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HUMANE OHIO

Humane Ohio operates a low-cost spay/neuter clinic and a pet food bank. Our vision is a community without homeless pets where every resident has access to affordable spay/neuter.

OUTDOOR COMMUNITY CATS

Question #1: There is a stray cat(s) in my neighborhood/yard. What can I do?

First, determine if the cat is friendly/tame or feral/wild. If the cat is tame, she may belong to someone. You can take the cat to a local veterinarian and have her scanned for a microchip. If the cat has a microchip, it will help reunite her with her owner. You can also post “Found Cat” flyers in your neighborhood and place a free “Found Ad” in the Toledo Blade. If you get no response after a day or two and decide that the cat(s) is lost or unowned, you can register the cat online at www.toledoanimalshelter.com in the “Lost/Found Database” and at www.petfbi.org and at www.k100country.com in the “Pets” section. You can also visit www.humaneohio.org (click on “Other Resources”) for our lost/found brochure that will give you more tips on what to do if you find a lost animal.

If the cat is tame and no owner is found, you can try to place the cat in a home yourself by posting flyers around town and on social media. If you take the cat to a shelter, please be advised that every animal shelter/rescue group has a different policy and the shelter may turn you away or euthanize the cat(s) if space is not available. According to Alley Cat Allies, seven out of 10 cats who enter shelters nationally are killed there. Even kittens may be at risk for euthanasia, especially during spring time and “kitten season” when shelters become overwhelmed with litters. Neonatal kittens may be at even higher risk for euthanasia because most shelters lack the volunteers and resources to bottle feed and provide round the clock care. Pet homelessness is a problem and most shelters and rescue groups are operating at capacity. Some shelters and rescue groups might be willing to take the cat when space becomes available if you are willing to foster the cat in your home in the meantime. You can visit www.humaneohio.org (click on “Other Resources”) for a list of local animal shelters and rescue groups. If you exhaust all other options and must return the cat back to where you found her, please have her spayed/neutered at Humane Ohio so she does not create more unwanted litters who will grow-up on the streets or end up in an overcrowded animal shelter at risk for euthanasia.

If the cat(s) is feral/wild, you can be part of a solution! You can care for the feral cat(s) and prevent more litters from being born. Outdoor community cat colonies can be managed and controlled with a non-lethal method called Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) where volunteers like you trap the cat(s) with a humane trap (available through Humane Ohio), have her spayed/neutered at Humane Ohio and return her to the colony (the site where she was found). You or someone else in the neighborhood needs to act as a volunteer caregiver and provide the cat(s) with food, water and shelter on a regular basis (Humane Ohio sells winter cat shelters!). Humane Ohio’s staff can walk you through the process of becoming an outdoor community cat caretaker, and can provide food through the Humane Ohio Pet Food Bank once the cat is fixed. Please call us at 419-266-5607. Please be advised that feral cats and unsocialized kittens are euthanized almost 100% of the time when taken to a shelter because they’re not considered adoptable, and animal shelters are not equipped to house wild animals; most lack the volunteers and resources to socialize feral kittens.

Question #2: How can I tell if the cats are friendly/tame or feral/wild?

Observe the cats’ appearance and behavior. A friendly/tame cat is likely to approach you, although usually not close enough for you to touch him. If you put food down, a friendly/tame cat will likely start to eat it right away. A friendly/tame cat is often vocal and may be seen at all hours of the day. A feral cat is silent, will not approach humans, and generally will be seen only from dusk to dawn unless extraordinarily hungry and foraging for food. If you put food down for a feral cat, he will wait until you move away from the area before approaching the food.

OUTDOOR COMMUNITY CATS continued

Question #3: I feed outdoor community cats in my neighborhood and they are reproducing. I can't afford to feed them all. What can I do?

Have the cats spayed/neutered as soon as possible at Humane Ohio so they do not produce more litters (please refer to question/answer #4 if you have female cats taking care of very young kittens.) You can trap the cats using humane traps (available through Humane Ohio) that do not hurt the cats. It's an easy process where you place food in the back of the trap, and, when the cat enters the trap for the food, they step on a metal plate that triggers the door to close. It's important that you return the cats to the same spot you found them in (unless it's a friendly, unowned cat that you can place in a forever home), and that you provide food, water and shelter on a regular basis to keep the cats healthy and safe (Humane Ohio sells winter cat shelters!). Humane Ohio's staff can walk you through the process of humanely trapping a cat(s). Please call us at 419-266-5607. Outdoor community cat caretakers who have spayed/neutered their colony are also welcome to use the Humane Ohio Pet Food Bank.

Question #4: A female cat had kittens outside. What should I do?

Have the cats spayed/neutered as soon as possible at Humane Ohio so they do not produce more unwanted litters (please refer to question/answer #3 for more information on humane trapping.) How you proceed depends on the age of the kittens:

If the kittens are recently weaned (usually 4 – 6 weeks old), contact Humane Ohio at 419-266-5607 to schedule an appointment for the mother to be spayed. Be sure to tell us that she has kittens that are recently weaned so we know she needs to be returned to her kittens within 48 hours. Even if very young kittens are eating solid food, they are unlikely to survive too long without their mother because she provides body heat and protection.

If the mom is friendly and the kittens are not old enough for adoption, you can call local shelters/rescue groups to see if they have a foster home available for the mom and her kittens, or you can foster the mom and kittens yourself until the kittens are about eight weeks old (the age when most kittens and puppies can be spayed/neutered and are made available for adoption) and then try to place them into homes yourself. If you take the cat and/or kittens to a shelter, please be advised that every animal shelter/rescue group has a different policy and the shelter may turn you away or euthanize the cat(s) if space is not available. According to Alley Cat Allies, seven out of 10 cats who enter shelters nationally are killed there. Even kittens may be at risk for euthanasia, especially during spring time and "kitten season" when shelters become overwhelmed with litters. Neonatal kittens or unsocialized kittens may be at even higher risk for euthanasia because most shelters lack the volunteers and resources to bottle feed and provide round the clock care or to socialize.

If the mom is not friendly, we can spay the mom and then it's best to return her to where you found her in her original habitat and plan to provide food, water and shelter (Humane Ohio sells winter cat shelters!). Feral cats and unsocialized kittens are euthanized almost 100% of the time when taken to a shelter because they're not considered adoptable, and animal shelters are not equipped to house wild animals. You can still contact local shelters to see if they have a foster home for the kittens or if they have room in their adoption program for the kittens if they are around eight weeks old and friendly.

If you return the kittens to their original habitat with the mother, plan to trap the kittens when they are old enough to be fixed at Humane Ohio's clinic. Kittens can be spayed/neutered and vaccinated at Humane Ohio when they are eight weeks old and at least two pounds and then returned to the colony (the site where they were found) unless you are able to socialize them and place them in a forever home.

Question #5: I just found a newborn kitten and the mother is nowhere to be seen. What should I do?

Do not be too hasty to move or take a kitten because the mother may be out looking for food, or in the process of moving her litter to a safer area. Watch closely for several hours to see if the mother returns. If the mother does not return **after one day**, and if the kitten(s) is very young and not weaned yet (usually under 4 – 6 weeks old), his only chance of survival is bottle feeding. This is an intensive process much like caring for a newborn human baby. There's a lot to learn, but once you do, the process will become second nature. It's a very rewarding process. Humane Ohio's staff can talk you through the bottle feeding process. Please call us at 419-266-5607. Please be advised that neonatal kittens or unsocialized kittens may be at even higher risk for euthanasia if taken to a shelter because most shelters lack the volunteers and resources to bottle feed and provide round the clock care or to socialize.

OUTDOOR COMMUNITY CATS continued

Question #6: I've been trying to trap a cat, but the cat won't go in the trap. What should I do?

If a cat will not go into a trap after repeated attempts, take a break for a week or two (except in the case of an injured cat). A short break can reduce a cat's fear of the trap. During the break, feed the cat and other cats you are feeding in unset traps (use a zip tie to hold the trap door open) for several days. Start by placing the food by the entrance of the trap, then move it inside, then move it to the back over a period of several days. Feed in the same place and at the same time as always. The cat will see other cats eating inside the traps and will likely try it too.

When you are ready to trap again, withhold food for 24 hours. **Never withhold water.** You can make a trap more enticing by using really smelly food such as mackerel tuna or catnip: drizzle a very small trail leading into the trap and place a chunk in the back of the trap (the cat will step on the plate that closes the trap door on its way to the back of the trap for the food). Cats also love the smell of a pungent herb called valerian. You can make a strong smelling broth by boiling valerian in water and then douse the trap with it.

Camouflage the trap with branches and/or leaves. Line the trap floor with leaves.

If all else fails, use a drop trap (a large and lightweight frame covered with netting). It is propped up on one side with a stick, and food is placed in the back. The trapper stands at a distance, holding a string attached to the stick. When the cat walks underneath to eat, the trapper pulls the string, allowing the trap to drop and capture the cat(s). The trapper immediately covers the drop trap with a blanket to calm the cat(s) and then carefully transfers her into an individual trap.

Question #7: Will Humane Ohio come out and trap the cats for me?

There are two options! We can loan you an easy to use humane trap and talk you through the trapping process; you bring the cat(s) to Humane Ohio to be spayed/neutered (please refer to question/answer #3 for more information on humane trapping). If that is not possible, we do have a Pay to Spay program where you cover the cost of our time and mileage in addition to the spay/neuter cost and we trap for you. Please contact us at 419-266-5607 or info@humaneohio.org for more info.

Humane Ohio has a very small staff. Operating with a small staff allows us to keep our spay/neuter prices low for our clients. We apologize that we cannot trap for free; doing so would drive our spay/neuter prices up and the demand for trapping would far exceed our manpower.

Thanks to Alley Cat Allies for providing much of the above information. Please visit www.alleycat.org or www.feralcat.com for even more information on outdoor community cats and Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs. Humane Ohio's staff can walk you through the TNR process and the process of becoming an outdoor community cat caretaker. Please contact us at 419-266-5607. **Thank you for looking out for animals in need!**