



OAKLAND ANIMAL SERVICES

Cat Intake April 2025

Cat Intake Policy Overview

At OAS, we follow best practices in cat intake, prioritizing the well-being of both cats and our community. We recognize the important role that community cats play in our neighborhoods, and our policy is designed to ensure that we offer appropriate care while also supporting responsible cat management. Below is a summary of our intake guidelines.

1. Healthy, Free-Roaming Cats (Community Cats)

- **General Policy:** We do not admit healthy, free-roaming community cats to the shelter, whether they are feral or friendly. This is based on the understanding that healthy, free-roaming cats are generally able to find their way back home if they are lost, and removal from their familiar environment can cause unnecessary stress.
- **Rationale:** National organizations such as the UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program, the ASPCA, and the Million Cat Challenge advocate for leaving these cats in their neighborhoods. Cats that appear healthy and have a good body condition are usually not lost but are simply enjoying life in their environment. Keeping them in the area helps to increase the likelihood that they will return home if they do wander.
- **What to Do:** If you find a healthy, free-roaming cat, please leave it in place. Refer to the [I Found a Cat flowchart](#) for more assistance.

2. Injured or Ill Community Cats

- **Feral Cats:** We will accept injured or ill feral community cats, in order to provide humane, end-of-life euthanasia. If you are a community cat caregiver who wishes to seek veterinary treatment for one of your colony cats with the goal of returning that cat back to their outdoor home, please take that cat to a private veterinary clinic. The shelter is unable to house feral cats and provide ongoing veterinary treatment.
- **Friendly/Stray Cats:** We will accept injured or ill friendly or stray community cats for medical treatment. If they are treatable and adoptable, we will work to find them a new home. If they cannot be saved, we will provide humane euthanasia.

3. Cats with Identification

- **Identification:** We will accept cats that have identification, such as a microchip. We will hold these cats for the required stray period, giving their owner the opportunity to reclaim them.
- **Finding an Owner:** We encourage individuals who find a cat to post on social media platforms such as NextDoor, Craigslist, Facebook groups, and create a flyer to distribute in the neighborhood. We might not know where that cat lives, but good body condition tells us the cat knows where home is and will make its way back on its own. Even cats who are actually lost are [10–50 times more likely](#) to be reunited with their owners if

they stay in the neighborhood where they are found (instead of being removed from the area and taken to an animal shelter)

4. Kittens

- **Mother's Care is Best:** If you encounter kittens that are still nursing (approximately 0-4 weeks old), please leave them where they are. The mother is best suited to care for the kittens, and intervention should only occur if the kittens are sick, injured, or abandoned.
- **Signs of a Healthy Litter:** If the kittens appear plump, clean, warm, and quiet, the mother is likely nearby and the kittens should be left alone. If the kittens are cold, hungry, or dirty, this may indicate the mother is absent or unable to care for them.
- **When to Intervene:** If you find kittens that may need help, follow the "our [Finding Motherless Kittens](#)" guidelines and check out resources from <https://www.kittenlady.org/kitten-care> and [Maddie's Fund](#) for guidance on raising kittens. If you are unable to get them care through a local veterinary clinic, call us or bring them to the shelter.

Community Cat Caregiver Resources: For those who care for feral or stray cats, we support Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) efforts and can provide resources and guidance. We do not admit community cats into the shelter, but we are happy to assist with TNR and related services.

Helpful Definitions

Healthy adult cats

- Healthy adult "stray" cats without a microchip are not eligible for intake through OAS
- Defining healthy
 - Has a good body condition
 - No visible injuries or wounds
 - Hair loss and areas of scabbing are okay
 - No visible nasal or ocular discharge
 - Mild clear discharge or tear staining is okay
- Provide citizens with the OAS policy, explaining why we are not accepting the cat

Sick/Injured cats

- Defining sick and injured
 - Noticeably underweight or poor muscling
 - Open wounds, limping
 - Severe URI
 - Other apparent signs of illness or injury that are inhibiting the cat from continuing to live comfortably
 - If questions, ask vet staff
- If brought in by a feeder, caretaker, or owner encourage them to seek care through a local veterinary clinic

- If feral (unable to handle, unsocialized) we have limited ability to provide medical treatment, as treatment would cause undue stress, humane euthanasia is the likely outcome.
 - If the injury/illness is mild we may provide treatment and ask the finder to return the cat to the area found.
 - If the injury/illness is mild, but the area to return the cat in is deemed unsafe, we may provide treatment and utilize the working cat program for placement (VERY limited ability to place cats through this program)
- If friendly (able to be handled, social) we will provide medical treatment as able and hold the cat through the required stray period. After this, we will determine the cats pathway, which may include:
 - Placing up for adoption
 - Transferring to a rescue group
 - Releasing back into the care of the finder in the area the cat was from

Kittens

- Still nursing, age 0-4 weeks
 - If kittens are plump, clean, and warm the kittens should be placed back in the area they are found as this is evidence the mother is caring for them
 - If kittens are skinny, dirty, cold, or noisy staff assessment on intake
 - See OAS kitten foster guidelines to determine pathway
 - Provide finders with information:
 - <https://www.contracosta.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/41245/FINDING-MOTHERLESS-KITTENS?bidId=>
- Age 4-8 weeks
 - If finders are unable to provide care or return for TNR services intake the kittens into the shelter
 - See OAS kitten foster guidelines to determine pathway
 - If healthy and mother in area, can consider leaving the kittens in place until they are large enough for s/n and provide TNR resources
 - Encourage finders to take kittens in themselves, socialize, and find homes for the kittens. Offer s/n and vaccination resources for finders to utilize.
- Age 8+ weeks
 - Provide TNR resources
 - If friendly, consider intake on case-by-case basis depending on shelter's current capacity

Owner surrenders

- Owner surrenders will be considered for intake on a case-by-case basis, ideally by appointment

Case-by-case intake decisions

- Consult animal care supervisor or other management for intake approval