



INTRODUCING YOUR WORKING CATS TO THEIR NEW HOME

Thank you for helping to save lives by providing a home for our working cats! To help your cats' transition to their new home please follow these important tips and don't hesitate to contact our Working Cat Coordinator if you have any questions!

First Step: Confinement

For your new cats to learn that your property is their new home, they need to be kept in a confined area for a minimum of two weeks when they first arrive. A full four week confinement period is highly recommended. If released too soon, the cats are unlikely to stay on the property.

If confined in a barn, shed, tack room, or other structure, ensure the doors close securely and search the space thoroughly for possible escape routes i.e. windows, vents, loose floorboards etc. that need to be secured before introducing the cats to the area. Most semi-feral and feral cats will attempt to escape through the smallest of spaces. *Remember*, the cats will need to be kept *securely* in this space for 2-4 weeks while they adjust to their new home.

A litter box will need to be provided during the confinement period and will need to be cleaned daily. Fresh dry food and water will also need to be provided daily during and continuing after the confinement period.

Feeding your working cats canned food nightly during the confinement period will help establish a routine you can use after the confinement period is over to draw them back to their living structure and keep them safe from nocturnal predators such as owls, coyotes, and raccoons. If you use a key phrase such as "Here kitty, kitty" when offering the wet food, it will give the cats a cue to come in at night once they leave confinement. *Teaching the cats this cue will also help you locate them if medical attention becomes necessary.*

If confined in a structure, the confinement area should be fully set up with food, water, and litter box before releasing your working cats into the area. Once you arrive home, enter the structure and securely close the doors. When ready, open the kennel doors and leave the room to give them time to settle in, return in the morning for feeding and cleaning.

To reduce stress, establish a regular schedule for feeding and cleaning during the confinement period. If fed and cleaned at random times the cats may never feel secure in their new environment.

- ❖ **If you are unable to secure your working cats in a structure, see the reverse side of this handout for crate confinement information.**

Continued Care:

After the confinement period, you can allow the cats to explore their new home. Ideally you should release the cats during daylight hours, with clear weather so they can explore their new environment in comfort (**an exception should be made for truly feral cats who do best when released after dusk**). Try to keep loud noises like barking dogs and playful children to a minimum during the first day/night of exploration.

Consider setting up "safe houses" on your property to give your cats extra places to hide if threatened and unable to return to their housing structure. Google "DIY Feral Shelters" for ideas and tutorials.

Remember: Caring for your working cats is as easy as providing fresh food and water daily in their barn, shed, etc. Some working cat caregivers keep litter pans inside the cats living structure, but often they are rarely used.

Never rely on outdoor cats to sustain themselves on rodents alone, if forced to hunt for their food the cats will likely leave the property to find a more sustainable location.

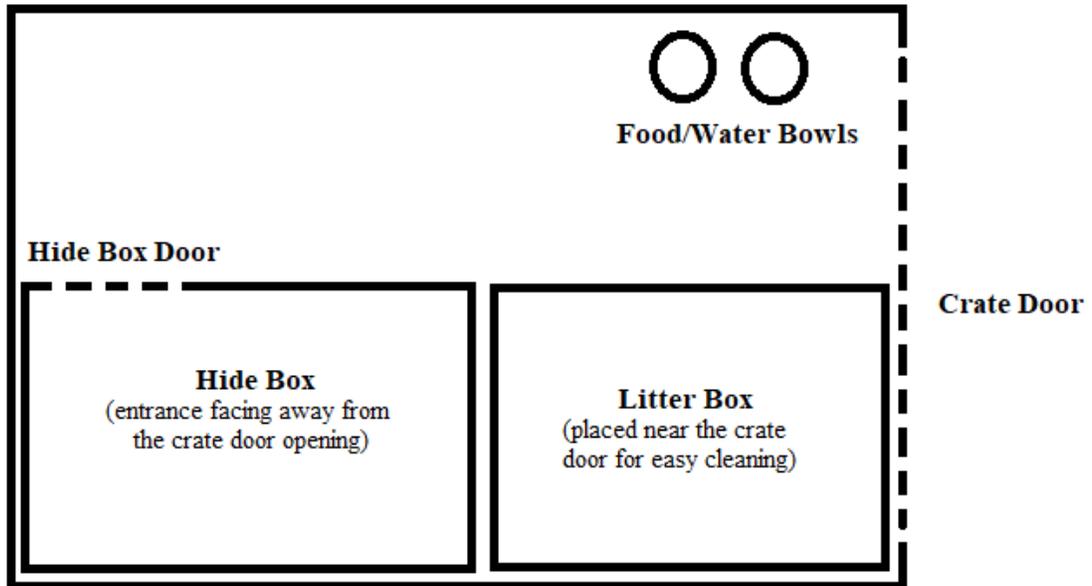
A well-fed working cat is a great hunter!

(Over)

Crate Confinement

If you are unable to secure your new working cats in a structure on your property during the 2-4 week confinement period, you're not out of luck! Using a large hard-sided crate kept in the structure the cat(s) will later inhabit can also do the trick with the right setup.

Here is an example of a basic confinement crate setup:



Hide Box

Your new working cats will need a place in their crate where they can retreat and feel safe while you clean their litter box and refresh their food and water bowls. The opening of the hide box should face the side of the crate, not towards the crate door. Consider covering the entrance of the hide box with a piece of cardboard, a piece of wood, or a towel to keep the cat secured in the box while you clean the crate, some truly feral cats may become aggressive when they feel cornered.

Litter Box

Place the litter box near the crate door so you have easy access for cleaning.

Food and Water Bowls

Bowls should also be placed near the entrance for easy filling and cleaning.

Newspaper

Consider lining the crate with newspaper so it can be easily cleaned if there is a spill. If the newspaper is soiled and requires a more thorough cleaning, consider covering the entrance of the hide box with cardboard, a piece of wood, or a towel while changing the newspaper so your movements outside the box don't cause undue stress for the cat.

Adopting Two (or more) Working Cats?

Since your new cats may not be familiar with each other, you will need to use one crate per cat. Set the crates a few feet apart inside the structure that is intended to be their permanent living space after release, each week move the crates closer together. Ideally by the time the confinement period is over, the crates will be a few inches apart with no hissing or growling.

Once the Confinement Period is Over:

See "Continued Care" on the reverse side of this sheet for addition information about the end of the confinement period. Keep the crate door propped open with supplies available for a week after confinement is over. After the week, remove the crate but keep food/water bowls in the same location. Each day slowly move food and water bowls towards the desired permanent location.