



Friends of Feral Felines

CAT'S TAIL

Winter 2006



Shelters for Feral Cats

By Michelle Nedopak, FFF Volunteer

Successful management of a feral cat colony entails not only spay/neuter of all the cats, but providing shelter as well. Even in milder climates, they are still in need of at least some protection from the elements. Elaborate shelters are not necessary. Costs will vary depending on



Simple wooden shelters can be built from plywood, with shingles protecting the roof

the materials used, and insulation always provides the most comfort for the cats, but a simple, inexpensive shelter is much better than no shelter at all. Plastic storage bins make durable shelters. The top should be securely taped closed, then the bin should be placed with the top facing the ground for extra stability. Lightweight shelters can be held down by a piece of wood or heavy rocks placed on top. Large green trash cans also provide shelters that hold up to outdoor use, but they must be stabilized to keep from rolling.

A large cardboard or wooden box can easily be made weather-proof to provide an inexpensive shelter. Heavy-duty garbage bags or other plastic can be taped around the box with duct tape to make the shelter waterproof.

Styrofoam coolers can also be turned into great shelters that provide insulation without any extra effort. Styrofoam will trap the cats' body heat and radiate it back to them, making cold days warm and comfortable for the cats. Local restaurants may have Styrofoam containers used to ship meat products that they can provide to caretakers.

Styrofoam can also be used to insulate any type of shelter.

For caretakers wishing to provide better shelters, wooden shelters can be built with materials readily available at hardware stores. Alley Cat Allies has building plans list-



Plastic or wooden shelters can be purchased pre-made from pet supply stores

ed on their website, www.alleycat.org, but caretakers may also build similar shelters based on their own designs. Roofing shingles on a slanted surface will allow water to drain off. Exterior paint can be used to make the shelter blend in with the environment or nearby buildings.



An open shelter gives cats a place to stay dry, but does not provide an area to get warm

Ready-made doghouses will provide durable and attractive shelters for those without the necessary building skills, or caretakers could try asking for help from friends and neighbors.

For homemade shelters, cut a small doorway near the corner of one of the longer sides. The opening should be a few inches off the ground to prevent water from leaking in. A plastic or canvas flap added over the entrance will help keep out wind and blowing rain. A piece of clear vinyl mat works well and should be securely attached to the shelter above the doorway opening. Some cats prefer two exits so that they are not trapped inside by other animals.



A small opening near the corner lets in less wind

If possible, shelters should be raised off the ground to make them warmer and more waterproof. Wooden pallets or bricks work well to elevate shelters.

Towels and blankets should not be used inside shelters because they retain moisture. Straw and hay are better insulators, and even shredded newspaper will work if changed regularly. Sheets of Mylar reflect body heat back to the cats and can also be used to line the floor. Water should never be placed inside shelters in case it spills. Food or catnip can be placed inside the shelter to attract the cats.

Cats are very resourceful and will often find places to take shelter, but they may not always be safe or suitable locations. Caretakers should provide them with some type of warm, dry refuge where they can escape the rain, wind, and cold. A basic shelter will go a long way toward keeping feral cats comfortable and healthy.

Letter From Ann Gross, Co-director of Friends of Feral Felines



Dear Friends,

A new year - a new beginning
- Welcome 2006!

We continue our TNR - Trap/Neuter-vaccinate/Return low-cost program for unowned feral cats in Charlotte and the surrounding areas in several ways:

- ◆ Monday thru Friday
Veterinary Network - low-cost spay/neuter/vaccination
- ◆ Six all volunteer low-cost Feral Angel Spay/Neuter Clinics in 2005
- ◆ Cooperative efforts with local non-profit rescue groups to help tame cats
- ◆ Good working relationship with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Control

New volunteers have joined our dedicated veteran volunteers in making non-lethal animal control of feral cats a reality for our community. We are so very grateful to each and every volunteer - our excellent and compassionate veterinarians, veterinary technicians, caretakers and our generous supporters. Each one has taken an important stand to humanely reduce the feral cat population, promote their health and well-being, and prevent the birth of thousands of homeless kittens. We hope that 2006 will be a banner year for our growth.

On a different note, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal

Control calls us when a cat with a left clipped ear is trapped and sent to them. The animals are held for 72 hours and treated with kindness and humane care. Caretakers should call 704-336-8007 to get information and reclaim their animals to return them to their colonies; however, it is important to find out who trapped the cats and to find out what the problem was. Hopefully, peaceful relations can be restored - a middle ground that each can live with. The Alley Cat article, "Community Benefits of Feral Cats," which can be accessed by www.alleycat.org, is very helpful.

In December, our volunteers greatly helped our fundraising efforts at Barnes & Noble holiday book wraps at South Park, Arboretum and Birkdale Village. We are very grateful for their fine efforts. The cat show at the Piedmont Kennel Club and the holiday mailing also helped add to our funds. Our treasury is low, but we will continue to subsidize spay/neuter as long as we are able.

Thank you for your continued support and generosity. Together, we go forward, and we welcome your ideas and suggestions. Please call our hotline (704-348-1578) and come to our meetings at Morrison Regional Library (next one is Tuesday, April 4th at 6:30 pm) so we may grow together in 2006.



Feral Update

Since 1998, 3,850 cats sterilized and vaccinated



Volunteer Spotlight: Cindy Henderson

"...Hi Ann, this is Cindy Henderson. Are there any appointments open for Monday?"

"...Hi Beverly, this is Cindy Henderson. Are there any appointments open for Tuesday?"

"...Hi Lisa, this is Cindy Henderson. Are any slots open for the next clinic?"

Lately, this is typical conversation for Cindy! So many cats, so little time.

Cindy lives in Charlotte with her husband and son, who is a student at Virginia Tech. Her work with FFF began in 2001, when she saw a group of kittens in the parking lot after coming out of a convenience store. Since then, she spends lots of time feeding, trapping and recovering many cats all over Charlotte. In addition, Cindy helps other caretakers by feeding their colonies when they go out of town or on vacation. She helps with our annual holiday book wraps at Barnes & Noble, and she watches over cats in recovery after their surgeries and helps to set up meals at our Feral Angel high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter clinics.

It does get overwhelming for her at times, especially when one of her cats has to be euthanized due to feline AIDS (FIV) or leukemia (FeLV), or when she finds another colony of cats. But, it is short-lived for Cindy. She always has a smile as she says, "It's all for the cats."



Cindy Henderson, FFF Volunteer

Thanks for all you do for FFF and for feral cats, Cindy!

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For newsletter submissions, mailing address changes, or to be removed from the FFF mailing list, please email feralnews@yahoo.com

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Friends of Feral Felines Volunteer Update

By Allison McLean, FFF Volunteer Coordinator

2005

Friends of Feral Felines ended 2005 with lots of Volunteer Activities. We had nearly 50 book wrapping time slots with Barnes and Noble at their South Park, Arboretum, and Birkdale locations. We raised money, educated the public about feral cats, and had a lot of fun. We also had our usual table at the Dixieland Silver & Golden Fanciers Cat Show on December 10 & 11. We sold baked goods and lots of cat related items.

Thank you to all the bakers and volunteers for the December Cat Show: Lisa Chaney, Cara Deleon, Gaye Forren, Ann-Marie Gearhart, Ann Gross, Gayle Ledford, Michelle Nedopak, Nora Pelusa, Debbie Pugh, Beverly Sammarco, Lisa Steffy, and Cathy Watkins.

We would like to thank the following volunteers for their efforts at the 2005 Barnes and Noble book wrapping:

Barbara Babst	Lynda Meckel
Cynthia Basamania	Frances Neal
Meredith Bergen	Michelle Nedopak
Michele Ciemny	Al Rich
Colleen Crittenden	Beverly Sammarco
Cara Deleon	Pennie Seagle
Gaye Forren	David and Eileen Smith
Jamie Franks	Amy Spurlock
Chris Fuentes	Lisa Steffy
Anne-Marie Gearhart	Tamara Steffy
Ann Gross	Meagan Wallace
Pamela Groves	Holly Weathersbee
Cindy Henderson	Clayton Wright
Jeff Hicks	Suzanne Wright
Kristie Horton	Susan Zongker
Bill Laudati	

We couldn't have done it without you!

Special thanks to the following for filling so many dates and being on our On-Call list as we added dates: Cynthia Basamania, Colleen Crittenden, Cara Deleon, Gaye Forren, Jeff Hicks, Bill Laudati, Lynda Meckel, Beverly Sammarco, Lisa Steffy, Meagan Wallace, and our own Santa, Clayton & Suzanne Wright.

The board would like to say a special "thank you" to Allison McLean, our new Volunteer Coordinator. Allison, we appreciate your excellent coordination of the holiday book wrap at the Barnes & Noble stores at Sharon Corners in SouthPark, the Arboretum, and Birkdale Village, along with the December cat show. Only nine months to go before you have to start coordinating for this year!



Annette Collins, quilt winner

Meet the Winner of our Quilt Raffle!

Congratulations to Annette Collins, who won this year's cat quilt. Annette volunteers at our Feral Angel Cat Clinics, cleaning cats' ears, flea combing them, and giving them some TLC right after they come out of surgery. She's also a feral cat caretaker who tends to several colonies and a baker for our cat shows.

All the squares in this year's quilt were hand made by our volunteers. The quilt was then put together by Charlotte Harkey of Quilt Patch Fabrics in Matthews, who once again donated her time and talent to help us with one of our best fundraisers.



FFF Handmade Quilt

2006

Friends of Feral Felines is starting 2006 off running! We will be attending the CFA Crafty Cat Show on April 1 & 2 at the Charlotte Merchandise Mart. We need volunteers to bake items and to donate cat related items to sell at the Cat Show. All baked items need to be homemade



FFF Volunteers

and delivered by Friday, March 31, at 7 p.m. Please be sure to have your items individually wrapped or bagged and priced. Label any items containing nuts. All cat/craft items need to be in good condition.

Volunteers are needed to help work a concession stand at the Wachovia Open Golf Championship during the week of May 1-7. Shifts are 6 to 11 a.m. and 11 a.m. to the end of play. Volunteers can work one or both shifts.

We are currently looking for additional fundraisers for 2006, so if you know of any events or festivals that Friends of Feral Felines could participate in, please let us know.

As always, upcoming events and volunteer information are listed on our volunteer website.

Thank you for all of your hard work in 2005! We look forward to working with you in 2006.

Allison McLean
fffvolunteer@excite.com
<http://geocities.com/fffvolunteer>



FFF Volunteers

FFF Wish List

- ♦ Landowners or farm owners willing to accept feral cats in need of relocation (urgent need!)
- ♦ Light colored towels for use at our clinics
- ♦ Medium to large pet carriers to be used for post-surgery recovery
- ♦ Donations of dry or canned cat food
- ♦ Volunteers for feral cat trapping teams at UNCC and Myers Park, as well as North, South, East, and West Charlotte

In Loving Memory of Mary Weezer...

By Donna Yankoglu

By now, I am sure everyone is aware of the unfortunate circumstances regarding the cats at the chain restaurant. What you don't know about is the special cat



Mary Weezer's feral cat companions

for which this is written. Mary Weezer was the calico that lost her life after being shot and made it possible for the rest of the colony to live on. I was not there that day, but I am sure she was trying to protect everyone like she usually did. Mary Weezer was the smallest cat in the colony, but she was very brave and always the

one looking out for everyone. She would wait around making sure everyone else got something to eat before she would eat. I have seen her pop raccoons on the head when they tried to eat the food that was for her colony. Her determination and memory will live on in my heart and in the kitties she left behind. I want to thank the many people who have made it possible for these cats to live on.

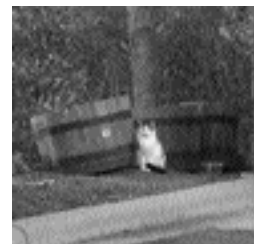
First, I would like to thank Lisa Steffy who has been there for me from the minute she received the phone call telling her Mary Weezer had been killed. She dropped what she was doing and went to the restaurant to see how she could help. She stood in the parking lot and cried with me even though she did not know who Mary Weezer was. She has been there through all of the ups and downs of the relocation process and put up with many late night phone calls. Without her, I would have never made it through all of



Mary Weezer's feral cat companions

this. She is not only the Co-Director of FFF, she is my friend. I want to thank Susie Montage for providing a relocation home; she has unselfishly taken on the responsibility of feeding these and many other cats she has given a new home.

Also, I want to thank Nicole Shophlin for generously letting me use her relocation cage and shelter. Thank you to Darlene for taking two cats. Thank you to Ann Gross, Ann-Marie Gearhart, Beverly Sammarco, Cindy Henderson, Cindy Pratt, Michelle Nedopak, Bill Laudati, Colleen Crittenden, and Flor Neal for all of your support and help. There are so many people who have helped; I hope I did not forget anyone!



Mary Weezer's feral cat companions

Thoughts of a Feral

By Annette Easdon

** Dedicated by the author to all the kind and caring people who give the lonely ferals a little care, a little love, and a little hope.*

I sit beneath the bushes as she fills my dish each day,
I only venture out to eat when she has gone away,
I know it will upset her when I turn away and hide,
As every day she tries her best to get me by her side.
I wish that I could let her know that I don't want to run,
And hope that she will understand it's nothing that
SHE's done.

I'd like to have her stroke me and pat my weary head,
But fear will overcome and I'll run and hide instead.
For all the kindly people who feed the strays each day,
I pray the Lord will care for them as they have cared
for me.

Feral Felines

By Carol Ann Martin, FFF Volunteer

Sometimes my feral cats drive me crazy
But keep me from getting too lazy

In the wild they live in cold
It's not a life, on this I'm told

But when my car pulls up they gleam
For soon they will be fed and clean

I'm telling people about their need
On doing this, I plant the seed

I love my work, this is my life
And at times like a husband or wife

But when the day comes to an end
This is how my time I spend

For these cats I am their voice
Because we know they have no choice

I love to rescue, yes it's a big deal
I gave my word and that's for real

Welcome to FFF Veterinary Network

Please welcome the latest veterinary practice to our network offering low-cost spay/neuter of unowned feral cats: Dr. Thomas Buckley of Buckley Animal Hospital on Pineville-Matthews Rd near Pineville.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the other dedicated veterinarians and staff participating in our network: Animal Healthcare Center of Charlotte, Archdale Animal Hospital, Carolina Place Animal Hospital, Carolinas Veterinary Clinic, Curtsinger Animal Hospital, Eastridge Veterinary Clinic, Freedom Animal Hospital, Gaffney Animal Hospital, Matthew Animal Clinic, Miller Animal Hospital, Mercy Animal Hospital, Monroe Road Animal Hospital, Park Cedar Animal Hospital, Total Bond Veterinary Hospital at Paw Creek, Triangle Veterinary Clinic (Union, SC), and Waxhaw Animal Hospital.

FFF would not be effective in reducing the population of unowned feral cats without the help of the kind veterinarians who work with us on a regular basis. Please consider taking your own pets to these veterinary clinics for the wonderful care they provide.

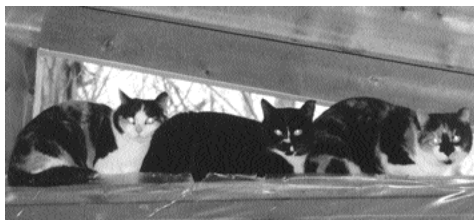
Feral Feature

By Mary Ralston

My feral cat trapping hobby began when I had a stray tomcat hanging around and causing problems with my eight cats. I didn't realize how different a feral cat would be, so when I trapped him, I had no idea what to do. The vet I took my cats to wouldn't treat him and told me to take him to animal control. Not wanting him to be euthanized, I just let him out.

Sometime later, I saw an article in the newspaper about Friends of Feral Felines and the quilt project to raise funds. I cut out the article and saved it in my "cat file". Early in 2000, I had another stray coming to eat and leaving his "calling card" on my doors. After a few weeks of that, I decided to take action and called the FFF hotline. Lisa Steffy loaned me the trap and recovery carrier, made the appointment and gave me all the instructions. I caught "Rufus", took him to the vet the next morning, and let him go the next day. With the help and instructions from FFF, it was so easy. He disappeared for a few days, but eventually came back to eat and is now part of our happy cat family.

Later that year, my husband told me he had five cats



Pretty, Tootsie, and Callie

at his warehouse. They were eating stale bread that was thrown out for the birds. I sent bags of cat food so they could start feeding them, and in the fall, we

began trapping them. They were a little more challenging than Rufus, but we had four of them done in about a month. The fifth one was trapped, but it was my old trap that failed to close all the way, and he escaped. The brown traps we use now are so much easier to use and never fail to close. Two years later when I was re-trapping the others for more shots, I finally caught the escapee. One of these cats, "Buster", tamed in just a few weeks and had a respiratory infection, so I relocated him to my home to care for him. He lives up to his name by patrolling our yard and keeping all the other cats in line. Some time later, I noticed cats near the bank that we use and started feeding them (with the approval of the bank). As the weather turned colder, I began trapping them, again with the help of FFF and Ann Gross. We caught two the first night. I took them to be fixed, but noticed the next day that the vet forgot to clip their left ears. One was a calico, and I knew there were at least three calicos in the colony. I didn't think I could tell them apart, so I decided to relocate these two to my home. FFF loaned me a large cage and I attached a cardboard box to one of the cage openings. I put this inside a basement/screen porch so they wouldn't be exposed to the winter weather. I would put the food and litter box in the cage, and the two cats, "Sweetie" and "Peanut" would hide in the cardboard box. I don't think I saw them for about two months. As the weather warmed up, I let them out in the porch. I just knew they would claw the screens out, but they never did. Eventually, I let them out into the yard. I didn't see them for a day or two, but I kept leaving food in the porch. One day I looked out and there they were, lounging on the deck!

I continued to feed and trap the ones left at the bank. The old trap was put to good use as a feeding station. I took out the bait tray, wired it open, and covered it with several layers of plastic. Now I had a place to put the food where it wouldn't get wet in bad weather, and it got the cats accustomed to going inside it to eat. When I wanted to trap, I just put a baited trap beside the feeding station, covered it with a towel, and it didn't take long before I had one in the trap.

I trapped another calico, "Pretty", just a few weeks after she had kittens. A nearby vet took her to spay, but before they operated, the bank employees began finding the kittens and brought them to the vet. Pretty refused to nurse them, so they were bottle fed and all were adopted. Pretty was spayed and released a few weeks later.



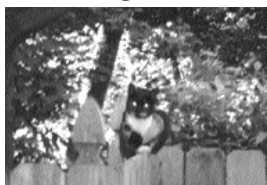
Baby

My husband began to tire of my daily trips to feed the cats, so I decided to relocate the rest of the colony. I trapped the third calico, "Callie", and her two kittens, "Sunshine" and "Baby", first. Sunshine was adopted, and Baby is still with us. "Tootsie" and her kitten, "Tortie", came next, and last of all, Pretty. This took about three months. I kept them in two relocation carriers, loaned to me by FFF, inside the now enclosed with plastic porch for the rest of the winter.

I had a six-foot fence installed, hoping they would stay inside it when I let them out in the spring. The first night they were out, Callie left and never came back. I think she must have read *The Silent Miaow* because she took Cica's advice and found a house with nice cars in the driveway and soft hearts inside. Look for "Annabelle's" story in a future issue of "Cat's Tale".

The others went out, but would climb back in the fence to eat. They enjoy their freedom during the warm months, but stay in during the winter.

Feral cats have such varied personalities, I never know which ones will ever let me touch them. Peanut is probably the sweetest one I have. He puts his paws on my neck and loves to be face-to-face with me. Tortie is still so scared of me she hides when I go to feed them. I always wonder if God thinks of us the way I sometimes do about these ungrateful cats! I remind them that they could still be living in a storm drain, but they seem oblivious to all the things I do for them. It makes me want to be more like Peanut and be thankful for the blessings I've received from my heavenly Caretaker.



Tortie, in a rare sighting

I've added five more cats this past year for a grand total of 18. I hope to get one kitten adopted, but the others are probably here to stay. Working with feral cats can be a challenge, but it is so rewarding to know that something is being done about some of the stray cats that you see everywhere. Of the 30 cats that I've trapped, 13 have been females, so preventing just those 13 from having more kittens has significantly reduced the number of stray cats that would have been born. I try to tell anyone who has any interest in cats about FFF and how easy and economical it is to TNR feral cats.



Feral FAQ's

I just moved into a new house in this area and noticed there are several wild cats in my neighborhood. Can you trap them for me, and is there a cost involved? A friend of mine told me your organization does this.

Good luck in your new home! It is not uncommon to see feral or stray cats in new neighborhoods, as their territories are being turned into housing communities or shopping centers. The most important thing you can do to help the cats is call our hotline, 704-348-1578, and listen to the message. It describes in less than one minute what FFF does and does not do. We will assist anyone with low cost spay and neuter services for feral cats, loan you the equipment to trap and recover them, and train you in using the equipment. Unfortunately, however, we do not have the manpower available to come out and trap for you, except in extenuating circumstances, such as if you are disabled or elderly.

We receive several calls from people who want cats trapped and taken somewhere else. The only way this can happen is if they have property lined up to relocate the cats. Currently, we have a waiting list of cats that need relocation. Instead of waiting for property to become available, it is important, in the meantime, to get the cats spayed or neutered so they aren't reproducing. It doesn't take much - just some food and water each day and a simple shelter, especially during the winter time. In the end, it will take less time and money to care for a colony of a few cats than to wait until they have litters of kittens.

We try to encourage our callers to take on the responsibility of caring for the cats they call us about. Perhaps neighbors or co-workers can assist you with raising funds for spay/neuter and feeding schedules. Saying you don't want to get involved will not solve the cat problem in your neighborhood. Cats are not finicky when it comes to where they reproduce!

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A Cat's Tale
Friends of Feral Felines
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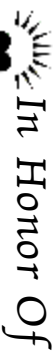
In Memory Of

Nick Nilson, by Patricia McCabe
Helen Perkins, who loved all animals, especially cats, by her husband, Thomas Perkins
Dusty, Brandy, and Lazarus, by Ray and Patsy Ledford

David Sammarco, father of Beverly Sammarco, by special friends at FFF

David Sammarco, by Karen & Don DeMart

Mary Lou Muller, by Carolyn K. Stewart and Huntersville Animal Hospital, P.A.



In Honor Of

Cheryl Hedges, who has been working with FFF volunteers to help cats living close to the Morehead St. / Baxter St. area

Susan Lawrence, by Joel and Rosemary Rutledge

The college cats, by Dr. Patricia Douville-Ricker
Colleen Crittenden, in recognition of all her hard work and efforts for FFF, by Paula Williamson

If you care to have your loved ones honored, please consider making a donation to Friends of Feral Felines in honor of or in memory of their name.

Events Calendar



Tues, April 4, and Tues, June 6
FFF General Meetings, 6:30 pm at Morrison Regional Library, Colony Road (South Park). New members are always welcome!

April 1-2 - Crafty Cat Show, Charlotte Merchandise Mart. Baked goods and cat items needed for FFF information table.

May 1-7 - Wachovia Open Golf Championship, Quail Hollow Country Club. Volunteers needed to work concession booth for FFF.

Please check our website or call our hotline for more details and confirmation of all event dates and locations.