



Providing care for feral cats in the King/Snohomish County area since 1998

Information Sheet Feral Kittens

Thank you for choosing to adopt a feral kitten. Your new kitten is very special and is different from normal domestic kittens. While a feral kitten can be one of the most affectionate and loving kittens you will ever own, an understanding of your kitten's background and needs will help you to raise a well-adjusted cat.

The following information is being provided to help make your adoption go smoothly.

First of all, feral kittens do better as "indoor only" cats. This alleviates the potential for running away when frightened as well as normal outdoor hazards. They also do better in homes that do not have small children (children unintentionally can frighten these kittens severely by their activity level and loud voices). Having another animal in the home IS a good idea as well.

Your feral kitten was raised in the wild until recently and still exhibits many of the "survival skills" learned from its mother to stay alive. This makes it different from a domestic kitten that did not have to worry about survival.

Feral kittens learn to be wary and afraid of people to help them survive and tend to exhibit the following behaviors:

- ❖ Hiding in small, dark places when in a new situation.
- ❖ Few cries or meows directed at humans until they learn this behavior by watching other cats.
- ❖ They are easily startled by all new noises, events, etc. Being around people and inside of houses is a completely new experience for these kittens.
- ❖ Hiding when unfamiliar people are around (this behavior can be observed even into adulthood).

Following several suggested steps outlined below can lessen these behaviors:

- A domestic "buddy" or two (another cat and or dog) in the home can help your new kitten learn, through observation, appropriate animal-human interactions such as meowing to communicate, seeking out human attention, communicating when hungry, etc. Some feral kittens do just fine without this "buddy", but most benefit from the social modeling provided by other domestic animals.
- Initially, confinement of your new kitten to one room with either few hiding places or "blocked" hiding places is suggested for the first week. Plenty of cat toys, food, water, and a place to hide/sleep (box with bedding in a corner works just fine) will help your new kitten become used to its new surroundings. Kittens love a dark, cozy place to hide and to sleep. It provides a sense of security.
- Lots of handling by all family members to encourage bonding is suggested, preferably in a setting where there will be few hiding places if the kitten "escapes". Any loud noise can startle these kittens significantly. That's when the spaces behind refrigerators, washing machines, stoves, etc. can become kitten-hiding spots and it can be very difficult to remove a kitten from these places if they do not WANT to come out.
- A gradual introduction to other animals in the home is important. This is more for the sake of your current pets than the kitten. Successful introductions can take time, depending on

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Feral Care

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how jealous your family pet(s) are of all the attention the new kitten is receiving. Sometimes this step takes no time at all.

We hope this information sheet has helped you become aware of how unique your new feral kitten really is and also helped you to understand how you can help your kitten adjust to you and your family. It is our experience that a feral kitten can grow up to be one of the most loving, devoted cats you'll ever own.

If you wish to learn more about feral cats, we suggest accessing these websites: "Alley Cat Allies" and the "Feral Cat Coalition". They are nationally recognized leaders in feral cat education/rescue. They can be found at <http://www.alleycat.org/> and www.feralcat.com respectively or contact them at the addresses/phone #'s listed below:

Alley Cat Allies

P.O. Box 397
Mt. Rainier, MD 20712
Phone: 202-667-3630
Fax: 202-667-3640
Email: alleycat@alleycat.org

Feral Cat Coalition

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