Animal Protection League of NEW JERSEY

Promoting Respect | Ending Abuse
advocating for animals since 1983

FEEDING A STRAY – What is the "right" thing to do?

You've spotted a cat wandering about looking hungry and in need of care. Four out of every five people who see this have the heart to stop and want to help the cat. Usually this means giving the cat food.

"All they need is a bit of food, they can look after themselves, just like a wild animal." ***WRONG***

Is feeding a stray the right thing to do? Yes....with caveats!

All homeless cats at a **MINIMUM** and most importantly need to be spayed and neutered to prevent their numbers from exponentially multiplying and given immunizations to protect them against rabies. This is the single most impactful thing you can do to help these cats.

So we ask you to YES, please DO help that cat and feed them, but at the same time please start working on your plan to also make sure this cat is sterilized and immunized.

Once you've noticed a cat in need, shouldn't you just be able to notify the local animal control to take it from there?

"Call Animal Control—they will take the cat to the shelter and find her a home." ***WRONG***

Again, yes.....with caveats!

Progressive municipalities DO include services for community cats and the animal control service provider WILL assess and address the situation when you call. Unfortunately, many towns are not at this point yet. If services for community cats are not included in your town's animal control contract, they will not assist but will hopefully advise you on how you can proceed yourself.

Some municipalities are still very regressive and will attempt to trap and remove community cats. At an animal shelter where focus is on trap and remove, feral cats or cats who are afraid of people will be held for 7 days and then most likely killed because they do not have resources to warehouse cats for their whole lives. Friendly cats and kittens can get good exposure and hopefully be adopted quickly if taken to a shelter but in general a shelter is not a place for a feral or unsocialized cat.

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Look up your town code, call your town clerk, call your shelter and animal control and ask questions to determine what the situation is in your town.

You have fed the cat once, but now all of a sudden, we're asking to you step up and get them spayed/neutered – it seems like a big ask doesn't it?

"I can't afford to do anything other than feed them." ***WRONG***

Feeding 1 stray cat who becomes pregnant and has 4 kittens, who then go on to have more kittens themselves becomes far more expensive than spaying/neutering 1 or 2 cats and continuing to feed just those 2 cats. If the cat is not on your property or anywhere you can return daily to continue to feed after the cat is spayed or neutered, then if you can investigate the area and see if you can locate a local potential feeder. Perhaps you can offer to assist that person with the TNR of the cats. APLNJ is here to help you in any way we can, including subsidies towards the cost of spay/neuter when possible.

What if she is friendly, and does not need to live her life outside and can be rescued and adopted?

"I have no room to take her into my house and no one will help me find her a home." ***WRONG***

HELP is out there—you just need to LOOK! There are many rescue groups who can help foster and adopt friendly cats and who may be able to help trap feral cats. There are also LOW COST vets and clinics who can spay / neuter these cats for as little as $60 and END the cycle. While we maintain that sterilizing and immunizing the cats (whether friendly or feral acting) is the single most impactful thing you can do, we do always encourage placement of friendly cats and kittens into rescues/shelters for adoption whenever possible.

LET US HELP YOU HELP THEM!

IF YOU CARE, PLEASE ACT!!

IF YOU DON'T CARE PLEASE ACT!!

Love them or hate them, the solution is always

SPAY and NEUTER

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