

Who Is A Feral Cat?

Homeless cats who are afraid of humans and cannot be easily approached or handled are referred to as "feral." Feral cats have generally had little or no human contact, causing them to develop a natural fear of humans. Not all homeless cats are feral; some may be strays who are lost or have been recently abandoned by humans.

The only difference between a housecat and a feral is that the latter has a strong fear of humans. Ferals are erroneously labeled as "wild cats." A bobcat is a wild cat; a feral cat is a homeless domestic cat.

Feral cats exist due to the public's failure to adopt, spay/neuter, and its reluctance to make a lifetime commitment to cats in their care. Killing the victims of such negligence should not be a consideration. For decades, the public has been apathetic regarding the plight of homeless animals. It is time to take responsibility for the tragedy we have created.

Traditional, agency-run attempts to trap and kill cats have historically resulted in greater numbers -- and greater suffering for that reason alone -- of feral cats, than have well-planned systems to trap, neuter, and return cats. TNR, in conjunction with public education and low-cost spay/neuter clinics, stabilizes numbers and facilitates the eventual elimination of colonies of homeless cats.

Our goal is to end the homeless cat crisis. Feral cat caregivers have been directly responsible for the prevention of hundreds of thousands of cats. We are actively working to address the root of the problem.

We acknowledge that the safest place for cats is indoors; however, because of the overpopulation crisis, there simply aren't enough sanctuaries or available homes to house the tens of millions of feral cats estimated to be living in the United States alone. The only humane and effective way to control the feral cat population and give the cats a chance at healthier lives is through TNR and managed colonies where food, water, shelter, and medical care are consistently provided.

The public can choose to rely on unethical, ineffective trap and kill attempts, or we can work toward our goal by implementing an organized, proven-effective, cost-efficient method of population control. We have made our choice. We hope you will join us.

<http://www.theanimalspirit.com/feralcatnetwork.html>

Low Cost or Free Spay - Neuter Programs in the United States

Below are programs that provide low cost or free spay/neuter for cats, **listed by state**. Some programs serve pets of people with low incomes. Some do not consider income but serve only pet cats -- or only feral (unowned) cats. Other programs serve all kinds of people and cats. We believe the listing details below are correct at this time. Please contact the program to be sure.

If you know about other low cost or free spay/neuter programs or if you have updates to our listings, please [contact us by clicking here](#).

If you don't find a service listed for your area, don't give up. First, call the offices of Spay/USA and of Feral Friends for Animals (see [Nationwide](#) below). They have information about discount spay/neuter services in many parts of the country.

You can probably find other spay/neuter services -- maybe some with lower prices -- by phoning local humane societies or rescue groups (even groups in nearby towns). Usually such groups keep informed of spay/neuter services. If you have rescued a cat or you caretaker ferals, ask local vet clinics whether they offer some kind of good discount.

Prices can vary widely even in the same city. Also, when discussing prices, be sure to ask whether there are other charges or fees in addition to the price of the spay/neuter. For example, sometimes a clinic will require that a cat have a rabies vaccination if he has not already had one. (Rabies vaccinations are required by law in many areas.)

About vaccinations. Based on recent research about vaccine safety, effectiveness, and duration of effectiveness, veterinarians are not giving as many vaccinations as in the past. (Rabies vaccinations, however, are required in many localities). Decisions about vaccinations should be based on current knowledge about vaccines and the cat's lifestyle, and health status. For the latest recommendations about what vaccinations to give and when, see the American Association of Feline Practitioners' [Vaccination Guidelines](#) and related info at the [the Winona site](#).

Doesn't everyone get their cats spayed and neutered? No. There are millions of healthy cats and kittens in U.S. animal shelters because of unaltered cats and not enough homes for their offspring. So many people don't know this, or they don't recognize this is related to themselves or their cats.

People put off spay/neuter due to issues of money, transportation, or time. Some people believe it's more important for the cat to mate "just this once" -- or they think a female cat's pregnancy and kittens will be sweet or educational for human children. Also, some people don't know that:

Cats can start mating as early as six months

Even indoor-only house cats often find ways to get outdoors when the sexual urge hits them. Whether for good (due to panic, accidents, or enemies) or they return home, kittens are the result.

An unaltered male cat can father hundreds of kittens a year.

Statistically speaking, even if a person finds good homes for a litter of kittens, some of the kittens will produce litters of kittens.

Spaying a female before her first heat protects her from risks of uterine, ovarian, and mammary cancer. Spaying also protects her from the stresses of pregnancy.

Spaying reduces her frantic interest in the outdoors and reduces the chances that she'll wander far.

Spaying reduces the chances she'll mark your home with urine when she's in heat.

Unaltered cats have urges that make them irritable and anxious. They yowl or whine frequently, fight and/or destroy objects in the house.

Neutering a male reduces his risk from numerous health problems.

Neutering lowers his urge to roam and to fight, and thus lowers chances of disease transmission and w

Neutering also reduces his tendency to spray in the home.

And neutering eliminates the powerful odor of adult male cat urine.

Help stop the suffering -- Spread the word in your neighborhood You can help cats and people by creating flyers in your neighborhood about low cost or free spay/neuter services. Design an attractive flyer highlighting the benefits of spay/neuter plus the names and phone numbers of local services. Post the flyers in supermarkets and other public places where flyers are accepted. Distribute flyers to households in your neighborhood, especially those with unaltered pets.

Early-age spay/neuter Some people delay spay/neuter for their pet because they've heard the animal must be spayed or neutered at six months or older. Although many older veterinarians were taught that, a number of studies show that cats spayed or neutered as young as eight weeks have no problems later in life due to early-age spay/neuter. Plus, young kittens benefit more from the procedures than older kittens or cats. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) strongly encourages early-age spay and neuter.

Due to traditions in some vet schools, some veterinarians are not familiar with the procedure or have no experience performing the surgery on younger kittens. Also, the procedure requires the safer and more expensive inhalant anesthetics such as isoflurane.

See the Alley Cat Allies fact sheet about the benefits of [early-age spay/neuter](#). For veterinarians and others interested in starting with spay/neuter programs, the American Humane Association (Englewood, CO 800-227-4645 or 303-733-7300) offers a 30-page brochure and accompanying video for \$14 about early-age spay/neuter, titled "The Case for Early-Age Spay/Neuter" by veterinarians Alicia Faggella, Patricia Olson, and Mark Bloomberg, which has been endorsed by the American Veterinary Medical Association, among others.

Veterinarian W. Marvin Mackie produced a video on early-age spay/neuter procedures. To learn more about early-age spay/neuter, if you are a veterinarian wishing to discuss it, write Dr. Mackie at 450 Arcadia Drive, San Pedro, CA 90732.

Low cost or free spay/neuter programs

MISSOURI

Operation SPOT - Stop Pet Overpopulation Today
St. Louis, MO
314-995-8678

Spay Neuter Clinic of the Ozarks Springfield MO and other Missouri and Kansas locations. 417-875-6555 Web: www.snco.org Low cost s/n for feral and stray animals as well as for pets of low income people.

Central Missouri Humane Society 616 Big Bear Blvd Columbia, MO 573-443-3893
Low cost spay/neuter for qualified low income.

Dogwood Animal Shelter Low Cost Spay/Neuter Clinic Camdenton MO 573-346-2929

Noahs Ark Veterinary Clinic Salem, MO 573-729-0294

People for Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) MO 816-252-2680

STOPP (Stop the Over Population of Pets) MO 816-313-7729

Arrowhead Veterinary Clinic Kansas City MO 816-353-0689

Spay and Neuter Kansas City Kansas City MO 816-353-0940

Low Cost Spay & Neuter Inc MO 816-765-5401

Humane Society of Greater Kansas City Kansas City, KS 913-596-1000

ILLINOIS...Low cost or free spay/neuter info and programs:

PrairieLand Anticruelty Champaign IL Quincy Humane Society Quincy IL 1422

Knox County Humane Society 1855 Windish Drive Galesburg, IL 61401 1275 www.misslink.net/kchs Discount certificates for s/n at participating veterinarians.

Better Pets Clinic Moline IL 309-764-5489 Low cost s/n for western Illinois and Iowa area.

Quad City Animal Welfare Center 724 West 2nd Avenue Milan, IL 61264 314-244-3333
Serving surrounding areas in Iowa and Illinois, Davenport, Bettendorf, Rock Island, Moline, etc. Low costs for spay/neuter, tests, and vaccinations.

Alley Cat Allies Chicago area workshops www.alleycat.org/chicago

Anti-Cruelty Society 147 West Grand Avenue Chicago, IL 60610 312-644-4444
Information and for requirements to set up an appointment for low cost s/n.

Bethalto Spay Clinic Bethalto, IL 618-377-2420

Humane Society of Southern Illinois Murphyboro/Carbondale area IL 618-337-3333
Once a month, they sell a limited number of vouchers for \$35 each (at this writing \$25) which the purchaser takes to a participating veterinarian for spay/neuter at no additional cost.

ARF (Animal Rescue Fountain Inc) Glen Ellyn IL 630-469-4121

Homes for Endangered & Lost Pets PO Box 972 St. Charles, IL 60174 630-381-1111
Information about services in the area.

Illinois Citizens Animal Welfare League 10305 Southwest Highway Chicago 60415 708-636-8586 Pets and ferals. Call for information and appointment.

Animal Welfare League (2 locations) 6224 South Wabash Ave Chicago, IL 60637 667-0088 Pets and ferals. Call for information and appointment.

South Suburban Humane Society 1103 West End Avenue Chicago Heights 60411 708-755-7387 Call for information regarding participating veterinarians, and other services.

Felines, Inc. PO Box 60616 Chicago, IL 60660 773-465-4132

PAWS Chicago Lurie Family Spay/Neuter clinic 3516 West 26th Street Chicago IL 60623 773-521-7729 Call for appointment. Low cost spay/neuter and low cost tests, Frontline, and Heartgard.

PAWS Tinley Park IL 815-464-7298 Ask about participating veterinarians. Orland Park Country Club Hills.

Humane Society of Winnebago County Rockford IL 815-749-1400

Kankakee County Humane Society Kankakee, IL 815-933-5999 Low cost spay/neuter for all pets.

Winnebago County Animal Services Rockford, IL 815-877-3073 Low cost spay/neuter for qualified low income.

Stop the Overpopulation of Pets, Inc. PO Box 1103 Dundee, IL 60118 847-321-1103
Provides discount certificates for s/n to be used at a participating vet clinic.

River Woods Pet Clinic Lincolnshire, IL 847-634-0022 In cooperation with local humane organizations, low cost s/n for pets and feral cats as well as early spay/neuter of kittens as 2 pounds and as young as 8 weeks.

C.A.R.E. PO Box 1964 Evanston, IL 60204 847-705-2653 carepet@aol.com

Lake County Animal Protection Northern Illinois locations 847-740-3977

If you know about other low cost or free spay/neuter programs or if you have updates to these listings, please [tell us](#).

NATIONWIDE

Friends of Animals 777 Post Road, Suite 205 Darien, CT 06820 800-321-656-1522 Friends of Animals provides discount certificates for spaying and neutering.

send you an order form and a directory of participating veterinarians nationwide. You can take the form to the Humane Society of Animals for a certificate which you then take to the vet. Veterinarians are invited to participate. For more information about participating.

Spay/USA 2261 Broadbridge Ave Stratford, CT 06614 800-248-SPAY 2

Call Spay/USA to get the names, phone numbers, and prices of services that have been approved. They provide lower cost spay/neutering for cats and dogs in your local area. Private veterinarians, humane societies, community programs, and special clinics participate nationwide. If your area needs more spay/neuter services, request Spay/USA's packet of materials to distribute to local organizations. www.spayusa.org