

How To Identify Stray And Feral Cats, And How To Help Them Survive!



As winter fast approaches, there is a greater need for generosity and kindness toward the stray animals that populate almost every neighborhood in the country. This month we are helping to raise awareness of both stray and feral cats. The most important part is to share information on how to tell the difference between the two, and how you can help protect them over the coming months.

The most common misconception with strays and feral cats is that they are “wild” animals. Feral and stray cats are both domestic animals, although stray cats are socialized to be near people and are typically the product of abandonment or getting lost and separated from their homes. Feral cats are cats that have had little to no contact with humans and act accordingly. They have strong family bonds and live in tight groups called colonies.

Cats become socialized when they interact with people and are held, spoken to, and played with from an early age. Since feral cats don't get this interaction feral cats have a natural aversion to humans and more often than not they cannot adjust to living anywhere but outdoors.

As for stray cats, over time they can become more wild as their contact with humans dwindle. But unlike a cat who was born into the feral lifestyle, stray cats have the ability to become house pets once again. By slowly re-introducing them to your home after living outdoors it may take awhile for them to acclimate, especially when they have been away from humans for a long enough period of time.

Despite the difference in social interaction, both types of cats live in a generally harsh environment. They have to hunt for food and shelter, or depend on the kindness of strangers. You don't have to bring a cat into your home to protect it either! Building shelters, or making areas they stay more comfortable with blankets and food can make a world of difference. You can also look up shelters in your area to find ones that will offer Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) services to keep the population down.

It is important to know how to identify what type of cats you may see around you. Strays are much more likely to come to humans and can be easier to take to shelters or adopt. Feral cats should not be approached however, and should be handled by professional caregivers. Here is a guideline that can help you decipher what type of cat you're dealing with:

Stray	Feral
Human Interaction	
Stray cats have been conditioned to be around people, and are likely to approach them for food, shelter, or just attention.	Feral cats will not approach humans and will likely have a hiding place to avoid contact with people and other animals.
Cat Interaction	
Stray cats typically stay on their own and do not socialize with other animals.	Feral cats will associate themselves with other cats and find unity within a group.
Body language	
Stray cats will typically walk around like your average house cat. Walking with its tail up as a sign of friendliness. Like people, they will make eye contact, look at you, or blink.	Feral cats are more reclusive, not make eye contact, and will crawl, crouch, stay low to the ground, and protect their bodies with their tails.
Schedule	
Strays will be active primarily during the day.	Feral cats tend to hunt and travel by night. You may catch a glimpse of them during the day, but they are likely to be nocturnal.

Stray	Feral
Physical Features	
Just like how we'd feel if we were lost in an unknown area without familiar resources, strays will tend to look dirty and disheveled.	The outdoors have become the way of life for feral cats, so they will have learned how to keep a clean, well-kept coat.

To find out more about handling and helping stray and feral cats in your area, visit [The Humane Society](#). And of course, thank you for helping keep our furry friends safe!

Read more at

<http://blog.theanimalrescuesite.com/feralandstraycats/#jjUxxLcPDvIXWjvE.99>

Source:

http://blog.theanimalrescuesite.com/feralandstraycats/?utm_source=jg&utm_medium=fb&utm_term=20141102&utm_campaign=feralandstraycats