STRAY, FERAL, OR COMMUNITY CAT?

DIFFERENT CATS - DIFFERENT NEEDS - EVERY CAT MATTERS
CAC COMMUNITY EDUCATION • PET PARENT SERIES

COMMUNITY CAT: A general term for unowned, free-roaming cats, including both stray and feral cats.

STRAY CAT: A cat previously socialized to people that is now living outdoors.

- May approach people or seek attention.
- May meow or appear comfortable nearby.
- Could be a lost or abandoned pet.
- Often can readjust to indoor living.

FERAL CAT: A cat with little or no positive human socialization.

- Typically avoids human interaction.
- May hide, flee, or become defensive.
- Often more comfortable living outdoors.
- May benefit from TNR and managed colony care.



WHY DOES THE DIFFERENCE MATTER?

Not every outdoor cat needs the same type of help!
Friendly strays may be lost pets who need to be reunited with their families or evaluated for adoption. Unsocialized feral cats may do better in a managed outdoor environment with TNR and ongoing caregiver support.
Understanding these differences helps us provide the right care.
The goal isn't to bring every cat indoors; it's to provide the right care for each cat.

REMEMBER!

A frightened stray may behave like a feral cat. Fear, illness, and unfamiliar surroundings can affect behavior.
Before assuming an outdoor cat is homeless, check for identification and contact a local rescue or TNR organization

REFERENCES & RESOURCES
ASPCA. A Closer Look at Community Cats. aspca.org
ASPCA. Position Statement on Community Cats. aspca.org

Educational disclaimer: General educational information only. This handout does not diagnose, treat, or prescribe for any animal and does not replace examination or individualized advice from a licensed veterinarian. Identification, licensing, collar, and travel requirements may vary by location and circumstance. CAC Community Education: General pet-parent education only. Not a substitute for individualized advice from a licensed veterinarian.