

		Reference # 4-15	
		Last Reviewed Date: 6/12/24	
		Initial Effective Date: 7/20/2023	
		Revision Date:	
Section:	Feline Program	SOP Title:	Community Cat Program

Purpose

The purpose is to outline pathways for all cats that come to League City Animal Shelter and shelter staff roles and responsibilities.

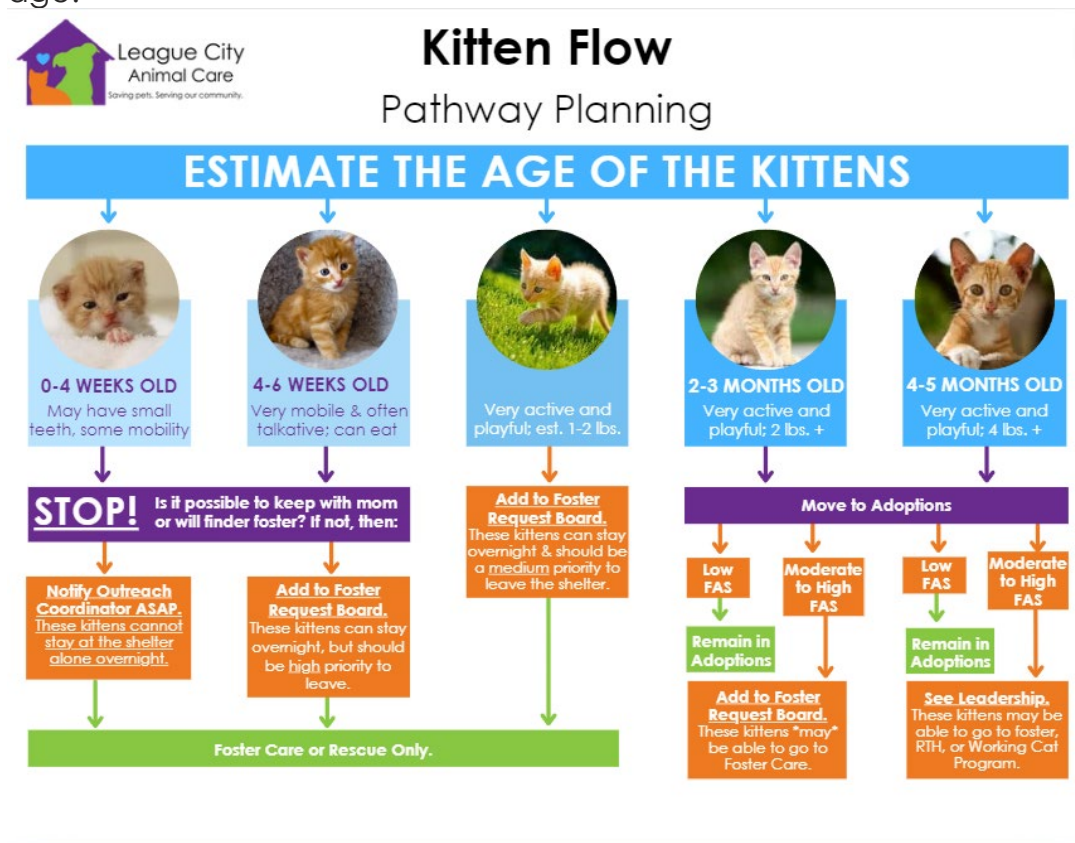
Definitions

Community Cat - is an umbrella term that refers to any member of the Felis catus species who is unowned and lives outdoors.

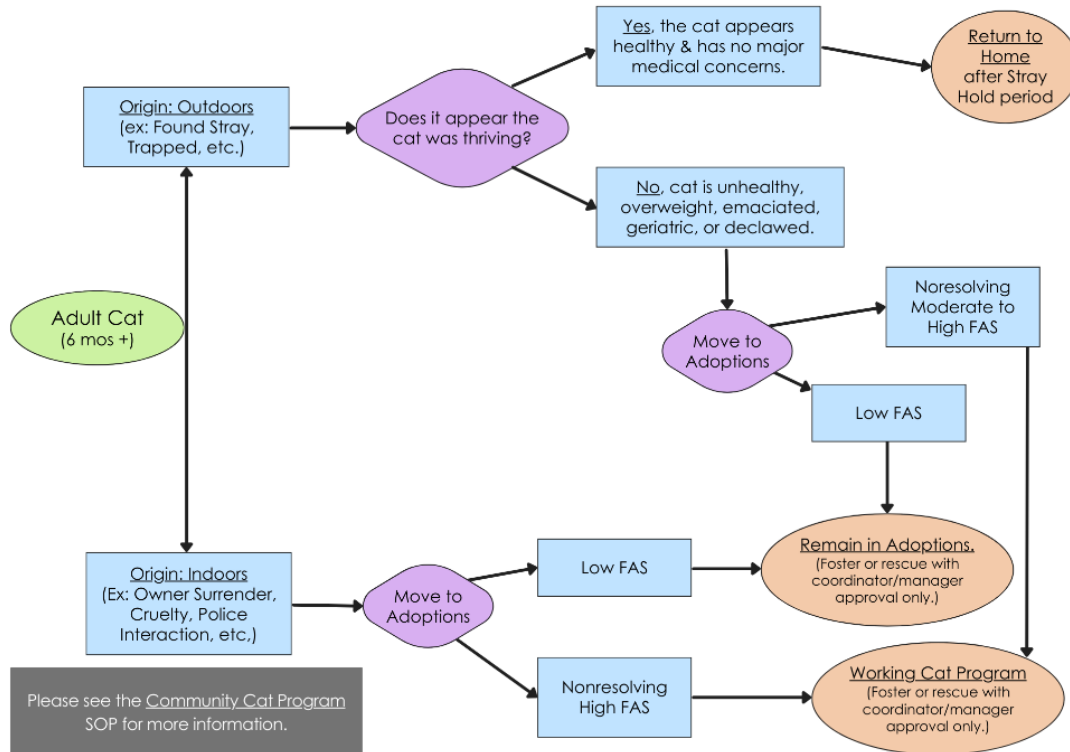
Fear, Anxiety and Stress (FAS) – Cats communicate their emotions through body language. For the purposes of this policy, we will be describing ranges of fear, anxiety and stress as low, moderate or high (Appendix A)

Cat Pathways

Upon intake, if intake source is “Stray”, staff will follow the below charts based on the cat's age.



Adult Cat Flow Pathway Planning



Eligibility Requirements for Return to Home

Physical Characteristics:

- Minimum 4lbs and 4 months of age.
- Body Condition Score (BCS Appendix B) is no less than 4/9 and no more than 6/9 BCS.
- No injury, illness or other medical concerns prohibiting release, unless approved by management.
- Not declawed
- Not Microchipped or Wearing Identification
 - If no owner reached after researching chip/id, cat may go through CCP at the end of the stray time.
 - If microchip indicates previous release, health will be evaluated prior to returning it to its home. If condition has declined, this cat will not be a candidate for return.

Found Characteristics:

- Cat was found outdoors and has no known history of primarily living indoors.
- Cat has known and specific physical address of origin for return.
- Cat is not from a situation where return is not feasible - risks, such as destroyed building at location of origin or other examples that make return unacceptable.
 - Proximity to busy roads will not in themselves be considered risks as research shows cats can thrive in these conditions.

- Cat shows no evidence of genuine abandonment (e.g. neighbors moved out and cat suddenly showed up and started desperately trying to get into finder's home.)

Stray Cat Intake

Interviewing the finder

- Whether a finder brings a cat to the shelter or first calls to schedule an appointment, the initial point of contact may present the best opportunity for obtaining critical information about the cat and his circumstances.
- The staff person doing the intake should use the Stray Cat Intake form (Appendix C) to interview the finder and record responses.
- Once complete, verify the answers with the finder and confirm the correct spelling of the finder's name and address and the accuracy of any phone numbers. This is the most vital piece of information for our program's success.
- The accuracy of the address provided should be confirmed and verified while the finder is still present, either in-person or on the phone.
- The information on the form must then be entered into Field Services on Shelter Luv and shared with staff.
- If the cat has a chip/id, make sure the source is aware that if contact is not made with the registered owner, the cat may be taken back to the address they provided.

Intake Exam

"Physical Exam" Template in SL (Appendix D)

Intake Process Next Steps

- Intaking staff adds the cat's name and Field Service ID number to the TNR list on the APO communication board to schedule for surgery/ear tip 3 days out, not including the day of intake.
- All cats are to be entered into Field Services under the designated case/zone number based on the location pick-up.
 - Each cat will be entered in as an activity associated with that case/zone. The activity name will be the cat's name and the Field Services ID number.
 - If the cat is not eligible for return, shelter proceeds with other pathways including adoption, foster care, or the working cat program.
 - They must be entered into Shelterluv.

APO Communication board

- RTH paperwork is completed, placed into a kennel card holder, and kept in the RTH folder. Paperwork includes the following:
 - SNIP spay and neuter form with a new microchip attached.
 - Cat trap label with name and Field Services ID.
- Cats are to be housed in a standard cat kennel along with a feral den, food, water, litter box and entered into Shelterluv.

SNIP Drop-Off

- All medical paperwork is filed.

- All invoices are sent electronically to the Animal Services Manager for payment.
- RTH cats are dropped off with SNIP for spay and neuter on Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays.
- Two cats per visit are allowed. If more are needed notify management for approval.
- The assigned APO will transport the cat and the associated paperwork.
- Drop-off for surgery is at 7:15am.
- Cats must be transported in a trap. Pick-up is at 3:00pm.

Defining Community Cat Program Zones

- Each area of the city has been organized into zones based on the city's Neighborhood Services Department.
- These zones will be utilized as Cases in Field Services and community cats will be tracked to identify areas in our community in need of assistance.
- To access a detailed, interactive version of the zones, click here. It can also be accessed by going to <https://www.leaguecitytx.gov/21/Maps> and select Code Compliance Zones.
 - **Zones Color Code**
The following is the color code for the zones:
 - Yellow – Zone 1
 - Green – Zone 2
 - Red – Zone 3
 - Blue – Zone 4

Return to Home

When cats are ready to be released

- Whenever possible, return the cat to the exact location where they were trapped. Adult cats may be returned up to 300 feet (about the length of a football field) from the exact trapping location if needed.
- Double-check that there are no visible signs of illness, injury or residual effects from the surgery, like bleeding or grogginess, as this is the last chance to catch such issues prior to returning a cat.
- Make sure the spot chosen to release the cat from the trap does not encourage them to run toward dangerous conditions, such as a busy street or dogs who are nearby.
- Consider releasing the cat on a side street (within 300 feet of the cat's original location), which gives the cat access to the preferred site and provides a safer, quieter option.
- Don't release the cat next to parked vehicles. Cats will often run to the nearest place of shelter in their line of sight, which means they may run underneath a vehicle and crawl up into the vehicle's engine area.
- Keep the trap covered until you are almost ready to release the cat. Then, quietly uncover the trap, allowing the cat to take in their surroundings (i.e., recognize their home) for 15–30 seconds. When you are ready to release the cat, simply hold the trap with the rear door facing away from you and open the door. The cat may try to escape before the trap is open.

- If the cat doesn't race out of the trap immediately, tilt the trap so that the end closest to you is raised slightly. You might also try tapping lightly on the trap to encourage the cat to leave. Never put your hand in the trap.
- Positioning the trap toward a bush or other safe form of shelter may encourage the cat to run in the desired direction.
- Hang CCP information brochure(s) on door at release location.
- Cats are then dispositioned in Field Services as "Returned" and in Shelterluv as outcome subtype "Returned to Home" if applicable. All field service activity statuses are to be marked as closed upon release.

Resources

- Best Friends Animal Society Community Cat Programs Handbook:
<https://network.bestfriends.org/education/manuals-handbooks-playbooks/community-cat-programs-handbook>
- Rethinking the Animal Shelter's Role in Free-Roaming Cat Management:
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2022.847081/full>
- Best Friends Community Cat Resources:
<https://resources.bestfriends.org/advocacy/community-cats>
- Million Cat Challenge Pathway Planning for Cats
- Million Cat Challenge – The Cat Superhighway webinar:
<https://www.millioncatchallenge.org/resources/webinars/cat-superhighway>
- Team Shelter USA - Community Cat Programs Handout
- Managing Community Cats: A Guide for Municipal Leaders:
<https://humanepro.org/page/managing-community-cats-guide-municipal-leaders>
- [How to Trap a Feral Cat for TNR: https://youtu.be/wF_omFE7Etc](https://youtu.be/wF_omFE7Etc)
- [Alley Cat Advocates Return to Field Handbook: https://icatcare.org/app/uploads/2020/10/return-to-field-handbook.pdf](https://icatcare.org/app/uploads/2020/10/return-to-field-handbook.pdf)
- [Neighborhood Cat project: A Lifesaving Community Cat Program by Wenatchee Valley Humane Society](#)

Community Cat Position Statements & Letters of Support

- The Humane Society of Greater Rochester
- The Humane Society of the United States
- Human Animal Support Services
- National Animal Care and Control Association
- Best Friends Animal Society - Return to Field
- Best Friends Animal Society - Trap Neuter Vaccinate Return
- Cornell University Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program

Appendix A

Cat FAS & Frustration Scale for Shelters

**FEAR FREE
SHELTERS** 

Signs of FAS and frustration can be caused by medical issues. Behavioral concerns should be brought to the attention of the appropriate medical staff.

High

- Severe signs of stress indicate emotional suffering
- Urgent action is required
- Immediate environmental management is imperative along with increased daily enrichment
- Medication and behavior modification should be strongly considered (imperative if signs persist)
- If behavior continues to deteriorate, alternatives to shelter housing are required



May display active signs: high arousal, hissing, and aggression; repetitive meowing and/or pacing, pawing, pushing, or hanging on the cage door; escape behavior, disruption of cage contents.

May display passive signs: constant hiding, feigning sleep, not moving, hypervigilance, avoiding social interactions, decreased play or exploratory behavior, decreased grooming, poor appetite or refusal to eat.

Moderate

- Moderate signs of stress
- Environmental management is imperative along with increased daily enrichment
- +/- Behavior modification and medications and/or complementary/alternative therapies



May be hesitant but not actively avoiding social interactions, occasional hiding, occasional meowing and/or pawing at the cage door or other frustration related behaviors. May display a slight decrease in appetite or grooming.

Low

- Relaxed or mild signs of stress
- Prevent increase through environmental management, enrichment and daily routine

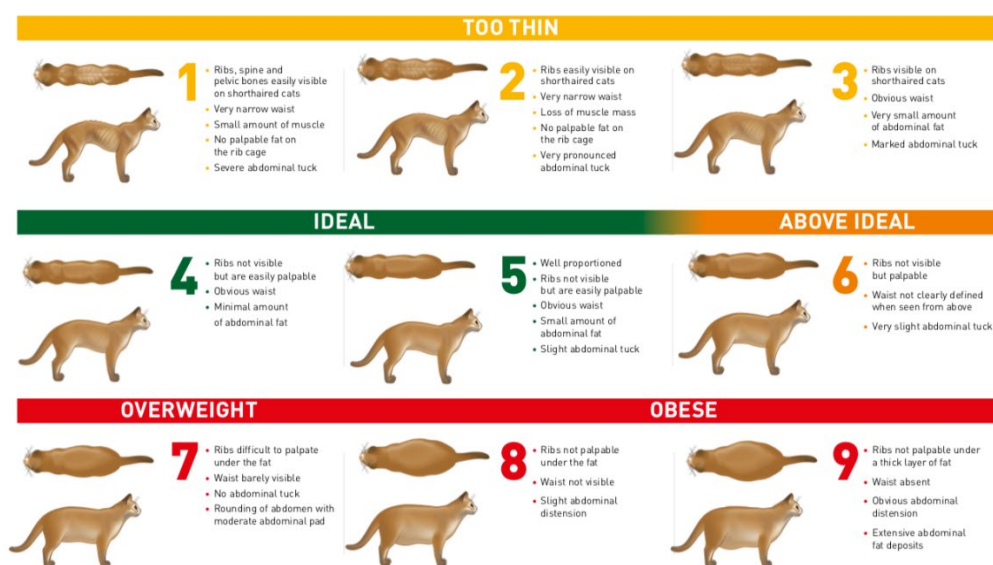


Normal behavior patterns including friendly behavior with people, eating, grooming, resting, playing, exercising, and sleeping. Relaxed body language. Good appetite. Appropriate social interactions.

Appendix B



BODY CONDITION SCORE CAT



Appendix C

Pet Name: _____ Date: _____

Stray Cat Intake Form

To copy into ShelterLuv if unable to enter directly.

Finder Details:

- o Name: _____
- o Address: _____
- o Phone: _____
- o Email: _____

Cat Details:

- o What is the reason for contacting Animal Care regarding this cat? _____

- o Did you care for this cat indoors after finding? (Circle one.) YES NO
- If so, for how long? _____
- What behaviors did you observe indoors? _____

- o Please describe any injuries or illnesses you are aware of (if any): _____

- o How easy was this cat to handle and place in a carrier? _____

Location Details:

- o Where was this cat found? (Please provide address if available or cross street if address unknown.)

- o How long have you observed this cat outside at this location? _____
- o This cat may have a caretaker; do you know of any location where this cat spends (or has spent) their time? _____
- o Are you aware of any other outdoor cats in this area? _____

Additional Details:

- o When this cat comes back to this location after being spayed/neutered, vaccinated, and ear-tipped, are you interested in registering as this community cat's caregiver? (Circle one.) YES NO More details!
- o Is there any other information that may be helpful? _____

Completed By: _____

Appendix D

Pet Name: _____ Date: _____

Physical Exam

To copy into ShelterLuv if unable to enter directly.

Subjective (History/Reason for Exam): _____

Objective (What did you observe?): _____

Body Condition (Circle number below):

Weight: _____ lbs.

1 (Emaciated) / **2** (V. Thin) / **3** (Thin) / **4** (Lean) / **5** (Ideal) / **6** (Stout) / **7** (Overweight) / **8** (Obese) / **9** (V. Obese)

MM Color: Pink / Pale or White / Blue (Cyanotic) / Bright Red / Yellow (Icteric) / Brown

MM Touch: Dry (Tacky) / Slightly Dry / Moist

CRT: 1 / 2 / >2

Hydration: Normal / Dehydrated (<5%) / Dehydrated (5-7%) / Dehydrated (8-10%) / Dehydrated (>10%)

Attitude: BAR / QAR / Depressed / Stupor / Coma

Pain: None / Mild / Moderate / Severe

Eyes: _____

Ears: _____

Nose/Mouth/Dental: _____

Respiratory: _____

Abdomen: _____

Urogenital: _____

Musculoskeletal: _____

Neurological: _____

Integument: _____

Assessment (Differentials, diagnosis, or problem list): _____

Diagnosis: _____

Plan (Treatments, future steps, planned rechecks): _____