



Adopting a Barn Cat

When adding a barn cat to your farm menagerie, keep this basic caretaking advice in mind.

Take care when introducing an adopted barn cat to its new home. Feed it well and have it checked out by a vet. For a cat not suited to indoor living, barn life might be its best option for receiving adequate food and shelter. Farmers who have room to spare in the barn can consider adopting a barn cat to give it a welcome home.

The Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society in Springfield, Mass., operates a Barn Cat Program for the placement of homeless cats. Spokesperson Candy Lash says the cats they adopt out fall into two main categories: Those that are too rough and independent for house living and those that don't properly use a litter box.

While barn cats might live more independently, they need the same basic care a house cat receives. When deciding whether to adopt a barn cat, make sure you can provide it some sort of shelter—whether it be a barn, garage or other structure—food and veterinary care.

Trap, Neuter, Return

If you have feral cats near your barn, help care for them using the TNR method. Read more»“As with all of our adoptions, we recommend that new adopters establish a relationship or schedule an appointment with their vet within two weeks of adoption and yearly thereafter,” Lash says.

Once you adopt the barn cat and introduce it to its new surroundings, set up a feeding schedule.

“We recommend that people feed their barn cat at night so that it becomes accustomed to that schedule and can be confined at night,” Lash says.

Caretakers can feed the cat whatever is age appropriate for the cat, says Chris Montgomery, a volunteer for the San Antonio Feral Cat Coalition who runs the website Texas Barn Cats.

“We actually encourage feeding canned food to relocated cats ... at least until the cats are released after their confinement period,” he says. “Feeding canned food will tend to keep the cats around while getting used to their new environment.”

Confinement, while it may seem harsh, is important to get a cat accustomed to its surroundings.

“They should be confined for two to three weeks before being let out of the barn to learn that their new surroundings are their food source,” Lash says.

Montgomery also recommends monitoring the cat's behavior, especially in cases where it's not used to being around humans.

“The caretaker should expect to be hissed at and spit at by the cat in the cage, accompanied by swipes from the cat as it lashes out with its claws if the person gets too close to the cat,” he says. “This isn't always a sign of aggression, but is more of a warning to get the person to stay away and is defensive in nature.”

Other behaviors and signs that could indicate a medical condition include twitching or spasms, drooling, sneezing or coughing, loose bowels or blood in urine, and lethargy. If you notice these symptoms in your barn cat, take it to the veterinarian.

Adopting a barn cat can add an interesting element to your farm. Find information on cat adoption at CatChannel.com.