Stray or feral cats

How to spot the difference

Have you found a homeless cat? Or is a cat visiting your home or garden regularly? Follow our guide to find out how to tell if an ownerless cat is stray or feral, and how best to help.

CATS
PROTECTION

Stray

Stray cats are socialised domestic cats who don't appear to have an owner. Sometimes a cat might stray too far and get lost, or they may not have a home to go back to.

May be friendly – if they're a little shy they often approach cautiously given time and encouragement.

Alone – will almost always be alone.

No ear tip – won't have their ear 'tipped', even if neutered.

Near houses – more likely to be found in people's gardens and trying to get into the house.

Microchipped – they could be microchipped if they are a missing cat.

Appeared recently – may have recently appeared, might look lost or disorientated.

Sound familiar?
For advice on what to do,
visit **cats.org.uk/straycat**

Feral

Feral cats are the same species of cat as our pet cats, but are not socialised to humans or the domestic environment. This means they behave like wild animals.

Not friendly – unsocialised to humans so find us naturally threatening. They can be hard to spot and very fearful.

Lives alone or with others – sometimes (not always) lives in a colony with other ferals.

Ear tip – may have their left ear 'tipped' to show they've been neutered and returned.

The cat on the front cover is a feral with their ear 'tipped'.

Away from houses – avoids human contact and often has a hiding spot away from populated areas.

Not microchipped – most feral cats are not microchipped.

Permanent – more likely to have set up a long-term, permanent home/shelter.

Sound familiar?
For advice on what to do,
visit **cats.org.uk/feralcat**

Still unsure if the cat is a stray or feral? Call our Information Helpline on 03000 12 12 12

If you find an injured cat, the quickest course of action is to take the cat to a vet, or to call the RSPCA, SSPCA or USPCA. Contact your local Cats Protection if you need help trapping an injured feral.

CATS PROTECTION