

I FOUND A FRIENDLY STRAY CAT – NOW WHAT?

It can be difficult to know what to do when you come across a friendly outdoor cat. Here are some tips to help determine next steps.

Determine if the cat has an owner

1. Use context clues

- If the cat looks clean and healthy, they likely belong to someone or may be lost. If the cat appears dirty and thin, it's more likely they've been outside for a long time and are un-owned.
- If you are in an area you don't normally spend a lot of time, you might not have the full picture to know if it is someone's indoor-outdoor cat. If you are in your own area (or somewhere you frequent) and you regularly see the cat, you'll have a better idea of if they're out all the time (likely un-owned) or just once in a while (likely indoor-outdoor owned cat).
- The cat is likely part of a colony if the top of an ear is missing.

2. Door-knock and scan for microchip

- This is the fastest way to find out a cat's situation and is the least stressful on the cat because you are not trying to transport them. Try to speak with at least five people to see if they know anything about the cat. It is important to work with the immediate community to get the full picture of the cat's disposition and their input on outcomes for un-owned cats. Some good questions to ask:
 - i. Are you familiar with this cat?
 - ii. Do they live around here?
 - iii. How long have they been hanging around?
- If door-knocking doesn't yield an answer, and you can safely pick up the cat and get them into a carrier, you may take the cat to be scanned for a microchip at a local vet, shelter, or pet supply store. Remember: if you found the cat in a pet resource desert (under-served areas with little to no access to veterinary care), it is less likely the cat will have a microchip, but that doesn't mean they don't have an owner!

3. Put up flyers

- If you can't find the owner and the cat looks like they need medical attention or looks unhealthy, you may take the cat to a veterinarian and/or a shelter. If you do, put up flyers around the immediate area you found the cat with contact information of where the owner could find him. Take into consideration common spoken languages of the immediate community.

Outcome A: You found the cat's owner or caretaker – yay!

If they are an owned cat and you have helped them find the way home, congratulations, your work is done. If the cat did not have a microchip or isn't neutered, feel free to offer information on PAWS Chicago's [Lurie Low Cost Spay/Neuter Clinic](#) (773-521-7729).

Outcome B: “I feed him, but he's not mine.”

You've found a community cat! A community cat is an outdoor cat cared for by one or more community members. Community cats can be friendly, unsocialized (feral), scared, or under-socialized. Because there is some investment of time, money, and compassion for the cat by at least one community member, it is important to acknowledge their efforts and kindness before offering solutions or suggestions. Then, you can ask questions to gauge the situation. A good question is: “What would you like to see happen with this cat?”

If the resident wants to keep the cat, and the cat is not fixed, you can help by referring our [TNR \(trap-neuter-return\) services!](#) Community cats do very well outside with consistent food, water, shelter, and spay/neuter services. Cook County also has an ordinance to that allows feeders to register as colony caretakers with a sponsoring organization such as PAWS Chicago. The application is available [here](#) along with instructions on how to rent and trap a cat, make a feral cat spay/neuter appointment, build a winter shelter and much more.

Please note that unsocialized or feral adult cats and kittens over four months would most often rather not live with people. In this case, working with a willing caretaker to provide TNR is the best option for the cat. Feral cats should be returned to exactly where they were found. Never “re-locate” feral cats to another area; they become disoriented and are vulnerable to getting hit by moving vehicles or other dangers. Click [here](#) for information on helping kittens.

Outcome C: No owner, no caretaker

If you have completed the above steps and have not found an owner or caretaker, or the caretaker would like help finding a home for the cat, don't worry — you have some options to help him find a home! If you or someone you know can hold onto the cat for a while, you can make an appointment with our intake department to schedule the cat's assessment for our adoption program. They can be reached at intake@pawschicago.org or 773-475-9462.

If you cannot hold onto the cat and need a place for them to go quickly consider the following options:

Managed-admissions shelters that are No Kill, but intake is by appointment only.

Tree House Humane Society – 7225 N Western Ave, Chicago, IL 60645. Call 773-262-4000.

One Tail at a Time – 2144 N Wood St, Chicago, IL 60614. Email ocatintake@onetail.org. OTAT does not take strays.

St. Sophia's Forgotten Felines – 525 W Roosevelt Rd, Wheaton, IL 60187. Call 847-773-7639.

Forever Fortunate Felines – 1119 W Webster Ave, Chicago, IL 60614. Call 844-228-7333.

Open-admissions shelters, that may euthanize based on capacity:

Chicago Animal Care and Control – 2741 S Western Ave, Chicago, IL 60608. Please note: CACC will take only sick and injured stray cats immediately.

Animal Welfare League – 6224 S Wabash Ave, Chicago, IL 60637. Call 773-667-0088 or email adoptions@animalwelfareleague.com.

Anti-Cruelty Society – 157 W Grand Ave, Chicago, IL 60654. Call 312-644-8338 or email admissions@anticruelty.org. Admission Hours by Appointment: Monday–Sunday: 12 p.m.–4 p.m.