



Alley Cat Rescue, Inc.

# ALLEY CAT Mews

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[www.SaveACat.org](http://www.SaveACat.org)

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## Preparing Community Cats for Hot Weather

by Maggie Funkhouser

When we think of preparing outdoor cats for extreme weather conditions, we mostly think of the Winter months; not many of us take the Summer months into consideration. But just as it is important to provide extra care for community cats during the cold season, it is vital to take some precautions when caring for cats during the hot, dry season.

Provide fresh, clean water everyday. Change the water two times a day, if possible and make sure to sterilize all dishes regularly. Metal containers resist bacteria better than plastic containers; however, metal is a better heat conductor and will warm the water faster. Adding ice can help keep water cooler for longer. Make sure the feeding station is in a shady area (or provide one). Feed early in the morning and late in the evening, when temperatures are lowest.

Increase the amount of wet food, if possible. Cats naturally don't drink a lot of water; they are meant to stay hydrated from the fluids in their meals (prey). Please note, because of the increase in flies and other insects during Summer months, it is not recommended to leave wet food sit outside for long. Ensure the cats eat all of the wet food and properly clean up the area to prevent parasite infections.

Change all bedding frequently due to increased fleas, ticks and other insects. Flea powders can be sprinkled onto bedding and surrounding areas, while medications such as Capstar can be crushed into the cats' food to prevent infestations. For friendly cats or those being TNRed or retrapped for vaccine updates, a monthly topical flea/tick treatment, such as Advantage Multi, is ideal. Most flea/tick medications also treat for ear mites, internal parasites (roundworms, hookworms), and can prevent heart worm disease.

Regular brushing helps decrease parasite infestations and removes dirt, fur, and dead skin. Brushing conditions the fur and helps cool the cat. Brushing is only recommended for outdoor cats who are friendly and allow human contact; this should not be attempted with truly feral cats. Brushing can, however, be used as a socialization tool. Regular petting and brushing can build trust with a cat and contribute to her/his adoptability.

Provide an area for the cats to go to the bathroom. A major complaint about community cats during the Summer is their relieving themselves in neighborhood gardens. Constructing large outdoor litter boxes, using 2"x4" pieces of wood and sand, is an easy way to combat this issue. Make sure to scoop the area frequently to prevent offensive odors.

Refrain from TNRing on days with extreme temperatures and high humidity. Trapping cats can be a stressful event; they don't need the extra stress of extreme heat. Check local weather forecasts prior to trapping and always set traps during the early and late evening hours; again, when temperatures are at their lowest. Never place a trap in direct sunlight or exposed to other weather elements. Never leave a trap unattended! It doesn't take long for a cat to succumb to heat stroke when left in a trap during the Summer.



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**From the Desk of**  
*Louise Holton*

**Alley Cat Rescue urges the public and veterinarians to spay female cats by 4 months of age**



Alley Cat Rescue is joining nonprofit organization, Cats Protection, by calling for “an urgent shift in pet owners' thinking in order to control cat populations.” The U.K. charity is urging cat guardians to neuter their cats at four months of age — two months earlier than the traditional six months — because at four months female cats can reach sexual maturity.

The call follows a recent survey by the charity, which found that just four per cent of people sterilized their cat at or before the recommended four months. “Getting the neutering message across is proving to be a very tough hurdle for cat welfare because our research shows the vast majority of people are still not neutering their cats early enough to avoid unwanted litters of kittens,” explains Jane Clements, Cats Protection’s neutering manager.

In *Save Our Strays*, Bob Christiansen analyzes four cat surveys that were conducted in Massachusetts, Santa Clara and San Diego, California, and Las Vegas, Nevada. He discovered that between 86 percent and 91 percent of owned female cats were spayed; however, 20 percent of those cats had one or two litters before they were spayed. Today some surveys also claim that 80 percent of cats are sterilized, but we suspect little has changed and some of these now-spayed cats had a couple of litters of kittens.

New research shows that British and American cat guardians harbor serious misconceptions about the reproductive habits of cats. The survey mentioned above found that 84 percent of the 715 people surveyed thought cats can't get pregnant before the age of six months. This is simply NOT TRUE! Cats can become pregnant at three-and-a-half to four months old.

In the December 2013 issue of *LiveScience*, Douglas Main wrote an article entitled “Ignorance About Cats' Sex Lives Fuels Unplanned Pregnancies.” Main writes, “Cat owners could use a refresher on the 'birds and the bees,' at least when it comes to their feline companions.” Half of the respondents said

they thought female cats “should” have a litter before being spayed. This is NOT TRUE! Research shows that cats who have not had kittens are healthier than those who have had kittens.

Jane Murray, an epidemiologist at the University of Bristol school of veterinary sciences in England, told *LiveScience* that: “Due to these misconceptions, a total of 850,000 unplanned kittens are born each year in the United Kingdom, according to the study, published in the journal *Veterinary Record*. Due to these unplanned pregnancies, as many as 150,000 kittens end up in British shelters every year.”

And unfortunately, cat overpopulation is an even bigger problem here in the United States. “Cat overpopulation is at crisis levels,” said Julie Levy, director of Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida's college of veterinary medicine. “A total of 3 million to 4 million cats end up at U.S. shelters every year, and more than half of them are euthanized,” Levy told *LiveScience*. “It's interesting that this study from the U.K. confirms findings in the U.S., that pet owners are confused about the reproductive lives of their cats, and that this lack of awareness about how quickly cats can reproduce contributes to unwanted litters and cat overpopulation. To help prevent unplanned litters, cat owners should get their kittens spayed or neutered at 4 months of age,” Levy said.

Motherhood provides no health benefits to female cats. If anything, spaying a female cat prior to four months of age greatly reduces her risk of developing ovarian and mammary cancer. Early spay and neuter also saves lives. Preventing births greatly reduces the number of cats who end up in shelters; which in turn reduces the number of cats who are needlessly killed every year.

Please help Alley Cat Rescue spread this life-saving message! Educate those around you about the important of early spay/neuter for companion animals. Help friends and neighbors locate low-cost programs, and encourage your veterinarian to provide early spay/neuter services; (some vets will not spay/neuter prior to six months of age.) Sharing this vital message could be the catalyst for ending overpopulation and needless killing in our country's shelters. If we can stop the rush of unwanted kittens dumped at shelters every spring and summer, we can go a long way towards ending cat overpopulation.



# The Importance of Building Relationships between Shelters and Rescues

by Denise Hilton

For many years, ACR has strived to build and strengthen relationships between rescue groups, cat caretakers, and veterinarians. One of the most important partnerships that we have established is the strong rapport we share with our local, county-run animal shelter. Joint rescue ventures such as this can be mutually beneficial in innumerable ways, not only for the rescue partners, but for the many precious lives that hang in the balance.

Thanks to such partnerships, we are seeing an increase in “special needs” pets with behavioral or medical issues being placed in permanent homes. And community cats who have been TNRed are being repatriated to their respective colonies. In the past, these animals would have been easily overlooked and ultimately euthanized in shelters, which are usually overflowing with strays, kittens, pregnant or nursing mothers, and sick/injured pets. However, once this partnership has been established, a simple phone call can mean a second chance for many shelter animals.

Rescue partners are also able to help one another when tough situations or emergencies arise. For example, in hoarding situations, natural disasters, cases of abuse or neglect, or large house/apartment fires, where shelters face an overwhelming intake of animals at one time, partnering rescues are able to step in and relieve some of the shelter's burden. Because we now have an open line of communication, we are able to pool our resources so that lives no longer have to be lost due to space limitations.

By working together rather than against one another, countless doors are now open that were once closed. When groups partner with each other

on special projects, fundraiser events, forming coalitions and building volunteer networks, the potential of finding homes for cats and dogs is greatly increased, essential services like low-cost spay/neuter can be provided to a larger audience, and most importantly, the sense of community is strengthened. A once compartmentalized world has evolved into a network of rescuers and shelters helping the public more effectively and efficiently through our ability to work together toward one common goal, saving lives. Each stake holder might run their daily operations a little differently, but by working together, we CAN end pet homelessness!



Mr. Business and Wildstyle were rescued from Baltimore County Animal Services



Kee Kee was rescued from PG County Shelter

# CALL TO ACTION: AUSTRALIA PLANS TO INFECT FERAL CATS WITH A DEADLY VIRUS

At the beginning of June, Australia's Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, announced that the country will begin researching a virus to kill feral cats. The government has endorsed a nationwide eradication plan of feral cats in an attempt to protect Australia's birds. Research is aimed at finding a "safe and targeted form of biological control." But how "safe" is this virus, when pet owners are warned that they must immunize their housecats, because the virus doesn't discriminate between feral and domestic. ALL cats would be at risk if this deadly virus is released.

Previous attempts at eradicating feral cats on islands has proven nothing but costly, ineffective, and in most cases, counterproductive. When feral cats are removed from island ecosystems (usually to protect birds), rodents and other small mammals (raccoons, skunks, opossums) fill the available niche and prey on the native bird populations at the same rate or at an increased rate than did the cats. Removing feral cats only exacerbates the existing problem and creates new ones.

Humans are responsible for declining populations of birds and wildlife, NOT cats. It's estimated that every minute, 11 football fields of forest are cleared. Forests that provide food and shelter for birds and wildlife; forests that are home to billions of species of animals and plants. Forests that filter out toxic chemicals in the air and pollution in the water. Human development is destroying crucial

habitat that is necessary for wildlife to live and thrive.

It's time humans start taking responsibility for their actions and stop placing false blame on cats. Killing is NOT a humane or morally-acceptable animal management practice. No animal deserves to die a slow and painful death by being infected with a virus. Non-lethal management practices, such as spay/neuter, are available and should be implemented. No wildlife management plan should include killing sentient life; it doesn't make sense to kill one species to preserve another.

Join us in taking a stand against Australia's plan to kill feral cats! Please visit us online at <http://bit.ly/AustraliaPetition> to add your signature to our petition. Together, we can make a difference for community cats.



## Visit Us Online!

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Sign up for our Enews!

[www.Facebook.com/AlleyCatRescueInc](http://www.Facebook.com/AlleyCatRescueInc)  
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[www.Twitter.com/saveacatorg](http://www.Twitter.com/saveacatorg)  
Follow us!

[AlleyCatRescue.Blogspot.com](http://AlleyCatRescue.Blogspot.com)  
Stay in the know with trending hot topics!

## Ways You Can Help!

[GivingWorks.EBay.com](http://GivingWorks.EBay.com)  
Sell items on EBay, with proceeds to benefit ACR!

[Smile.Amazon.com](http://Smile.Amazon.com)  
Choose ACR as your charity, so that every time you buy & sell, proceeds benefit cats!  
Or donate cat food & litter!

[www.V-DAC.com](http://www.V-DAC.com)  
Donate your old vehicle!

# The Dangerous Myths Surrounding FIV

by Joe Zimmerman



Buff loves attention! He's FIV+ and in need of a home.

Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) are, as their names suggest, fairly similar diseases - though they affect different species - and their similarities are not limited to their physical effects. Just as both are retroviruses that use the cells of the host's body to replicate themselves and can result in immune deficiencies, both diseases are burdened with stigma.

Common practice holds that cats diagnosed with FIV are hopeless cases at best and a danger to those around them at worst. Based on these assumptions, veterinarians and caretakers often suggest euthanasia for FIV positive cats. However, common practice is not always consistent with the facts. The majority of FIV positive cats live long, healthy lives, and when fighting is eliminated, the risk of transmitting the disease to other cats is virtually nonexistent. In this case, misconceptions about the disease have created a deadly situation for infected cats.

Countless studies and testimonies from owners show that FIV positive cats are far from hopeless cases. Though the disease can be fatal, infection does not mean that a cat is resigned to death. Like its human counterpart, FIV acts slowly, multiplying in the lymph nodes and progressively weakening the immune system. This leaves infected cats less able to fight off infections and other viruses.

However, if cats are kept in an indoor environment where their exposure to pathogens is limited, they can survive and remain healthy for years. Cats are also typically not diagnosed until the late stages of the disease, so cats with FIV often live completely symptom-free for many years before their immune system is compromised.

Notably, a diagnosis of FIV does not even necessarily

mean that a cat is infected. Cats who are vaccinated against the disease also test positive because they carry the antibodies that protect them from the disease. Currently, tests can't tell the difference.

A diagnosis of FIV does not lead to a short and painful life, and it also does not threaten all healthy cats nearby. FIV predominantly spreads through deep bites and scratch wounds, though infected mothers can also pass it on to their kittens in rare circumstances. Studies have not found any evidence that non-aggressive contact, such as licking, grooming and sharing food/water, leads to exposure.

Subsequently, FIV positive cats can live with FIV negative cats, without transferring the disease. As long as cats do not fight with each other, there is no reason to rehome anyone. And the problem of cat aggression has a solution. Spaying or neutering a cat will make him/her less competitive with other cats and therefore less aggressive. Sterilizing cats greatly reduces fighting.

Humans cannot become sick from a cat with FIV, and other cats can only acquire the disease in rare circumstances. Additionally, though it may seem natural that more feral cats would be FIV positive because of their exposure to more cats, studies have shown that the prevalence of the disease is comparable among both owned and free-roaming cats. It's estimated that only between two and four percent of the cat population is FIV positive.

FIV is a dangerously misunderstood disease. It is possible for cats, both feral and owned, to live long lives with the disease. Spaying and neutering is an effective way to prevent the spread of the disease, by stopping both aggression and the passing on of the disease to offspring. Infection is only a death sentence to FIV positive cats if veterinarians continue to euthanize them without fully understanding their disease and considering their chance for survival. Please help dispel the myths of FIV by educating those around you; it just might save a life.



Mr. Grey is the sweetest cat. He's FIV+ and in need of a home.

## Meet Sockie!

by Julie Cannon

Sockie came to us from the Prince George's County Shelter back in March. She's a beautiful black and white domestic shorthair with a very "Rubenesque" figure. We tried to find her a home through our Petsmart adoption center; unfortunately, we discovered that Sockie is not a fan of other kitties, so that avenue didn't work out.

Sockie is absolutely one of the sweetest cats in the world – as long as she isn't around other cats. She loves to wind around legs and explore, trying to see what she could potentially get underneath (not much, as it turns out). She loves attention and all the pets she can get.

Right now, she's living at the ACR office, but we'd love to see her go to her forever home! Please contact us for more information or if you're interested in fostering or adopting this precious lady.



### Mission Statement:

Alley Cat Rescue (ACR) works to protect cats on several levels: locally through rescue, rehabilitation and adoption of cats and nationally through a network of Cat Action Teams. ACR is dedicated to the health, well-being and welfare of all cats: domestic, stray, abandoned and feral. ACR also assists the international animal community.

#### Alley Cat Rescue Staff:

Louise Holton - *Founder and President*

Denise Hilton - *Director of Operations*

Maggie Funkhouser - *Director of Communications and Development*

Julie Cannon - *Executive Assistant*

Tom Ragusa - *Finance Associate*

Joe Zimmerman - *Research Intern*

#### Board of Directors:

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## Show your support with ACR Gear!

Cotton t-shirts are available in sizes small, medium, large, and x-large. The black v-neck is also available in size 2x-large. PBA-free stainless steel water bottle holds 20oz of liquid. Comes with two different drinking attachments.



"Save A Life" \$12 each

Gray T-Shirt with Maroon Writing  
MD residents add \$0.72 sales tax.



"Neuter is Cutter" \$12 each

Blue T-Shirt with Navy Writing  
MD residents add \$0.72 sales tax.



"Alley Cat Rescue" \$18 each

Black V-Neck with white writing  
MD residents please add \$1.08 sales tax



\$10 each

Blue Water Bottle  
MD residents please add \$0.96 sales tax.

## Order Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Order Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Item	No. of Items	Size (s)	Cost
"Save a Life" \$12			\$
"Neuter is Cutter" \$12			\$
"Alley Cat Rescue" \$18			\$
Water Bottle \$10		NA	\$

Maryland residents please remember to add the appropriate sales tax for each item.

**Please send checks made out Alley Cat Rescue or provide your credit card information.**

Visa     MasterCard     Discover     American Express

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Send orders to P.O. Box 585 Mt. Rainier, MD 20712

## Recognize the Signs of Heat Stroke

Cats only pant or sweat through their foot pads in order to get rid of excess heat. As the body temperature rises, the cat will suffer heat exhaustion and eventually heat stroke. If the body temperature is not brought down quickly, serious organ damage or death could result.

Signs of heat stress include: restless behavior (trying to find a cool spot), panting, sweaty feet, drooling, excessive grooming in an effort to cool off, and body temperature is normal to slightly elevated.

These can lead to heat exhaustion: rapid pulse and breathing, redness of the tongue and mouth, vomiting, lethargy, stumbling, staggering gait, and a temperature over 105°F.

If the body temperature is not decreased, the cat will ultimately collapse, have seizures and slip into a coma. The cat's body will shut down.

If you find your cat unconscious in a hot environment, place a bag of ice or frozen veggies between his/her legs and against the belly, and take your cat to the veterinarian immediately.



## More Hot Weather Tips Inside!



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