



OSCatR Fostering FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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INTRODUCTION – GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT OSCATR

Ottawa Stray Cat Rescue (OSCatR) was established in 2011 and earned charitable status in February 2014 (registered Canadian Charity No. 83641 4573 RR0001). OSCatR is a no-kill volunteer-run cat rescue based in Ottawa, Ontario.

OSCatR does not have a shelter or central facility; all cats are housed in loving foster homes which allows the cats more freedom to be cats. This structure also helps maximize the use of funds and donations.

OSCatR is a closed admission rescue, only taking in stray, abandoned and feral cats. In 2015, OSCatR successfully adopted out 536 cats. Furthermore, our Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) program brought in and fully vetted 118 cats. Some of those cats were returned to their colonies while others were placed into our Feral Cat Relocation program. Of the 118 cats, 7 were found to be friendly and were either adopted or are awaiting adoption.

The organization is made up of a three-member board of executives, and approximately 15 coordinators. The coordinators specialize in different areas including: Intake, TNR, Foster, Adoption, Outdoor Relocation, Fundraising, Events, Sponsorship, Crafting, and Donations. There is also an ever growing group of dedicated volunteers and foster homes.

How many cats do we have in care? This number changes all the time. It depends on the time of year. It can range from 50 to 200. Kitten season increases our numbers, as some litters can be 4-8 kittens with an adult mom.

How many volunteers do you have? Our team of active volunteers fluctuates throughout the year. That being said all our volunteers give generously of their time and efforts and are the backbone of this rescue. Without our amazing volunteers, our impact would not be near as great.

Fostering

1. What do I need to become a Foster Parent?

A quiet room to isolate the cat/kitten for about 10 days. This isolation period allows for the parasitic treatment medications to take effect. It also allows time to determine the general health of the cat and treat for any illnesses before, if applicable, your own pets are exposed to the foster cat. Foster parents also provide food (excepting veterinary food), litter, toys, treats etc. The only exception to this is if the foster cat has been in care with another fosterer for this 10 day period.

2. Who pays for the Medical and Veterinary Care?

Ottawa Stray Cat Rescue pays for all the medical care for the cats under our care through our veterinarian's clinic. OSCatR will not cover the cost of medical care incurred without our prior consent.

3. Who pays for food, litter, etc.?

We sometimes receive donations of food, litter, toys, litter boxes, cat trees, etc. When we can, we will provide these to our fosterers. The rest of the time you are responsible for supplying all food and litter.

4. How long will the Foster Cat be in my home?

It's hard to know how long it will take to find an adopter for a specific cat. Some cats get adopted very quickly while others take much longer. We work closely with you to match you up to a cat in our care that best meets your experience, and time commitment.

5. Can I adopt my Foster Cat?

Yes! OSCatR has a long history of "foster fails". However, we discourage fostering as a means to "shop around" for the perfect cat; if you are fairly sure you wish to adopt, we can suggest cats that we think would thrive in your home environment, helping ensure a long, happy union. If you do decide to adopt your foster cat, let the



Adoptions Coordinator know as soon as possible. Once a foster cat is posted for adoption, the choice to adopt is no longer available.

6. *When will my Foster Cat be ready for Adoption?*

You know the behavior of your foster cat best because of the time you have spent with your foster. We rely on your feedback to help determine if your foster is ready to be adopted.

If your foster cat has been inside for a minimum of 10 days (completed quarantine), seen a vet and had their first set of shots/dewormer/flea medication (along with a negative fecal test for kittens 12 weeks and under, along with older kittens if it is determined that a fecal test should be done due to irregular stools) - and received a clean bill of health - then they are ready for adoption. Please note that kittens must weigh at least 700 grams before they can receive their first vaccine/be adopted.

Additionally, you should also be looking at their behavior and comfort with their indoor life. Behavior to look for:

- Do they let you touch them when they eat?
- Do they headbutt looking for attention?
- Are they comfortable in their environment?
- Are they playful, alone, with you or the other cats in the home?

If you have a concern or question about if or when your cat is available for adoption, please contact our foster or Adoptions Coordinator.

7. *What is the protocol for vaccinations and fecal testing?*

Before a kitten can be adopted (8 weeks – 12 weeks of age), they MUST have a fecal test done, and the first in a series of vaccines/dewormer/flea medication administered.

Before a cat (over 12 weeks of age) can be adopted, they must have the first in a series of vaccines/dewormer/flea medication administered.

Vaccine Protocol		
important: DO NOT let more than 5 weeks lapse between vaccine appointments or the series will have to be restarted.		
Kittens (7 weeks - 6 months old) ** kittens must be at least 700 grams to be vaccinated	2 x FVRCP, 1 x FVRCP/Rabies, Panacur (deworming) at first visit, then Milbemax at subsequent visits, Revolution (fleas)	3-4 week intervals (starting at 7 weeks old) (Rabies not given until 16 weeks old)
6 weeks old	3 x FVRCP, 1 x FVRCP/Rabies	Get a 4th booster
Adult Cats (social) – 1 year +	1 x FVRCP, 1 x FVRCP/Rabies	3-4 week intervals
Adult Cats (scared/semi-feral/feral)	1 x FVRCP/Rabies	
If vaccinated before 7 weeks old	3 x FVRCP, 1 x FVRCP/Rabies	Get a 4th booster
Positive Fecal Test		
Fecal positive for Roundworm (dewormer given at each vaccine appointment treats Roundworm)	Panacur for 3 days. Milbemax on every subsequent visit (for kittens when receiving each vaccine). If high worm burden, Milbemax every 2 weeks. No quarantine necessary. Panacur (aka fenbendazole) treats roundworm, hookworm, tapeworm, bladder worm, lungworm, and migrating larvae, and giardia,	
Fecal positive for Coccidia	Panacur, or Fenbendazole for 5 days, then fecal retest 5-7 days later. Clean out entire litterbox and wash it out after day 1 of treatment and on day 3 for best results. Wash hands thoroughly each time you come in to contact with cat/litter box. Contagious so should be quarantined unless all cats are being treated.	
Fecal positive for Giardia	Baycox for 3 days, then fecal retest 5-7 days later. Clean out entire litterbox and wash it out after day 1 of treatment and on day 3 for best results. Wash hands thoroughly each time you come in to contact with cat/litter box. Contagious so should be quarantined unless all cats are being treated.	



Adoption

1. *What is the adoption process?*

Adoption interest form is submitted to the Adoptions Coordinator via the website www.helpcats.ca

- If all looks good, the Adoptions Coordinator will put the potential adopter in touch with the foster parent who has the cat(s) they are interested in.
- Fosterer emails the potential adopter, copying in rescue@oscatr.ca to set up a time to meet the cat.
- After the visit takes place, the fosterer lets the Adoptions Coordinator know how the visit went, and voices any concerns they may have. If the adoption is approved by all parties, the Adoption Contract is emailed for electronic signature.
- The adopter makes arrangements directly with the foster parent for an agreed pick up time, keeping the Adoptions Coordinator updated.
- The adoption fee should be paid via eTransfer. We do accept cash if the adopter does not do electronic banking.

2. *What are the Adoption Fees?*

Kittens:	\$200
Adult Cats (over 6 months old):	\$165
Special Needs or Senior Cats (10+ years):	\$100

*There is a 10% discount when adopting more than 1 cat/kitten.

3. *What is included in the Adoption Fee?*

The fee includes a veterinary exam, first set of shots (second and/or third if in care longer), deworming, spay or neuter and microchip. The adopter will be responsible for the second and third set of shots if they haven't been administered yet.

In the case of kittens or unaltered adults, the adopter will be responsible for taking said cat to one of our veterinary partners (see list at the end of this document) when it is time to be spayed/neutered/microchipped. Kittens should have their sterilization surgery around 5-6 months of age. The list is also included in the adoption contract they will receive.

4. *How long will we hold a cat/kitten once they decide to adopt?*

When a potential adopter asks about how long we will hold a cat/kitten for them, please refer their question to the Adoptions Coordinator at rescue@oscatr.ca.

At times, we have held cats/kittens for longer than 1 week, but we ask for the full adoption fee in advance and we also ask the adopter to supply food and litter to the foster. Should there be vetting required during that hold, it is the adopter's responsibility.

The longer we hold adopted cats, the longer other strays have to wait on the street to come in. Please let the Adoptions Coordinator know if you have any questions or concerns about this policy.

5. *Do we test for FIV/FelV?*

Short answer to this question is no, we do not test. Why? The test is not perfect. There are many false positives. Many cats can be exposed to FIV/FelV and not develop the disease, but because of this exposure they will still test positive. A re-check a few months later will often come back negative. If the potential adopter would like to have these tests done prior to finalizing the adoption, that can be arranged, as long as they agree to pay the associated costs.



6. *What if I don't think a Potential Adopter's Home would be the best suited for my Foster Cat?*
As the foster parent, you know the cat best. If you have any concerns about the potential adopter, please let the Adoptions Coordinator know asap.



Barn Program/Feral Cat Relocation Program

1. What is the Barn Program/Feral Cat Relocation Program all about?

Feral Cat Relocation Program (FCRP): Cats are relocated to carefully monitored outdoor homes. Cats in the FCRP are adopted out in groups of at least two. Adopters must provide the cats with a suitable outdoor home such as a barn, shed, or garage. Although the cats will likely hunt rodents, food and water must be provided daily. The adoption fee is waived for cats adopted through the FCRP. If you have questions or would like to adopt outdoor cats through the Feral Cat Relocation Program, please email rescue@oscatr.ca.

Colonies

1. How many colonies do we have?

In 2015: OSCatR volunteers supported about 50 caretakers and colonies. 118 community cats received health care and 111 were released back into their communities, 7 were found to be friendly and have since been adopted or are awaiting adoption. The TNR program helps these communities by providing food, shelter, site assessments, equipment, training, advice and transportation.

2. How big is a colony?

Colonies vary in size, from three to over 100 cats. Most colonies are comprised of about 30 cats.

3. What happens to colony cats when you TNR them?

All of the cats which we released back into their communities are sterilized, vaccinated (including 3-year rabies vaccine), microchipped, and receive emergency medication and dental work, if needed.

When colony cats cannot be returned to their outdoor homes due to unsafe conditions such as: traffic on a busy road, construction, demolition of their shelter, or predators in the area, we enter them into our Feral Cat Relocation Program (FCRP).

Following TNR, when possible, we return to catch cats that have become friendly (which was the case for at least seven cats in 2015) or those needing relocation from unsafe conditions.

4. What is the purpose of your TNR Program?

The main purpose of the TNR program is to control the population of stray and community cats in our area. Simply providing intake and adoption does not solve the problem. Some community cats will never be suitable for adoption, no matter how much human interaction they have. Neutering helps control populations that could easily become unmanageable and the medical assistance provided helps cats lead healthier lives.

5. Where are the OSCatR Colonies location?

We have colonies from all over, including: Arnprior, Kemptville, Embrun, Gatineau, Stittsville, Kanata, Carp, Downtown, East End Ottawa.

6. What happens if a cat in a colony is sick or injured?

We do what we can, but it would depend on the injury. These are wild cats and many get injured often. Having to re-trap them and then sedate/anesthetize them to evaluate is far more stressful and harmful to the cat than just allowing an abscess to rupture, drain and heal naturally. Same for lacerations and other injuries. Also, treating a community cat can be problematic and dangerous for personnel. Sadly, due to manpower and budgetary constraints we cannot go trapping every community cat that presents with an injury.



TNR (Trap, Neuter, Release)

1. *What is a feral cat?*

Feral cats are outdoor, free-roaming cats who have never been socialized with humans and are living in a “wild” state. This could be a formerly domestic cat who has been abandoned when very young or a cat who has been born on the streets and has never had any contact or interaction with humans.

Feral cats look like regular domestic housecats, but because they have never been socialized, they are very fearful and distrustful of humans. Some arch their backs and hiss and show aggression; others avoid eye contact and just run. True feral cats cannot be picked up or handled. Very often, you can’t even get close to them without weeks or months of building trust by feeding them. Think of them like foxes, but less suited to living completely unassisted in the “wild”.

2. *What is a stray cat?*

Stray cats are former pets who have either been abandoned or have “strayed” from home and become lost. Stray cats are generally tame and can be handled. These cats used to be cared for by an owner, but are now homeless and trying to survive on their own on the streets. Stray cats can be handled and pet, although they still may be skittish or frightened and run away from people. Generally, stray cats are friendly and exhibit similar temperaments as pet cats. Stray cats can and should be rescued off the streets and adopted into loving homes.

3. *What is TNR*

TNR stands for Trap-Neuter-Release. TNR is a community-based program. It involves concerned citizens, like you, trapping feral, free-roaming cats in your neighborhood, bringing them to a clinic or program to get them spayed or neutered, and then returning the cats to the exact spot where you trapped them. This is so they can live out the rest of their natural lives as comfortable as possible. TNR also includes ongoing care and management of feral cats.

4. *Why does TNR work?*

Spaying and neutering the cats will end the cycle of homeless kittens being born so the population stabilizes and, over time it reduces naturally. Once the cats are fixed, the problematic behaviors of howling, cat fighting and spraying also subside. Trap-Neuter-Release is the only humane way to effectively reduce the feral cat population, so that people and cats can peacefully co-exist.

5. *Can't I just keep the cats and remove them to a farm?*

Trap and remove does not work. Cats are there in the environment because of two main reasons:

- There is a food source (intended or not), and/or
- There is some sort of shelter.

When cats are removed from a location, it creates a “vacuum” effect — meaning the surrounding cats breed rapidly to fill in the gap, plus new cats move in to take advantage of the natural food and shelter. This vacuum effect is well documented. Trapping and removing cats often results in having even more unsterilized cats than when you started. Also, the cats who are displaced to another location often have difficulty finding food, shelter and water, and may try to return to the original location.

6. *If I take the cats to the shelter can't the shelter find homes for them?*

Most shelters are a death sentence for community cats, as feral cats are deemed unadoptable and are euthanized. Very young kittens may be rehabilitated by the shelter, but this is not a guarantee and the stress of being separated from their mother as such as a young age can be medically devastating for them.

7. *I feel bad for the community cat. Can I just keep it as a pet?*

Feral or “wild” cats are not pets. Community cats already have a home, the outdoors. Community cats are very fearful and distrustful of humans and therefore are un-adoptable. If you want a pet, please adopt a tame cat



from a shelter, as they all desperately need homes. We have worked with some resident feral cats who cannot be returned to the outdoors for various reasons, and these cats are seldom seen by their humans and may spend most of their time in ductwork and other hiding spots, coming out to eat and use the litter box only when the humans are away or asleep. This can persist for years and is quite stressful.

Community kittens can often be adopted into homes, but only if they are socialized at an early age. Generally, kittens up to around 12 weeks of age can be tamed relatively easily. However, the older the kittens get, the harder it is to tame them and the less overall progress they will make. Whether you can tame them or not also depends on the temperament of the kitten; some are gentler and friendlier than others.

Stray cats, however, can be taken into homes as pets. Remember, stray cats used to be someone's pet and were either abandoned or they "strayed" from home and became lost. These are cats used to being in homes and are struggling even harder than feral cats (who are more accustomed to street life) to survive on the street. Tame, friendly stray cats can and should be picked up off the street and adopted into homes again as quickly as possible.

8. What happens if I just ignore the cats?

If you ignore the cats, they will continue to breed. Rapidly and prolifically. Cats can start having litters when they're only five months old. They can have three to four litters a year, usually consisting of five to six kittens per litter (although several may not survive). If you just ignore the situation, in a short time you can easily go from three or four cats to dozens. Trap-Neuter-Return is the only humane, effective solution to control the homeless cat population.

9. What is an ear-tip? Why do you need to ear-tip a feral cat?

Ear-tipping is the universal symbol to identify that an outdoor or free-roaming cat has been fixed. This involves clipping off, or "tipping" the upper one centimeter of the cat's right ear so that it's straight across, instead of coming up into a point. This is done while the cat is under anesthesia, it is painless for the cat, and it does not significantly alter the appearance or beauty of the cat. Since community cats are wild, you cannot get close enough to them or pick them up to tell if they have been fixed, so the ear-tip allows you to see this at a distance. It is a sign to your neighbors, other trappers and caregivers in the area, veterinarians and vet clinics, and even to Animal Control that the cat has been fixed, preventing unnecessary euthanasia.

10. I have a homeless cat in my neighborhood that I would like to get fixed. Where do I start?

Before you can utilize our program, we first require an application. Once we receive your application the TNR Coordinator will email you usually within 72 hours to get you started. They can loan you humane traps, and other equipment as needed. They will also provide you with important humane trapping and aftercare instructions that you'll need to read and be familiar with prior to trapping.

11. I want to get my own pet cat fixed, but I can't afford to. Can you help me?

Our mandate is to help stray and community cats, to this end owned cats are not eligible for any of our services. The city of Ottawa has a spay/neuter clinic that offers services at a reduced rate for owned cats, and vet clinics located outside of the city are often less expensive. Please visit the City of Ottawa's website for more information.

12. What if the cat is pregnant?

It is safe to spay a cat even if she is pregnant. The pregnancy will be humanely aborted. While later term pregnancies pose a slightly higher surgical risk, our veterinarians are highly experienced, and it is safe to spay your cat at any point during the pregnancy. If a cat is too far along to fix, our vet will make that determination. Another option is to hold the feral mother in one of our temporary feral safe housing until the kittens are 5-6 weeks and then spay and release the mother while socializing the kittens and finding them homes.



13. This female cat just had kittens. When should I get her spayed?

Please try to wait until the kittens are five weeks old before you trap and bring in the mom (and kittens if at all possible). Kittens under five weeks need their mom since they have to nurse every couple of hours. They also require their mom to be able to keep warm, since they can't hold in body heat on their own yet. They also need mom to help them go to the bathroom, because they don't know to go to the bathroom on their own (mom has to lick them to stimulate them to go). At about five weeks or older, the kittens can survive for a longer period of time without their mom, as they are eating and going to the bathroom on their own by that age. We do highly recommend trying to trap the kittens along with the mother at this stage so that they can be socialized and rehomed.

14. Can I start trapping during the winter?

Our TNR program does not operate in the winter because the cats become stressed from the TNR and are shaved for surgery making it more difficult for them to keep warm. However, cats do not breed much in the winter (they are too busy trying to stay alive), so it is best to wait for spring. The best thing you can do for community cats in the winter is to help keep them alive by providing dry kibble, fresh water (heated dog bowls are a great way to provide liquid water even in the coldest weather) and shelter.



What Veterinarian(s) can I take my foster cat(s) to for vaccines, spay/neuter or if they are ill?

You can go to one of the following Animal Hospitals. If your cat is not well, please reach out to the Foster Coordinator (rescue@foster.ca) or any other Coordinators within the rescue. If the foster is in distress and you cannot reach anyone, please go to Animal Emergency and Specialty Hospital (see below).



Veterinarian Partners				
Animal Hospital	Address	City	Phone #	Hours
Algonquin Animal Hospital	1945 Baseline Rd.	Ottawa	613-224-5701	Monday: 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Tuesday: 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Wednesday: 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Thursday: 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Saturday: 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Sunday: Closed
Chapman Mills Animal Hospital	3050 Woodroffe Ave.	Nepean (Barrhaven)	613-843-1334	Monday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Tuesday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Wednesday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Thursday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Saturday: 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Sunday: Closed
Embrun Veterinary Hospital	651 Notre-Dame	Embrun	613-443-5459	Monday: 7:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Tuesday: 7:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Wednesday: 7:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Thursday: 7:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Saturday: 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Sunday: Closed
Fisher Glen Animal Hospital	6-1896 Prince of Wales Dr.	Ottawa	613-228-7008	Monday: 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Tuesday: 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Wednesday: 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Thursday: 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Saturday: Closed Sunday: Closed
Nepean Animal Hospital	250 Greenbank Rd.	Nepean	613-829-0220	Monday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Tuesday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Wednesday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Thursday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Saturday: 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Sunday: Closed
Animal Emerg. & Specialty Hos.	1155 Lola Street	Ottawa	613-745-0123	24 x 7 – emergencies only (not for vaccines/spay/neuter/ microchipping)