



The Uninvited Cat



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**



How to Deal with Unwelcome Cats on Your Property

WHETHER OR NOT YOU HAVE cats yourself, odds are that people in your neighborhood do. And odds are that at least a few of these cats venture into your yard from time to time. Whether you're a bird lover, a cat lover, or both (or neither!), here's advice from The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) to keep your premises feline-free—and help those cats at the same time.

STEP 1

Figure Out What Category of Cat(s) You're Dealing With

Different types of cats require different approaches. All cats who come onto your property are by definition “free roaming.” But as you may already know, not all free-roaming cats are the same. The cat who “visits” you may be:

- AN OWNED CAT (your neighbor's) who is allowed outdoors unsupervised—probably the most common scenario in suburban neighborhoods
- AN OWNED CAT who has become lost
- A PREVIOUSLY OWNED CAT who has been abandoned and no longer has a home
- A “NEIGHBORHOOD” CAT, one fed by several residents in the area but truly cared for by none of them
- A FERAL CAT—an unsocialized (almost wild) cat who may be one or more generations removed from a home environment and may subsist in a colony of similar cats

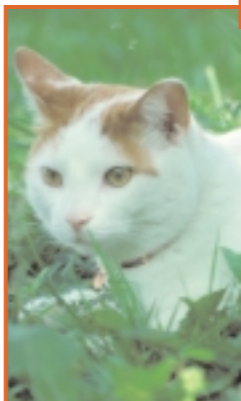
Your approach to preventing unwelcome feline visitors depends on the category of cat(s) you are dealing with.



STEP 2

Learn the Laws

It's also important to know which state and local laws protect both you and the cats who come calling. Laws about cats vary quite a bit from state to state and community to community. For example, your city or county may require that cats be registered with it and/or always wear a collar and identification. Or it may be illegal for a cat who is unsterilized (one who hasn't been spayed or neutered) to roam outdoors in your community. In many cases, unwelcome cats are covered under your community's nuisance abatement ordinance.



It's usually easy to find out about laws in your area by contacting your local animal shelter, humane society, or animal control agency.

STEP 3

Take Action

After you've identified the category of cat(s) you're dealing with and learned more about your local laws, follow these recommendations:

If the cat is owned by a neighbor but allowed outside, then ...

... your best approach is one that seeks to persuade that neighbor to keep his cat indoors or otherwise safely confined. To succeed at this, the key is to avoid being combative and to build a good relationship with your neighbor.

Gather information to pass to your neighbor about the many benefits to cats if they are kept indoors or only allowed outdoors when supervised. Include tips on how to keep cats happy as indoor pets. (All the information your neighbor needs can be found in two HSUS publications, *A Safe Cat Is a Happy Cat* and *Cat Care Basics*. You can order both together for \$3*, postage paid. See the order box.)



Speak with your neighbor about your concerns, whether you are bothered by his cat killing birds at your feeder or using your garden as a litter box or

about the cat's own safety. Give him your materials, and let him know of companies that sell outdoor cat enclosures; a list can be found in *Cat Care Basics*.

Make your neighbor aware of the laws that address owned cats in your area—but be sure not to threaten him with action.

It may take some time, and several conversations, for your neighbor to act. Be sure to follow up with him and try to be as constructive as possible. If your efforts fail, and you have relevant laws

in your community, contact your local animal control agency or humane society staff and ask that they contact your neighbor about his cat. Sometimes a friendly call or visit from an animal control officer is just the thing to get your neighbor's attention.

If the cat has appeared recently and you think she might be lost or abandoned, then ...

... contact your local animal shelter to check whether a “lost pet” report has been filed for a cat matching the description of the one in your neighborhood. She may be lost and frightened, and her family may be worried sick about her. Your call may be the one to reunite them. You may also want to post “found cat” signs in your neighborhood.

If you are able to catch the cat, you can:

- Take her to your local animal shelter, which will try to find the cat's owner. If the shelter's staff are unable to reunite the cat with her caregiver, they may put the cat up for adoption to a loving home.
- Call local veterinarians to see if one is willing to temporarily house the cat. Some veterinary



clinics will also try to adopt out homeless cats if their original owners cannot be found.

● Bring the cat into your home while you try to locate the owner. *Note: Be sure to keep the stray cat isolated from any animals living in your home until she has been given a clean bill of health by your veterinarian.*

If the cat is feral and living with other cats in a feral cat colony, then ...

... first try to find out if someone is “managing” the colony. This would be someone who feeds the cats, has them sterilized, and monitors their health. You can find this person by posting signs or, in some cases, by checking with your local animal shelter or animal control agency. If you locate the feral cat colony caretaker, notify her of your concerns as a resident of the area.

Unfortunately, some people attract large numbers of feral and stray cats by putting out food daily because they feel sorry for the cats. But these individuals take no other responsibility

for the cats’ care or safety and do nothing to try to stop their continued breeding.

The resulting colony can cause problems for the cats, other animals, and people.



If there is no apparent caretaker, then call your local animal control agency or humane society staff and explain the situation. They will advise you of what, if anything, they are able to do. If you are able and willing to take responsibility for the cat colony yourself, please contact The HSUS for additional information. We can provide you with information on everything from humanely trapping cats to managing feral cat colonies.



Two Essential Resources for Cat Owners

CATS ARE better off when their owners have the information they need to care for them safely.

Our *A Safe Cat Is a Happy Cat* brochure (PM2276, 60 cents each*) gives the facts about keeping cats safe and happy—indoors.



Our *Cat Care Basics* booklet (PM2137, \$1.99 each*) covers adoption, health care, nutrition, and more—and gives tips for keeping indoor cats safe yet stimulated.



Order both for \$3*, postage paid. To order, send a check or money order payable to

The HSUS
2100 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037

Please specify the quantity of each.

*Residents of these states should add applicable sales tax: CA (7.25%), CT (6%), DC (5.75%), FL (6%), IL (6.25%), MD (5%), OH (5%).

Generous support for the Safe Cats campaign was provided by The Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust, a KeyBank Trust, and the Frances V. R. Seebe Trust.

Six Steps to Keeping Cats Out of the Birdhouse

Here are short-term steps to discourage cats from making your home *their* home.

- 1 Move bird feeders and suet away from trees and bushes. Keep feeders close to the house if possible.
- 2 Clean spilled seed from under feeders daily.
- 3 Avoid scattering any food such as nuts or berries on the ground.
- 4 If necessary, stop feeding the birds until the problem is resolved; they will not starve and will eventually return when you put seed out again.
- 5 Try commercial repellents on areas of the yard frequented by cats. They can be found at pet supply and gardening stores.
- 6 Use “aversive” conditioning, such as water sprinklers activated by motion. If you are home when the cat pays a visit, scare her with loud noises or move quickly toward her and clap your hands.





The goal of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) Safe Cats™ campaign is to keep cats safe and happy by ensuring that they are protected in safe homes. This campaign provides cat caregivers with information on creating feline-friendly homes and offers caregivers and public officials information on the consequences of—and the solutions to—letting owned cats roam unsupervised outdoors. For more information about the campaign, visit www.hsus.org/safecats.

**Promoting the
protection of
all animals**

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2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037
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