## 5 Easy Steps for Humanely Deterring Cats

1. Talk to your neighbors. Determine whether the cat is a pet, stray, or feral, and if he has been neutered. If not, get it done!

2. Apply nontoxic deterrents around your yard.

3. Put a tight lid on your trash can.

4. Block gaps in the foundation of all sheds and outbuildings.

5. Use a car cover.

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# How to Live With Cats in Your Neighborhood

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## What is a Community Cat?

Community cats (also called feral cats) are members of the domestic cat species just like pet cats, but their home is outdoors. These cats are usually not socialized to people and are therefore not adoptable. Community cats typically live in groups called colonies, and form strong social bonds with other colony members. Cats like these have been living outside among us for over 10,000 years.

Please remember: community cats **do not** belong in animal shelters. Because these cats are usually not adoptable, virtually 100% of them are killed in shelters. Instead, they should be neutered, vaccinated, and returned to their outdoor home.

### Trap-Neuter-Return

Trap-Neuter-Return is the only humane and effective way to stabilize community cat populations. Cats are humanely trapped and taken to a veterinary clinic, where they are neutered and vaccinated. If the cats or kittens are socialized, they are placed into loving homes. If not, they are returned to where they were trapped, and often provided continuing care by volunteer caregivers.

Trap-Neuter-Return works. No more kittens are born, cats' lives and health are improved, and the population stabilizes and falls over time. Mating behaviors like yowling and fighting also stop, which means happier cats *and* people.

### The Vacuum Effect

Animal control's traditional approach to community cats—catch and kill—won't keep an area free of cats for long. Methods like catch and kill or "relocating" cats are not just inhumane, they're ineffective. Once the cats are removed from a territory, other cats move in to take advantage of the newly available resources and breed, forming a new colony. This phenomenon is known as the vacuum effect, and is documented in a variety of animals throughout the world. Catch and kill is an endless and costly cycle.

### So, you're seeing cats in your yard...

Like all animals, community cats settle where shelter and food are available. That means their territory is often close to people. We understand that not everyone enjoys having cats in their yards. The simple tips in this brochure will help you keep outdoor cats away from certain areas without hurting them. If you want the cats to stick around, this brochure also has ideas to make areas more attractive to cats.

Alongside Trap-Neuter-Return and regular colony care, these quick steps will help you peacefully coexist with your neighborhood cats!

Because feral cats are not socialized and not adoptable, they do not belong in animal pounds or shelters, where virtually 100% of them are killed. Instead, they should be neutered, vaccinated, and returned to their outdoor home.

# Easy Solutions to Cat Behaviors

## Cats are getting into my trash.

**EXPLANATION**: Cats are scavengers and are looking for food.

**QUICK SOLUTIONS:**

- **Place a tight lid on your trash can.** Exposed trash bags will attract wildlife as well.

- **See if neighbors are feeding the cats.** If they are, make sure they are doing so on a regular schedule.

- **Start feeding the cats yourself if you find no regular feeder**—at a set time, during daylight hours, in an out-of-the-way place. Feeding cats regularly and in reasonable quantities, will help ensure they don't get hungry enough to turn to trash. A good amount of food can be eaten in less than 30 minutes.

## There are cat paw prints on my car.

**EXPLANATION**: Cats like to perch on high ground.

**QUICK SOLUTIONS:**

- **Gradually move cats' shelters and feeding stations away** to discourage cats from climbing on cars.

- **Purchase a car cover.**

- **Use deterrents** listed in the next section.

## Cats are digging in my garden.

**EXPLANATION**: It is a cat's natural instinct to dig in soft or loose soil, moss, mulch, or sand.

**QUICK SOLUTIONS:**

- **Scatter fresh orange and lemon peels or spray with citrus scented fragrances.** Coffee grounds, vinegar, pipe tobacco, or oil of lavender, lemongrass, citronella, or eucalyptus also deter cats.

- **Plant the herb rue** to repel cats, or sprinkle dried rue over the garden.

- **Use plastic carpet runners** spike-side up, covered lightly in soil. They can be found at local hardware or office supply stores. Or, set chicken wire firmly into the dirt with sharp edges rolled under.

- **Arrange branches in a lattice-type pattern, or put wooden or plastic lattice fencing over soil.** You can disguise these by planting flowers and seeds in the openings. You can also try embedding wooden chopsticks, pinecones, or sticks into the dirt about eight inches apart, with the tops exposed.

- **Get Cat Scat™**, a nonchemical cat and wildlife repellent consisting of plastic mats that are cut into smaller pieces and pressed into the soil. Each mat has flexible plastic spikes that are harmless to cats and other animals, but discourage digging. Available at www.gardeners.com.

- **Cover exposed ground in flower beds** with large, attractive river rocks to prevent cats from digging. They have the added benefit of deterring weeds.

- **Establish a litter box** by tilling the soil or placing sand in an out-of-the-way spot in your yard. Keep it clean and free of deposits.

## Cats are lounging in my yard or on my porch.

**EXPLANATION**: Cats are territorial and will remain close to their food source.

**QUICK SOLUTIONS:**

- **Apply cat repellent fragrances** around the edges of yards, the tops of fences, and on any favorite digging areas or plants. See the "Cats are digging in my garden" section for a list of cat-repellent fragrances.

- **Install an ultrasonic animal repellent** or a motion-activated water sprinkler, such as CatStop™ or the ScareCrow™. Available at www.contech-inc.com.

## Cats are sleeping under my porch or in my shed.

**EXPLANATION**: The cats are looking for a dry, warm shelter away from the elements.

**QUICK SOLUTIONS:**

- **Physically block or seal the area the cats are entering with chicken wire or lattice** once you are certain the cats are not inside. Be sure to search for kittens before confirming that the cats have left—especially during spring and summer, also known as kitten season.

- **Provide a shelter**. Or, if the cats have a caregiver, ask the caregiver to provide shelters. Shelters should be placed in secluded areas and hidden to keep cats safe and away from populated areas. Find tips to build or buy shelters at **alleycat.org/ShelterGallery**.

## Feeding the cats attracts insects and wildlife.

**EXPLANATION**: Cats are to be fed under proper guidelines. Leaving food out can attract other animals.

**QUICK SOLUTIONS:**

- **Keep the feeding area neat** and free of leftover food and trash.

- **Feed cats at the same designated time each day**, during daylight hours. They should be given only enough food for them to finish in one sitting. All remaining food should be removed after 30 minutes. If another person is feeding, ask them to follow these guidelines too. For more colony care guidelines, visit **alleycat.org/ColonyCare**.

## Cats are yowling, fighting, spraying, roaming, and having kittens.

**EXPLANATION**: These are mating behaviors. They will continue unless the cats are spayed or neutered.

**QUICK SOLUTIONS:**

- **Trap-Neuter-Return stops mating behaviors.** Neutered male cats no longer fight, spray, or roam. Spayed female cats stop yowling and having kittens. After spay/neuter, hormones leave their system and the behaviors usually stop entirely within three weeks.

- **To combat the urine smell, spray the area** thoroughly with white vinegar or products that use natural enzymes to combat the smell, like Nature's Miracle®, Fizzion Pet Stain & Odor Remover, or Simple Solution®. These are available at most pet supply stores.

- **Find local resources and help at alleycat.org**. To have a list of local feral cat experts—Feral Friends—in your area emailed to you, use our request form at **alleycat.org/Response**.