AAFP POSITION STATEMENT

# 2023 AAFP free-roaming cat position statement

From time to time, the AAFP will respond to emerging new knowledge or issues of concern to veterinary professionals caring for cats. Our position statements, which represent the views of the association, are available at: www.catvets.com/guidelines/position-statements

The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) supports the humane management of free-roaming cats. A free-roaming cat is any cat not confined to a house or other type of enclosure; this includes owned cats with outdoor access, owned cats that have become lost outdoors (strays) and unowned neighborhood cats that are often supported by caregivers but are not claimed as personal pets or property. Any of these populations may include cats on a socialization spectrum towards people from friendly to feral.

The AAFP supports the humane management of free-roaming cats with the overarching goals of:

- sustained reductions of unowned free-roaming cat populations over time;
- improved cat health and wellbeing;
- mitigating negative impacts on the environment, wildlife, public health and neighborhoods; and
- supporting free-roaming cat caregivers and their human–animal bond.

The AAFP supports reducing the number of free-roaming cats through humane capture, sterilization and appropriate homing based on the spectrum of socialization to people and lifestyle that characterizes *Felis catus* with adoption into homes, where appropriate, and return to the original or appropriate location (eg, barn, community) once sterilized.[1] The AAFP supports non-lethal programs for controlling free-roaming populations. Outdoor access for companion cats should focus on methods that address the goals listed above, including leash-walking and fenced yards or other enclosures when possible.[2]

The AAFP recognizes that the management of free-roaming cats is complex. The AAFP encourages collaboration between humane groups, conservationists, animal control authorities, caregivers and other stakeholders. The AAFP encourages more interdisciplinary research to increase evidence-based management practices.

**This Position Statement updates and replaces the AAFP's earlier Position Statement '2012 Free-roaming, abandoned and feral cats', published in November 2012.**

## References

1 International Cat Care. **Cat friendly decision-making: managing cat populations based on an understanding of cat lifestyle and population dynamics.** https://icatcare.org/app/uploads/2020/02/final-populations-decision-doc.pdf (2022, accessed 21 April 2023).

2 American Association of Feline Practitioners. **2016 Impact of lifestyle choice on the companion cat – indoor vs. outdoor.** https://catvets.com/guidelines/position-statements/lifestyle-choice-position-statement (2016, accessed 21 April 2023).



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