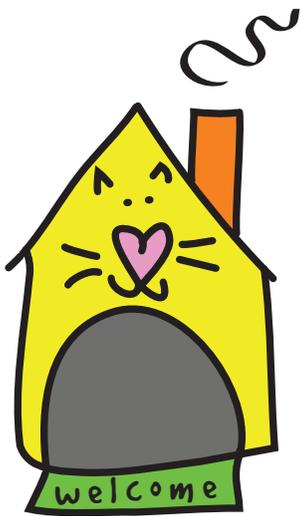


Pacific Animal Foundation

www.PacificAnimal.org



HELPING FERAL CATS THROUGH THE WINTER MONTHS

For anyone wanting to help a feral cat be warm and well fed during the winter months, below are some ideas that may be useful.

First and foremost, **Pacific Animal Foundation (PAF)** would always encourage anyone wanting to help a feral cat to make sure the cat is spayed or neutered. By making sure the cat is spayed or neutered, you give the feral cat a better quality of life as the females will not constantly be having litters of kittens and the male cats will not be contributing to the reproductive cycle. Other behaviours associated

with unneutered male cats such as fighting over female cats and territory, spraying, yowling, and roaming will be greatly reduced or stopped.

Most feral cats are too wild to handle and be put in a cat carrier so the best idea is to locate a local rescue group that practices **Trap/Neuter/Return** (or "TNR") and work with them. You can likely borrow a humane trap for safe capture of the feral and most feral rescue groups have partnerships with veterinary clinics and veterinarians experienced with feral cat handling. During the vet visit, the feral cats can also be vaccinated, tattooed, defleaed, dewormed, as well as any minor wound care provided.

Once the feral cat has been returned to its habitat, the feral caregiver can provide a warm shelter box and daily food to help the cat stay dry and fed. The cat will likely return the favor by keeping the premises free of rodents for the homeowner or business – a win-win situation for the feral cat and the caregiver.

If you are caregiving for more than one feral cat, then you may need to provide a bigger, sturdier shelter box so several cats can enter and cozy up on frosty nights or snuggle in out of the rain. Taylor's husband, John, has been our "go to" guy for some of our fabulous wooden shelter houses and we are providing some photos of his construction talents! We tuck straw inside the little houses for insulation and change it every few months. Straw tends to resist dampness and mold and provides insulation against the cold when the cat curls up. Hay is different from straw and not recommended. It is best to locate the shelter box out of the wind and rain and up against the side of a building or house for as much weather protection as possible. Some of our PAF shelter boxes double as feeding stations and are large enough to contain several cats at once.

Maureen Nelms, a volunteer with an organization called **Helping Homeless Cats (HHC)** on Vancouver Island (www.helpinghomelesscats.com) has some great suggestions as well.

For a simple one or two cat shelter box, she suggests a Rubbermaid bin. Put a cardboard box inside the bin, put styrofoam peanuts between the cardboard box and the bin, cut a hole in one end of the bin/box and cover the rough edges with duct tape. Fill the inside of the box with straw. A nice, cozy waterproof shelter!

Her group also has a number of raised feral feeders. She suggests using a tall post attached with a special fitting to a 2' x 2' piece of plywood. A little platform is built on top with open sides and the food and water towers are placed inside. A nearby wooden box allows the cats to jump to the raised feeder. This type of feeder may not be appropriate for small kittens or geriatric cats as it needs to be high enough to discourage dogs and raccoons from jumping up to the food. Try to locate the feeder in an area of some overhead weather protection - perhaps under a grove of large trees but with no low branches. If you have raccoons visiting your feeding station, try temporarily switching your feeding times by a few hours to discourage them. It's always best to feed feral cats in the morning so that all the food is eaten before dark.

There are lots of other creative ideas for shelter boxes and feeders on the internet. It shows that there are many caring people out there willing to help feral cats.

Thank you . . . if you are one of them!



This is Smokey's House – note the glowing cat eyes in the top nook. ~ PAF photo



A latched door swings open for shelter cleaning and feeding. ~ PAF photo



Raccoon Deterrent Feral Cat Feeder by David ~ Best Friends Animal Society www.bestfriends.org