



Introducing your new Barn Cats

Thank you for saving the life of shelter cats by giving them a fabulous barn home! In order to help your new cats' transition to their new home, please follow these important steps, and don't hesitate to contact Kitsap Humane Society if you have any further questions!

First Steps:

Your new cats should be set up in a confined area when they first arrive at your barn, for a minimum of four weeks (however for some cats, we may recommend a longer confinement time). If you are housing your new cats in a barn, if the barn doors close securely the cats can be confined to the barn, but most people prefer confining the cats to a tack room or feed room. Whatever your confinement space, it is important to evaluate it thoroughly for spots where the cats can possibly escape and block these off prior to placing your new cat into the confinement space. While confined, your new cats should have access to a clean litter box (even if they will not have a litter box once released), food and water. By keeping your cats confined for this time, they will associate the barn as "home base" so that once they have free reign of the property, they will stick around, and know where to come for food. If there are other animals in the barn area (like other cats or dogs) it is recommended you keep your new cats separate from these animals for the confinement so they can adjust to one big change (location!) at a time.

Integrating:

After the four-week confinement in the barn, room in the barn or other enclosed structure, you can open up the area and let the cats explore. We recommend that the first time you give your cats access to the outside, it be daylight so that you can monitor for any problems. It can be overwhelming for your new cats to see the full property the first time with dogs or kids running around, so try to keep the property as quiet and stress-free as possible when you first open the doors.

If you have other animals on your property, your new cats will need time to adjust to living with them- give them time! Most cats, given enough time and space, will transition into happy coexistence with other cats, dogs, and even farm animals! Let your new cats and current cats work out their differences- sometimes cats need to make noise or scuffle a little to learn their place in a home's social order- this behavior is normal! Also remember that most barn cats that are adopted together are "strangers" to one another and will also need time and space to adapt to having a new friend. Having multiple hiding spaces (both low spaces like boxes and high spaces like cat trees) gives cats the option to avoid one another if they are feeling stressed.

Feeding:

Even though your new cats will be valuable partners in mouse control, it's important that you still give them access to food and water every day. Cats do not/will not hunt if you withhold food, so make sure you're keeping your cats healthy with regular feeding. Routine feeding times/places will also help keep skittish cats from wandering off the property. Feeding cats on a regular schedule and saying a specific phrase like "time for yummys!" each time you feed them with also help your cats learn recall skills, which is helpful in keeping your cat safe. A cat that is not provided regular food and water will not stay at the property. In addition to dry kibble, we recommend a bit of canned food each evening.

Medical Care:

Your new cats are up to date on vaccines (FVRCP and Rabies), and spayed or neutered. Your cats have also been treated for fleas and dewormed! We recommend that you continue your cat's vaccination schedule as the years progress- many "country" vets will often make house calls to vaccinate barn cats on-site. Keeping your cats up to date on shots is an important part of keeping them healthy while living outside. If your cats appear injured or ill, it is your responsibility to have them examined by a veterinarian to help keep them healthy and safe for years to come.