



## Caretaker Meeting Notes

September 28, 2008  
Mundelein High School

### WINTER CARE

#### **Housing**

- Straw is best type of bedding for shelters
- Avoid carpet and towels as they do not dry out and are a haven for fleas
- Avoid hay as it does not insulate well and it could become a food source for rodents
- Change the bedding every year to remove any fleas that are living there.
- A rubber door flap can help keep out drafts.
- Heating pads can be purchased from Grayslake Feed, PetSmart (maybe), Doctors Foster and Smith catalog ([www.DrsFosterSmith.com](http://www.DrsFosterSmith.com)), (800) 826-7206
- Heated water dishes
- PVC can be used to cover cord to heating pad and/or water dish
- Garage door modifications so cats can get into garage
- Cat door into garage or access under deck
- A dog igloo can be modified with Reflectix insulation and a small board to reduce the size of the door opening.
- Reflectix silver bubble insulation reflects body heat back into cat shelter. It can be attached with staple gun or strong glue to inside of shelter. Available at Menards.
- Check [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org) for shelters to give away

#### **How do I get the cats to use the shelter I provided?**

- If one location does not work, try moving shelter to another spot
- Put some food in or near shelter to increase interest but remove food at night so opossum and raccoon are not attracted to it.
- Too much of your time and attention to the shelter may make it less desirable to the cats so try staying away from shelter.

### HEALTH CARE

#### **Fleas**

- "Program" by Novartis Animal Health is available online through Pet Meds, liquid form that can be put in a small amount of stinky, soft food. Effects last a month. This product has no effect on adult fleas, but controls flea population by breaking the life cycle. Check out [www.novartisah.com](http://www.novartisah.com) for more information.

#### **Worms**

- One caretaker buys worm control medication from her Vet in liver flavor (based on weight of the cat), rolls it in crushed cat treats to make it more appealing. The product is Praziquan chew. These were formulated by Petranek's Pharmacy in Libertyville.
- See your vet for other ideas and the prescription

- Discussed over-the-counter worm control but no verifiable resource given
- Per discussion with Spay and Stay's operating vets, most/all cats living outdoors will get tape, roundworms etc. if they eat rodents. Most healthy cats will live with worms without serious consequences. Elderly, sick or young cats will be most affected by worms.
- UPCO ([www.upco.com](http://www.upco.com)) has worm medicine to put into food or drinking water

#### **Antibiotics**

- Salmon or other flavor freeze dried treats (from Whole Foods or some pet stores) can hide some pills or use Pill Pockets. But watch your cat to make sure food is eaten.
- Crush pills and put into wet food if taste is not too strong

#### **Kitten socialization and adoption**

- Caretakers do as much socialization as possible but cannot always get to kittens to socialize in time for adoption.
- Some vets have been resource for placement of socialized kittens and friendly adults
- Homing cats to a new location takes time (4-6 weeks) and diligent effort. It sometimes works but cats have innate sense of home and will often travel many miles to return to original location.
- Some adult cats will become friendly after sterilization and become ready for indoor living.
- It is a difficult decision whether to keep, socialize or attempt to relocate cats.

#### **Gaining Community support**

- Trying to get others to do their parts can be difficult
- Make contacts through your neighborhood, organization, religious affiliation, business contacts
- Place door hangers in neighborhoods where cats are known or sighted
- Place door hangers in local library, grocery store, pet store, coffee shop, community center and vet's office
- Need at least one person in an identified neighborhood to get involved so TNR can take place.
- Several Spay and Stay caretakers volunteered that they would be willing to mentor another caretaker in their surrounding community to assist with TNR

#### **Raccoon problems**

- Take food in after dusk
- Use of lighting to discourage raccoons was suggested but others felt it was not a certain remedy.
- See website for raccoon-proof feeder
- Place food up high since cats can jump but raccoons have to climb.

#### **Parking lot-Ideas for which we don't have an answer today!**

- Make video on Mass Trapping available to access on Spay and Stay website
- Coyote concerns
- Can an interactive caretaker blog be created?
- Increasing involvement/outreach to children and youth
- Do you have a shelter that's not being used that another caretaker could try?



## Caretaker Meeting Notes February 7, 2009 Mundelein High School

### WINTER CARE

#### Shelter

- How do I get my cats to use the shelter provided?
  - Put catnip in the shelter
  - Warm the shelter with a heated mat-Grayslake Feed, Drs. Foster & Smith, e-Bay
  - Put in an escape door
  - If one location does not work, try moving shelter to another spot
  - Put some food in or near shelter to increase interest but remove food at night so opossum and raccoon are not attracted to it.
  - Too much of your time and attention to the shelter may make it less desirable to the cats so try staying away from shelter.
- Feralvilla.com was recommended for its easy to assembly two-level cat shelter
- If coyotes are a concern in your area, use a heavier shelter, not plastic bins so coyote cannot knock it over or destroy it trying to get to the cats
- Winterize with straw not hay for insulation purposes. Line inside of the shelter with Reflectix silver bubble insulation (available at Menards) installed with a staple or glue gun. It reflects body heat back into cat shelter.

#### Food & water

- How do I keep it from freezing?
  - Keep It Warm, a ceramic tile that is heated in the microwave and placed under outside food dish. It will keep food/water thawed for up to 45 minutes.
  - Blain's Farm & Fleet sells a heating element for water dish \$13 to \$18 plus S&H
  - Heated water bowl-Grayslake Feed, Drs. Foster & Smith and e-Bay
  - It was generally agreed that snow is not a substitute for fresh water for animals.

### THREATS TO COLONY FROM OTHER ANIMALS

- Skunks, raccoons and opossums are nocturnal animals and can be discouraged from using cat shelter by providing a light source in the shelter or near the shelter door.
- Removal of cat food after dusk or when cats are done eating at night will discourage other animals from hanging around.
- It is generally agreed that skunks, raccoons, and opossums are not a threat to mature cats but would harm young kittens. Trapping cats overnight is still discouraged as it would leave cats vulnerable to harm by intruders.
- The use of coyote urine (several internet sources) has been recommended to ward off raccoons and opossums but would probably also keep cats away.
- Skunks
  - Because of their potential to carry rabies, skunks should especially be discouraged from being around your house and cats.
- Raccoon
  - How high up does feeder need to be to be raccoon proof? No answer for this.
- Coyotes

- They do pose a threat to cats so be wary of coyotes that may be watching your cats at feeding time when they are most vulnerable.
- Threat is probably greater during winter when food sources are scarce.
- “Intruder Cat”
  - Try a separate feeding location to reduce fighting
  - Legal position on TNR of an owned free-roaming cat
    - If a cat is free roaming and does not have collar or tags, and owner cannot be located, it is up to the caretaker to decide whether to trap.
  - It is the caretaker’s discretion whether to notify neighbors about proposed trapping days or to contact the village, as there could be repercussions.
  - Look up village ordinances online to see whether there are leash laws for cats.

## TRAPPING THE ELUSIVE FELINE

- Drop trap
  - Helpful when trying to catch the last few cats of a colony
  - Borrow both a drop trap and box trap
  - This is a two person activity
  - Use heavy weight such as large ceramic flower pot or battery on plywood base of drop trap to secure drop trap
  - Placing it on grass will reduce likelihood of cat dragging it and getting its tail or toes pinched. Use extreme caution around kittens – do not use when kittens are in vicinity.
  - Cover the drop trap immediately with a large towel to calm the cat.
  - When transferring cat from drop trap to box trap, one person lifts door and other person holds box trap. Align drop trap door with escape door of box trap, and hold end of box trap with your foot.
  - Cover box trap with towel except far end so cat can see daylight
  - If cat does not readily run into box trap, you can slowly begin to remove cover on drop trap beginning at corner by anchor platform
  - If you would like to make a drop trap, ask the S&S office about borrowing one to use as a construction model.
- Box trap
  - Feed only inside trap with both ends open for 1 week prior to spay day.
  - You may camouflage it with leafy branches that don’t interfere with mechanism
  - If kittens are already caught, use them as “bait” for mother cat by covering the kittens’ trap except for one spot in the middle, putting that opening at right angle to mom’s trap so that must go into her trap to see the kittens.
  - Place trap in usual feeding location, along their usual path, or against buildings that provide cover
  - Some cats knock over trap so secure it along wall or between heavy items
  - Opinions vary as to best trapping food. Some say use exactly the same food every day, other like stinky cat or human foods to entice cats.
  - Once cat is caught, stop feeding soft food, use only dry food to reduce vomiting or diarrhea in trap or at spay day.
  - Place 8½” x 16” piece of cardboard over trip plate to ease in catching *kittens* and lighter weight cats
  - Feed *kittens* up to 4 months old normally the day before surgery (no fasting in evening) – morning of surgery, feed ½ normal ration including water, very early in morning before bringing to the clinic
  - *Kittens* can be neutered when they weigh 4 pounds and are in good health

## SOCIALIZATION OF KITTENS

- Ideally, for health reasons, leave baby kittens with mother until weaned and begin socialization process when they are beginning to eat solid food.
- Kittens older than 8 weeks are a bigger challenge.
- Baby food for humans, especially chicken, is very attractive to kittens and cats. Put a bit on your finger and dab on their nose if they do not trust you enough to eat it off your finger. They will begin to associate you with good food.
- Eye contact from the kitten is a good sign of trust.
- Do not be put off by hissing and scratching. They think you are a predator and will harm them. Put on gloves to hold them. Wrap in a warm towel if necessary.
- Play a radio in the room where the kittens are.
- Bring in other adults and children when the kittens have begun to trust you. They need to be comfortable with everyone to be adoptable.
- Very resistant kittens may need to be separated from their siblings so that they can begin to bond with humans.
- Drs. Foster & Smith sell a product called Feliway Comfort Zone Plug-In to calm cats in stressful situations
- Litter training
  - Remove other items from the room that they could confuse for a litter box such as potted plants, towels, pillows, newspaper, etc.
  - Kittens' natural instinct is to scratch and bury in loose substances so place kittens in litter box with clay litter (*non-clumping*) right after they eat.
  - Put some of their poop in the box to give them the idea.
  - Put the litter box in a place that they have chosen to go already, often a corner.
  - Kittens will share a litter box but sharing with other cats in the home should be put off until good litter habits are established by all.
  - Cat-Attract litter was suggested by a caretaker
  - Premium Choice litter from Grayslake Feed suggested by a caretaker
  - If cats are indoor-outdoor, litter box can also be placed on the deck.
  - Always have enough litter boxes to prevent stress or going outside of box.

## RESOURCES

- ❖ Blain's Farm & Fleet [www.farmandfleet.com](http://www.farmandfleet.com) Woodstock, Sycamore, Janesville
- ❖ Drs. Foster and Smith catalog [www.DrsFosterSmith.com](http://www.DrsFosterSmith.com) 800-826-7206
- ❖ Feral Villa cat shelter [www.feralvilla.com](http://www.feralvilla.com) \$59.95 plus S&H from Indiana
- ❖ Grayslake Feed @ Center and Seymour St. 847-223-4855 <http://grayslakefeed.com>
- ❖ Keep It Warm Hot Plate <http://www.asseenontvmegamall.com/keep-it-warm.html>
- ❖ Lectro kennel mat and many other heated mats and water bowls on e-Bay
- ❖ Alley Cat Allies [www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org)
- ❖ Spay USA [www.spayusa.org](http://www.spayusa.org)

### Help Needed

Clerical help at Grayslake Office  
 Caretaker Committee  
 Spring Garage Sale Committee  
 Help new caretakers trap cats

### Upcoming Spay Days

March 29 location TBD  
 April 26 location TBD

**Next Caretaker Meeting will be on a Wednesday evening in June.**



## Caretaker Meeting Notes

June 25, 2009

Mundelein High School

### Dr. Dave Luaces of Care Animal Hospital, Libertyville, answered caretakers' medical questions

#### **PREGNANT and NURSING CATS**

##### **Care**

- Pregnant and nursing cats could eat kitten chow to receive extra calcium
- Watch for female to go from round shape to thin to gauge an approximate time when kittens were born
- Typical weaning age (cessation of nursing) of kittens is 4-6 weeks
- Female cats can get pregnant as soon as kittens are weaned
- Some nursing moms will accept orphaned kittens from other litters

##### **Spaying**

- Mom cat can be spayed at any time after giving birth but if kittens are younger than 3 weeks they would need to be bottle fed every 3-4 hours around the clock while separated from mom for spaying
- Mom's milk will continue to be produced even after she is spayed
- Return nursing mothers to kittens 24 hours after surgery and confine her in smaller space due to anesthesia effects and incision

##### **Kittens**

- Kittens 4 weeks and older can be away from mom for 24 hours if they are active and eating soft food well
- Introduce canned food mixed with water or kitten milk replacer to form a gruel that kittens can eat
- Kittens are ready for adoption after they are fully weaned at about 6 weeks old
- Kittens can be sterilized at about 3 months depending on weight. Work with them early to begin socialization process.
- Cats do not recognize their offspring/mother after a time apart from each other

#### **PARASITES and TREATMENT**

- Ear mites and fleas
  - Revolution and Frontline are used to treat this. These products are veterinarian exclusive and should be bought from a vet. Manufacturer's warranty does not apply if these products are purchased through Pet Meds, Drs. Foster and Smith or other online pet supply companies even if prescription is sent.
  - If it is possible to do it safely, get a reasonable amount on the cat. There will be some loss but that is taken into account in dosage instructions.
- Heartworms
  - Few cats get heartworms and many can clear heartworms out of their system on their own.

- There is no need to test cats for heartworms before giving heartworm medication because
- Revolution kills heartworm babies, not adult heartworms.
- If a cat does have heartworms, there is no effective treatment as the treatment would kill the cat.
  - Sudden death in cats is often attributable to heartworms
  - Heartworms are infrequent in feral cats.
- Tapeworms
    - Droncit is given for tapeworms to all cats that come through a spay day
    - Profender is a good topical treatment for tapeworm but it is expensive
    - Tapeworms come from flea eggs that the cat ingests.
  - Ticks
    - Ticks are usually not an issue in cats though some cats get many and many cats get none. Ticks are seen very infrequently at the monthly spay days.
  - Dr. Luaces recommends “herd immunity” for parasite control which means giving parasite treatment to 5 cats one month and a different 5 cats the next month as the medication is effective for about a month. This will reduce expense and parasites.
  - Some veterinarians will not prescribe medication for cats they have not seen but feral cats can be difficult to bring in.
  - Dr. Luaces said that 70% of kittens that initially test positive for feline leukemia will clear it from their system on their own.

### **WOUNDS and INJURIES**

- Flesh wounds like abrasions will probably heal on their own
- Deep wounds and lacerations may form an abscess, cat will appear lethargic. Let the vet know where the cat’s wound is (body, legs, head) when discussing treatment
- Eye injuries (enlarged, absent, sunken, glued shut) are always considered an emergency by Dr. Luaces.
- Antibiotics
  - Liquid antibiotics can be hidden in food
  - How much is enough? The dosage takes into account that some of the medication will not make it into the cat.
  - Salmon or other flavor freeze dried treats (from Whole Foods or some pet stores) can hide some pills or use Pill Pockets. But watch your cat to make sure food is eaten.
  - Crush pills and put into wet food if taste is not too strong.

### **VETS and FERAL CATS**

- If you have a vet that does not see feral cats, you can ask about other vets in the practice who will.
- You probably won’t be able to change his/her mind and it may be a clinic policy to not treat feral cats.
- Feral cat health issues are not a topic taught in veterinary school. Some vets have a personal interest in this area and choose to include feral cats in their practice.
- Clinics may not treat feral cats due to exam difficulties, cost issues, staff concerns, etc.

**Question** about rabies revaccination of feral cat that have lived more than 3 years past spay date.

- There is ongoing research into a 7 year rabies vaccine but it is not ready yet.
- Raccoons are carriers of rabies and can bring rabies, leukemia and parasites to cats through water/food dish. The dish should be washed frequently with dish detergent and disinfected with bleach.

**Question** concerning color change from black tuxedo to fur with brown patched

- Vitamin deficiency possible but not likely if cat is eating average grocery store cat food.
- The aging process can change the cat's coat.
- Scratching at fleas could cause color change because different layers of the fur are exposed. A cat's undercoat may have different colors than the top layers.

**Question** about female cat that has never shown mating behaviors or brought kittens in and seems to be fat, not pregnant.

- She was probably spayed when she was young and got away or was dumped. No apparent need to cause stress by trapping her.

Elizabeth Fisher, Spay and Stay board member, spoke about need for caretakers to talk to their family and friends about what they do for their cats and how Spay and Stay helps them. She said that the \$25 that is charged for the sterilization only covers part of the cost of surgery and the expense to Spay and Stay is much greater. Donations of any type are appreciated.

Julie Wheeler is launching a Coin Can campaign to place 100 coin cans in Lake County businesses. The cans will be checked every 2-4 weeks by the responsible volunteer and emptied of the cash at least monthly. Julie Wheeler can be contacted at 847-624-8432 to get a can.

The S&S office in Grayslake would love some additional volunteers to help with light office work. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call Cynthia Deen at 847-289-4557.

The tentative date for the next Caretaker meeting is October 4 at Mundelein High School, 1350 W. Hawley St. Mundelein. E-mail Julie Wheeler at [wheeler.julie@comcast.net](mailto:wheeler.julie@comcast.net) with suggestions for topics.