



## Ensuring a Harmonious Relationship with Our Neighborhood Feline Colonies

Feral and free-roaming cats can be a wonderful part of a community. However, challenges can arise when cats use your yard as a place to frolic. This can create stress for your own animals, unpleasant smells and sounds. Good news is that there are three sure-fire ways (with specific actions) to keep cats safely at a distance. These tactics include:

### ***1. Prevent***

### ***2. Block***

### ***3. Persuade***

Following the steps for the categories is easy and will keep cats at bay from the areas that you identify – humanely and effectively. It is a win for your home and the cats.

### ***1. Prevent***

- **Leverage their dislike for water.**

Use water sprinklers, or better yet, place motion-activated sprinklers in strategic spots where you'd like them to avoid. Every couple days, change the location a bit so the cats are not sure where to expect. You can also place open water bottles filled with water around the yard which could be accidentally tipped over. The more you can get them to associate your yard with getting wet, the better.

- **Use commercial repellants**

These solutions may be bringing out the big guns, but may be effective if you find a few cats who do not mind that water. The first is an application, typically made of synthesized or collected predator urine. Spreading this around the perimeter of your yard often does the trick, but make sure to check the ingredients to ensure it is safe for the cats, your pets and children. Another option is an ultrasound audio transmission device that humans and most other animals do not hear, but drives cats away. Be cognizant to not use this solution if you have pets or your nearby neighbor's do.

- **Plant repellants**

They may appear pleasant enough to you, but some decorative plants are deterrents for cats. An herb named rue is at the top of the list to have cats move out of your space. Other plant selections include citronella, lemongrass, eucalyptus and lavender.

- **Mulches – Not just used for gardening anymore!**

You can mulch the surface of your yard by adding components such as citrus peels, coffee grounds, tobacco and white vinegar to your mulch. Your garden will be happy and the cats will be at bay.

- **Remove food sources**

The cats might be coming around if you have easy-access trash, leave food out for your other pets or if you are hosting any mice. Also, if you identify that a neighbor might be feeding our feline friends, perhaps have a discussion about feedings at a safe location, times and amounts to identify overfeeding issues.

### ***2. Block***

- **Protect your ground cover and garden**

Use plastic carpet runners, spike-side up, covered lightly in soil. Or, set chicken wire or lattice firmly into the dirt. These methods won't injure the cats' paws, but is a great deterrent.

- **Decorate**

Decorative river rocks can prevent cats from digging and can add to the landscape. Your landscape can also be a deterrent if you plant thick shrubbery where a cat may consider digging. Place enough of these plants close together so that the cat finds it difficult to turn around or dig in the area.

- **Remove opportunities for introductions to your pet cat**

Keep your cats indoors to avoid interactions and drawing cats into your yard with their presence.

### ***3. Persuade***

- **Establish a place in your yard for cats to encourage them away from areas of the yard you use**  
If you make the cats' usual haunts less attractive, you might want to provide them with an out-of-the-way area in your yard to decrease the chances of them returning to the forbidden zones.
- **Plant catnip in the newly designated area**  
Allow the grass to grow significantly taller. The cats will love it.
- **Give them a high spot**  
Add a tall perch or two if there is not a tree, fence or other high spot available for the cat to survey its domain.
- **Establish a litter box**  
Till the soil or place sand in an out-of-the-way spot in your yard. Keep it clean and free of deposits.
- **Provide a shelter**  
This can be similar to a small doghouse. Shelters should be hidden to keep the cats safe, and placing them in secluded areas can help guide the cats away from unwanted areas.
- **Feeding considerations**  
If you are feeding the cats, keep the feeding area neat and free of leftover food and trash. This keeps the area free of odor and does not attract unwanted animals. Keep feedings at the same time each day (not night as this can encourage predators) with only enough food for them to finish in one sitting. All leftovers should be brought in after an hour. If another person is feeding, ask them to follow these guidelines too.
- **Note:** These steps are also great in minimizing the impact on the neighbors to reduce tension if you do decide to provide for a colony of cats.

### ***Other Thoughts and Actions to Consider***

#### **Remove the Existing Cat Smell**

To combat the urine smell, spray the area thoroughly with white vinegar or with products that use natural enzymes to combat the smell and typically available at your pet supply store.

#### **Trap and neuter stray cats in your neighborhood**

- This is an effective and humane way to stabilize feral cat populations. Cats are humanely trapped, taken to a vet and are neutered and vaccinated. Kittens and socialized cats can be adopted into homes. Healthy, adult feral cats are returned to their colony site where caring volunteers can continue to provide for them.
- It works! No more kittens. Their lives and health are improved, and the population stabilizes and declines over time. And, the behaviors and stresses associated with mating, such as yowling and fighting, stop. It also reduces their tendency to roam and keep them from unwanted areas.
- Please visit <http://www.longmontfriendsofcats.org/> for more information.

#### **“The Vacuum Effect” – It does NOT work**

An outdated approach to eliminating feral cats from an area—catch and kill—won't keep an area free of cats for long. Catch and kill is cruel, inhumane, and creates a vacuum. Once the cats are removed from a territory, other cats move in to take advantage of the newly available resources, aka the “vacuum”, and breed, forming a new colony. Catch and kill is an endless, cruel and costly cycle. And, with so many other kind and humane options available, it is not an effective solution.



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