

HOW YOU CAN REHAB / SOCIALIZE LOST, ABANDONED OR FERAL CATS

Most people are overwhelmed by the idea that they can help a lost, abandoned or feral cat/kitten by themselves. Well, you're not alone! Cat Tail Acres Sanctuary is here to advise you! It is not difficult as long as you are determined and have patience.

The first thing you need to consider is that your rescued cat/kitten's life has taken drastic turn. He/she is in foreign territory and does not understand what is happening. Socializing a cat that has lived all or a majority of it's life outside is going to take time and must be done on the cat's timeline, not yours. Over time the kitty will learn to trust you at their natural pace but this could take time – days, weeks or months.

Step 1 – Vetting

Can you answer yes to all of these questions?

1. Has the cat seen a vet?
2. Has the cat been spayed/neutered?
3. Has it had it's vaccines and been tested for FELV and FIV (cats older than 6 months)?

If you answered no to any of these questions, please make an appointment with your vet and take care of these important first steps especially if you have your own cats.



Step 2 – Setting Up a Safe Space

We recommend setting up a safe space in a spare room or basement but some may feel more comfortable with their garage or an outdoor area such as a shed. Whichever space you decide, make sure it's safe – no chemicals or items that the cat could ingest; no sharp edges, well ventilated and some space for the cat to move about. For those outdoor spaces, ensure the cat has access to outdoor cat housing (see our recommended cat shelters [here](#)) and outdoor cat fencing would be recommended as well. The space should also include at least two litter boxes since many feral cats are used to eliminating in different spots. All in all, the space should be a calming “sanctuary” for the kitty.



Here's an example of how one of our CTAS Volunteers cat-proofed a spare bedroom so she could bring a feral indoors and work at socializing it for our adoption program. She used plastic to protect her carpets and wood closets and included a spot for the cat to view out the window along with access to a litterbox, food and water. It's not difficult – just takes some time and patience.

Read [PIPER'S JOURNEY](#) about how one of our volunteers tamed a feral cat in her basement.



Step 3 – Setting the Routine

Creating and maintaining a daily routine of caring for your scared kitty will help them relax and start to adjust to their new surroundings.

- Do everything you can at the same time each day, but split up the visits if you can so they becomes accustomed to your presence and hearing your voice.
- Scoop litter boxes at the same times every day.
- Provide food at the same times every day.
- Clean and refill the water dish at the same time every day.

Step 4 – Don't

- Don't stare them directly in the eyes. While you are cleaning and feeding remember that some cats view gazing directly at another's eyes as a sign of aggression so don't look them directly in the eyes. Instead look at their forehead or over the top of their head. Eyes are very strong communicators and to a cat, closed eyes are a sign of trust. Long, slow blinks, or simply "looking" at them with your eyes closed all communicate that you mean them no harm.
- Don't try to snuggle, pet or grab, especially cats that aren't kittens. They will need time to realize you are not there to harm them. When it seems they could be ready, touch them with a closed hand which will mimic the size/shape of a cats head. It will seem less threatening than that of an open palm.

Step 5 – DO

- Spend time in their space. Take a book into their safe space daily, sit down and read aloud, but in a calming voice so they get used to you being in their space.
- Leave an item of your clothing in their space .. Something you've worn (the sweatier the better). This will allow them to become accustomed to your scent.

Step 6 - What to Expect

For those cats that were previously socialized that became lost or abandoned, rehabbing and re-socializing should take no time at all. However, rehabbing a cat/kitten that has not previously been socialized will take some time. There will be many baby steps along the way and some major breakthroughs. Young kittens will take no time to "turn to the human side". Older kittens could take weeks. Young adult cats could take weeks/month but the key is to remember to let them set the pace. Don't try to rush things ... they will come round eventually and once you have socialized the feral cat or re-socialized a lost/abandoned cat, Cat Tail Acres Sanctuary will take them for you and put them into one of our volunteer's adoption programs!

