



## Nuisance Prevention Tips for Feral (Wild/ Stray) Cats



Feral (wild) cats, like raccoons and possums, have become part of our urban landscape. These cats and their offspring are the victims of abandonment, accidental loss and failure by owners to sterilize their pets. Human dwellings provide wild animals/unowned cats with three things they need to survive: shelter, food and water. To overcome daily challenges to their survival, they have learned to adapt and live in close proximity to human beings.

Conflicts may occur when areas on your property (decks, crawl spaces, sheds, etc.) are not properly sealed/protected or when normal food sources or shelter are scarce, as during the winter. If an animal is damaging your property, seeking shelter or scavenging in your trash, you can take care of the problem yourself with the goal of preventing the problem from reoccurring rather than killing the animal. While removal/killing of the animal seems like the solution, it only offers a quick fix and a vacancy for another animal in search of a ready-made home. Humane methods of conflict prevention are less costly and more palatable to the community at large. Trap-Neuter-Return coupled with colony management and nuisance prevention techniques offer long-term solutions to feral (wild) cat nuisance behavior.

Nuisance/ Complaint	Understanding the Behavior	The Solution
Cats are using my garden/yard as a litter box or digging in my flowerbed.	A cat's natural instinct is to eliminate in soft, loose soil-like mulch, sand or peat moss.	To keep a cat out of your garden: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Place irregular shaped rocks or pinecones set firmly into the dirt.</li> <li>2. Chicken wire can be firmly set into the dirt (sharp edges rolled under).</li> <li>3. Heavy plastic carpet runner (pointed side up).</li> <li>4. Spray cat repellent available at pet supply stores on typical digging areas or plants.</li> <li>5. Reppers (repellent grains similar to moth balls but designed to deter cats and dogs) is available at PetSmart and most local pet stores.</li> <li>6. Scatter fresh orange and lemon peels or spray with citrus-scented fragrances. Coffee grounds and pipe tobacco also deter cats.</li> <li>7. Plant the herb rue to repel cats or sprinkle dried rue over the garden.</li> </ol>
Cats are sleeping under my house, shed, deck or in the car motor.	The cat is seeking a warm, dry shelter from the elements. They will use abandoned buildings and cars, brushpiles, culverts and other places that provide cover and protection.	To deter cat from your area, physically block or seal the location the cat is entering like the deck, shed or under a mobile home with chicken wire or lattice.
The cats are getting into my trash.	The cats are hungry and looking for food. They are opportunistic scavengers and will feed on rodents, insects, moles or trash, etc., if no regular food source is available.	To deter cats from your property, trash should be properly covered and secured or you will attract raccoons and possums in addition to cats.

Nuisance/ Complaint	Understanding the Behavior	The Solution
Cats are everywhere. Fighting, spraying, yowling, roaming, sick and injured, continuing to have kittens.	These are "mating behaviors" displayed by cats that have not been spayed or neutered. Cats left to breed unchecked or without proper care can become a nuisance.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Report the people that abandon their cats.</li> <li>2. Is the cat unowned or is he/she the neighbor's owned cat causing the nuisance?</li> <li>3. Humanely trap and sterilize the cats with Trap-Neuter Return (TNR). This is the single most effective way to eliminate nuisance behaviors. It stops the breeding and offers a long-term solution. Contact PAWS at 717-957-8122, Box 3 or <a href="http://www.pawsofpa.org">www.pawsofpa.org</a> for assistance starting TNR.</li> </ol>

**Cat Stop Automatic Outdoor Cat Deterrent – Excludes cats from areas they are not welcome.** When cats come within range, Cat Stop emits a loud burst of ultra-sonic sound that startles the cats and teaches them to stay away. Safe for other animals. Operates for up to six months on a single 9-volt battery and protects approximately 290 sq. ft. Place in your garden or mount on a wall or carport ceiling. Order at [www.scatmat.com](http://www.scatmat.com) or call 1-800-767-8658.

Myths and Misconceptions	Facts	Explanation
The cats pose a threat to our children.	Feral cats are naturally wary of people and will not approach humans they do not know. Feral cats will not attack unless they are cornered or threatened.	Parents and caregivers should teach their children to not approach or touch ANY unknown animal. Children should ask an adult or caregiver for help if they think an animal may be trapped, sick or injured or if they find a baby animal.
Feral cats are diseased and spread rabies.	This is a common misconception. Studies show that feral cats and owned cats share similar health status.	TNR protects the public. Vaccinating, sterilizing and treating cats for fleas and returning healthy cats to managed colonies is the best way to protect the public as it creates a barrier between humans and wildlife.
The cats will go away if you stop feeding them.	By not feeding the cats, you will actually create a greater nuisance since cats will be forced to rely on scavenging and foraging for food.	Cats with no regular food source will encroach closer to your property and there will be an increase in chance encounters with people as they are driven by starvation. Feeding the cats on a regular feeding schedule is the first step in colony management and will allow for humane trapping and sterilization of the cats. Feeding stations can be placed in areas away from people to reduce chance encounters.

**Be Advised:** If you choose to trap cats, there are specific trapping and care and treatment protocols you must follow. Bear in mind that most if not all feral cats taken to shelters are euthanized. Feral cats are not socialized to humans and are not candidates for adoption. Trap and removal methods are very costly to any township, city, borough and its taxpayers. For instance, in 2004, it cost the City of Harrisburg (taxpayers) over \$130.00 for every cat that was picked up. Today's costs have increased to over \$200 for each cat that is picked up. This is very expensive for a short-term solution.

**Please call PAWS at 717-957-8122, Box 3 to seek a long-term, non-lethal solution.**

*We would like to acknowledge Indyferal.org's Nuisance Prevention Tips fact sheet and Alley Cat Allies, upon which we based this information.*