day. Shake the food bag or call “kitty, kitty.” Continue the routine once released so they will know it's time to eat. Cats cannot live on what they catch; they need food and fresh water daily. Cats are by nature clean animals and like a clean litter box, so clean theirs once or twice a day while caged/contained.
- Feral cats will generally stay in the back of the cage and avoid contact, as they are afraid of you. They are not aggressive but will try to protect themselves if they feel threatened, so do not try to touch them. Allow the cats to sniff your hand if they are interested—your hand should be facing down with your fingers curved down when doing so.
- When you feed, water and/or scoop litter, center yourself in front of the open door. Your presence should prevent attempts to exit the cage.
- Do not reach in and try to pet or pick up a cat. If a cat tries to exit the cage prematurely, you can shift your position but do not do not reach out with your hands to stop the cat.
- If they do get out prematurely, continue to feed outside the cage. You may not see them for a while but they will likely stay around if they are fed. We have had cats return after several weeks.
- Just prior to release day, we recommend spreading cat feces from the litter box outside of the barn. This will make their environment smell like their territory.

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