



## 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. Is he lost? Is he indoor/outdoor? Is he homeless? Here are some tips to help determine next steps.

### Determine if the cat has an owner

#### 1. Use context clues

- Does the cat look well-fed and generally healthy, or thin and dirty? If the cat looks clean and healthy, it's likely he belongs to someone or may be lost. If the cat appears dirty and thin, it's more likely he's been outside for a long time and is un-owned.
- Are you in your own neighborhood or somewhere else? 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 he's out all the time (likely un-owned) or just once in a while (likely indoor-outdoor owned cat).
- Is he eartipped? If he's missing part of his left ear, he is likely part of a colony.

#### 2. Door-knock, door-knock, door-knock – and scan for microchip

- This is the fastest way to find out a cat's situation and is least stressful on the cat because you are not trying to move him or transport him. Try to speak with at least 5 people to see if they know anything about the cat. Do not skip this step! 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. Does he live around here?
  - iii. How long has he been hanging around?
- If door-knocking doesn't yield an answer, and you can safely pick up the cat and get him 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 due to access, but that doesn't mean he doesn't have an owner!

#### 3. Put up flyers

- If you can't find the owner and the cat looks like he needs medical attention or looks unhealthy, you may wish to take the cat to a veterinarian and/or a shelter. If you do this, 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!

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Good job! If he is an owned cat and you have helped him find his 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.”

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You've found a community cat! A community cat is an outdoor cat cared for by one or more community members (most often several). 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 where he is, 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

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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](mailto:intake@pawschicago.org) or 773-475-9462.

If you cannot hold onto the cat and need a place for him to go quickly, consider [Chicago Animal Care and Control](#). They will take injured stray animals immediately, and appointments are needed for all other relinquishments. Make an appointment by emailing [visitcacc@cityofchicago.org](mailto:visitcacc@cityofchicago.org) or calling 312.747.1406. PAWS Chicago goes to CACC multiple times a week to pull animals into our adoption program. CACC has many rescue partners and PAWS Chicago pulls more cats into our program than any other partner. Because of this teamwork, consistently over 92% of cats going into CACC end up adopted, pulled by a rescue, or returned to owner.

Finally, you could keep the cat or rehome him yourself! Please be sure to visit our clinic to get him neutered, vaccinated, and microchipped!

**Thank you for helping cats in your community!**