

Guidelines for Establishing an Effective Adoption Program

This section of the handbook provides guidelines to help rescuers rehome or adopt out friendly stray cats and any feral cats and kittens who have been socialized. As mentioned previously, removing and rehoming friendly cats from outdoor colonies is part of a successful Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program because it helps decrease the number of cats living in a colony.

Depending on the number of cats and kittens one is rehoming, it might be more practical to contact a local rescue organization for assistance, since they already have the resources in place. Plus this frees up TNR folks to trap and TNR more feral cats.

Some adult feral cats can be “adopted” by their caretakers and, over time, they may become assimilated to living indoors. Refer to “Adopting Adult Feral Cats” for more information, and see also “Guidelines for Safely Relocating Feral Cats” when rehoming feral cats.

Tips for Rehoming Cats and Kittens

Before deciding to rehome a friendly cat, take her to a vet to be scanned for a microchip in case she is a lost pet whose owner is looking for her.

When rehoming cats, word of mouth is the most useful tool one can have. Simply talking with friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, and even your local postal workers, school bus drivers, and landscapers can lead to finding suitable homes for adoptable cats. Engaging in friendly conversation regarding companion animals can help one provide information about a cat or kitten



Louise Holton

The top priority of every adoption program is the health and well-being of the cat.

who is in need of a home. Keeping a few cute pictures on hand to show prospective adopters is a bonus.

Creating a simple flyer for each cat or litter of kittens you are trying to rehome can be another great adoption tool. The more visibility you can provide for the cat, the better the chances you will have of finding her a home. Include a color photo and important information such as: the cat has been spayed or neutered; she is current on vaccinations; she has been tested for disease, treated for parasites, and microchipped; and mention if she gets along well with other cats or dogs. (It is highly recommended that all cats and kittens are spayed or neutered prior to rehoming to prevent unwanted litters. Plus, a sterilized and vaccinated cat offers more incentive for potential adopters and for rescue organizations to work with you, because you have already done some of the hard work for them.)

Adding certain details to a flyer can be off-putting to some adopters who don't necessarily know what these details mean. Explaining special-needs cases to potential

adopters via conversation and providing supplemental information can make all the difference in finding special-needs cats suitable homes. Though make sure all important details are disclosed to adopters in some way to prevent the cat from being returned or abandoned.

Supply flyers to those you speak with and ask them to share with their friends and family. Contact local businesses and see if they would be willing to hang your flyers for clients to see. Think animal-friendly businesses like veterinarian hospitals and pet-supply stores; though other businesses may be willing to help if the owner and/or staff likes animals. Public spaces such as churches, schools, or even your office can be good places to leave flyers as well. You can also advertise with a local newspaper.

Take advantage of social media to help find homes for adoptable cats and kittens. With countless individuals having access to the Internet, using social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram will greatly increase visibility and the potential of finding the perfect home. These sites offer quick and easy sharing with the click of a button! These days, there are some great (free) online platforms such as Rehome by Adopt-A-Pet, GetYourPet.com, and Home To Home that can connect you to potential adopters. Please note, we do not recommend using websites like Craigslist to rehome cats, for they can attract individuals who may not have good intentions for animals.

Another great idea for rehoming cats is to give potential adopters the option to first foster a cat or kitten. Providing a trial period is a great way to help some individuals get over the fear of commitment. Permitting someone to foster a cat for a month or two, to see if the cat will be happy in her new home and whether she will get along with other cats, dogs, or even children, can help relieve some of the potential adopter's initial reservations. This is also an effective

way to see if this is the right home for the cat; some cats have a more difficult time adjusting to new surroundings and to new people and animals. In addition, fostering can serve as a way to screen potential adopters to ensure they will be responsible guardians.



Alley Cat Rescue

ACR volunteer at an adoption event.

Lastly, be creative, persistent, and patient! Think outside of the box when trying to rehome a cat. Share cute stories or stories of triumph and use quality photos to pull on peoples' heart strings. Explain why a particular cat is special and how wonderful it would be if she was adopted. Don't give up! You might not rehome a cat overnight, but with some time and effort, you will find the right home for her.

Adoption Guidelines and Forms

These next few paragraphs and accompanying forms, which can be found in the appendix of the handbook, are meant to help

Alley Cat Rescue



Four-day-old kitten fostered by ACR.

guide individual rescuers who are rehoming cats and kittens on their own. If you are working with a rescue organization to place cats, they will most likely have their own guidelines and forms to use.

Prior to rehoming a cat or kitten, Alley Cat Rescue provides all potential adopters with an [adoption application](#) and a list of guidelines they will be expected to follow. ACR wants to see our rescued cats placed in homes where they will be treated as a member of the family for the rest of their lives which, with care, can be from 15 to 20 years.

As part of an initial screening for adopters, you may want to consider requesting references, including their veterinarian. This will allow you to ask about the potential adopters previous companion animals, if they had any, and to gauge if the individual has the appropriate time and space to devote to a new pet.

Upon adopting a cat from ACR, individuals must sign a legal contract stating compliance with our requirements, which are in the best interests of the cat. ACR would rather an individual be upfront about their reservations and possible non-compliance with our guidelines and contracts, than

adopt out a cat only to have her returned or abandoned.

To ensure a recently adopted cat is adjusting well to her new environment, ACR highly recommends conducting a post-adoption follow-up. This can be in the form of an email, a phone call, or a pre-scheduled visit. Following up with recent adopters not only gives you peace of mind, but it also allows for individuals to ask questions or express any concerns. Most adopters are happy to hear from you and are excited to share news regarding their new family member.

Important Notes

- Work in conjunction with a rescue organization, even if it is just for advice or online posting assistance. It never hurts to ask.
- Offer a foster period to potential adopters to help alleviate any initial hesitation and/or reservations. Be willing to work *with adopters*.
- Ask potential adopters for references (including their veterinarian), so you can better ensure the cat will be adopted by a responsible, caring individual.
- If possible, offer adopters the ability to contact you post-adoption with questions or concerns.
- Please note that only some rescue organizations have a no-kill policy, meaning they do not euthanize healthy animals, and keep all animals until they are adopted. County-run shelters in particular usually do NOT operate under a no-kill policy, meaning they will euthanize healthy animals if they need to free up space for incoming animals. Most county-run shelters have a

time limit of a few days to adopt out animals, and once that specified limit is reached, the animal is killed. The County of Los Angeles Care and Control revealed in its 2020-2021 "Paw Status" report that it euthanized about 32 percent of cats brought to its shelters between July 1 2021 through June 30, 2022 ("Paw Status," 2022) So before you agree to work with an organization, ask them specifically if they operate under a no-kill policy.

- All cats and kittens who are up for adoption should be spayed or neutered prior to being rehomed. Remember, these cats and kittens came from outdoor colonies with unsterilized cats. The key to a successful TNR program and to ending cat homelessness is through spaying and neutering.
- All cats and kittens should be vaccinated prior to rehoming. Providing vaccines prevents disease and other health conditions, some of which can be fatal. It is always best to ensure a cat or kitten receives her initial vaccinations, so her immune system can build up antibodies to resist potential future exposures.
- All cats and kittens should be treated for internal and external parasites prior to rehoming. These parasites can cause health issues and should be prevented.
- All cats and kittens should be tested for FeLV and FIV prior to rehoming. Testing a cat prior to adoption can prevent cats from being returned, abandoned, or killed, should she be later tested and found to be positive for either disease. Some veterinarians still recommend to their clients to euthanize FeLV and FIV positive cats, which is not necessary. Therefore, it is safer to test the cat prior to rehoming so potential adopters are aware of her special needs.
- Always keep safety in mind. Never give out your personal information, such as your home address, whether it be listed on a flyer, a website, or to someone you recently met. Instead only provide your phone number and/or email address as the primary method for contacting you. And suggest meeting potential adopters at their house, so you can inspect the home and gauge if you think it is a safe environment for the cat; take a friend with you or let someone know where you will be.
- Never use the words "Free to good home" on flyers or online sites. Advertising "free" animals can attract individuals who may not have good intentions for the animals. Unfortunately, some people are looking only to make money and do not care for the well-being of animals and are drawn to such ads, particularly those looking to sell animals to research laboratories or breeding facilities. Sometimes it can be helpful to mention an adoption fee to dissuade these individuals and to only attract those who are truly interested in adoption. Plus, asking for a small adoption fee can help recoup some of your veterinary costs, and allow you to rescue more cats.