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Feral Cat Behavior: Is the cat stray or feral?

by Marie O. September 21, 2016

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What is a feral cat? How can you tell? There seems to be some confusion out there about whether a cat is stray or feral.

I've even read information from some highly reputable websites that is flat out wrong—maybe because these organizations are studying cats while they are caged, which is how most facilities house cats that are waiting to be adopted, cared for or killed.

Thing is, ferals and strays live outdoors!

I've been caring for a number of stray and feral cats for the past few years and have had daily opportunities to observe their behavior in their natural habitat—outside in the community.

Here's a short video of one of my ferals Amber Cairo. She is two years old, going on three. AC is the daughter of another feral cat (Cinder), who I sheltered and fed for a year, until a neighbor's dog shook her to death. It's rough out there, folks.



After her mother died, Amber Cairo started sleeping in her mother's outdoor shelter and coming to my house to feed. Prior to her mother's death, for that whole year I cared for her mother, Amber Cairo had never appeared.

Then, a week after her mother's death, she showed up on the same door mat that her mother had sat on daily, waiting to be fed. I've been feeding Amber Cairo for six months now, and she shows up almost every night. When she does arrive, it's always between 6:30 and 7:45 pm, when it is dusk or dark.

Ferals are elusive, and prefer to feed at the time of day when they can sneak in and out.

Some websites say that feral cats will not look you in the eye, and that's how you can tell they're feral. To the contrary, ferals will stare you down. Maybe it's a way for them to show that they are strong, a bit of alpha energy thrown at a human to intimidate her.



Amber Cairo stares at me without blinking, this wide open stare. After she eats, she sometimes watches me through the low windows of my house. One day I crouched up to the window and stared back, but instead of wide-eyed, I waved my eyelids like cats do when they are telling you they love you. After a minute or two of me waving my relaxed eyelids, she started to do the same, and we waved eyelids together for about 10 minutes.

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Despite this lovely-dovey eye contact, when I go to feed Amber Cairo, she still sometimes hisses at me, and always growls and moans as if I'm about to attack her. Even after six months of feeding her.

Amber Cairo is a true feral cat, who will never warm up to humans. My relationship with her will always be distant. Her fear runs deep. You can read the blog she herself wrote about her fear: <http://quotekitty.com/blogs/news/inside-feral-is-fear-a-cat-story>

Here are a few ways to determine whether the cat who showed up at your house is stray or feral:

Stray Cats:

- Will often rub up against you to leave their scent
- Often allow you to touch them
- Will approach you
- Will approach food with you being present
- May show up at any time of day
- May hang around a lot
- Will often come if you call them

Feral Cats:

- Will not approach you
- Will run if you approach them
- Will wait 'til dusk to eat what you've put out
- Sometimes hang out with another cat
- Will not ordinarily eat if you are within 10 feet
- May come to feed if you call them by a familiar name or tone
- Are suspicious of humans

One caveat, cats can range between these two opposite spectrums, but overall if a cat is an adult and is feral, she will likely remain feral and will not make a cozy house cat. Life outdoors is all these cats will ever know.

If you have a little anecdote about a stray or feral cat that you feed, or questions about my blog, share it below.

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Marie O.
Author

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Cat Lover is a Heartbroken Foster Mom

by Marie O. November 20, 2016

About nine months ago, I fostered two unweaned kittens, taken from their feral mother cat at five weeks and two days. How they were taken is a gruesome tale, better off told in another blog. And, on first glance at my shaky hands, I may need therapy before I tell that story. You see, I've never had children. I blame my "failure" as a foster mom on that, or maybe my attachment issues, or maybe just my love of cats since childhood. Some of you chill-hearted cat-lovers may excel at fostering. Me? The process almost killed me.

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Stray

Black Cats and Halloween

by Marie O. October 02, 2016

So, I'm sitting in the chair of a new hairdresser yesterday, October 1st, and, as hairdressers always make polite conversation, she asks me, "So, do you have any fur babies?"

I chuckle and said, "Yes, in fact, I do. I care for a number of strays and ferals, and have kind of become the crazy cat lady in my neighborhood."

She responded that she'd be taking in her sister's black cat for the two weeks around Halloween because they were afraid for the safety of the cat in the Denver neighborhood where the cat lives and likes to roam at night.

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Cat Lovers Website Donates to Cat Charities

by Marie O. September 22, 2016

Welcome to Quote Kitty, a new website that donates 9% of the *retail* price of every product purchased to save cats. That's 9% for each of cat's 9 lives. It's the website for cat lovers because every item sold is cat themed and helps support community cats across the United States. At Quote Kitty, we sell cat apparel and accessories for people, as well as products for your feline friends. The Quote Kitty motto is "Curiosity Saves the Cat."

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