



BRADSHAW ANIMAL SHELTER



SUCCESSFUL BARN CAT INTEGRATION

Thank you for saving the lives of some “unadoptable” shelter cats by giving them a fabulous barn home! To help your new cats transition to their new home, please follow these important steps, and don’t hesitate to contact Celeste Ingrid at ingridc@SacCounty.NET or Gena Ensey at enseygm@gmail.com if you have any questions.

First Steps:

Upon arrival, your new cats should be set up in a safe and comfortable confined space within your barn (or similar living area) for approximately two weeks. If the barn doors close securely, the cat can be confined to the barn, but most people prefer confining the cats to a tack room or feed room (as long as it is not too hot!). Confining the cats to very large “black wire dog crates” also works well. While confined, your new cats should have access to clean litter boxes (even if the cats will not have litter boxes once released), food, and water. By keeping your cats in the barn for this time, your cats will associate the barn as “home base” so that once they have free reign of the property, the cats will stick around and know where to come for food. If there are other domesticated animals in the barn area (cats or dogs), it is recommended you keep your new cats separate from these animals for the confinement period so the cats can adjust to one big change (location!) at a time and feel safe.

Integrating:

After two weeks of acclimation, you can open up the area and let the cats explore. Please introduce your cats to the outside during daylight hours 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. However, try to avoid situations that put the cats at risk of injury.

***Important!** Do not release your cats if it is raining or the potential for rain. Cats find their home by scent and rain will wash it away. Waiting one more night will not hurt. Leave the cages up for an additional five days so the cats can get back in if they want. After the release, we hope they think of your barn as home and decide to stay.*

Safety:

Threats such as coyotes are common. Therefore, it’s important that the cats always have access to a safe place, especially at night. Often a small cut out in the side of the barn suffices as an access point. It’s strongly recommended that the cats be secured in the barn by dusk. Training the cats to return to the barn each evening can be done by feeding. (Learn more on reverse.)

Feeding Instructions, and more (Clicker Training):

Even though your new cats will be valuable partners in rodent control, it's important that you still give your cats access to food and fresh water daily! Cats will not hunt more 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. Give each cat ¼ to ½ cup of dry food in the morning. At dusk, feed them wet food. Begin clicker training during the initial acclimation period by clicking a dog training clicker or ringing a bell at feeding time, the sound of which they will learn to associate with food. After the cats are released, click or ring the bell in the evening (same time each day) to bring them back into the enclosed safe area for the night. Feed them only wet food when they come back inside at night. We have volunteers who can provide coaching on clicker training, just ask. It's very easy! If you want to move the feeding station, move it just a few feet per day until it is in the desired location. This will keep the cats from looking elsewhere for food and leaving the area. If you are away from home, remember to arrange for someone to provide the cats with daily food and fresh water.

Medical Care:

As of adoption time, your adult new cats are up to date on vaccines (FVRCP and Rabies), spayed or neutered, treated for fleas, and microchipped! If you've adopted a kitten 6-12 months, FVRCP boosters may be needed (consult your vet). If you have adopted truly feral barn cats, you'll probably not be able to touch them during their lifetime. If you find one has been injured or is in need of medical attention, please contact your vet. Many "country" vets will often make house calls to vaccinate barn cats. If possible, we recommend that you continue your cats' vaccination schedules as the years progress. Keeping your cats up to date on shots and deworming is an important part of keeping them healthy.

More Important Information:

- **Set-up Supplies:** The shelter will supply an amount of food to allow proper transition to whatever brand you prefer to use. When possible based upon shelter resources, for local adopters, we may also be able to loan black wire dog crates during the integration period. We may also have extra litter boxes.
- **You're not alone:** The shelter has fabulous staff and volunteers who are very knowledgeable about barn cat integration and care, and they are always available for you to contact for any assistance you may need!
- **Moving:** If you must move, please notify the Bradshaw Animal Shelter Barn Cat Program (Celeste Ingrid at ingridc@SacCounty.NET or Gena Ensey at enseygm@gmail.com) if you need help relocating the cats to your new home, or if you cannot keep them.

Thank you for saving cats' lives!