



## BCHS Working Cats Caregiver Instructions

### Before arrival of barn cat(s):

- Determine several possible locations for acclimation cages.
- Have needed supplies on hand, such as bedding, cat food, food and water dishes, etc.
- Remove any rat poisons, antifreeze or other harmful substances which might be in the barn or immediate area.

### First two weeks:

- Check feed/water each day and refill as needed or if the water gets dirty.
- Scoop litter each day, change completely after one week.
- Ensure that cages are safe from vehicles, horses, and dogs and have plenty of ventilation.
- Talk to the cats whenever you can. Give each a name if they do not have one; cats do learn to respond to their names.
- During the first day or two, the cats may struggle to find a way out. Most cats settle down in the cage after a day or two when they realize that no harm will befall them.
- **If it gets unusually cold**, put sheets/towels over the cage or stack hay/straw around it. Ensure cage cannot get wet. Place straw in the cage for bedding (do not use blankets as they can get wet and freeze). Ensure their drinking water is not frozen or replaced frequently.
- **If it gets unusually hot**, ensure the cats are in a shady location, provide a cooling fan if able and place a frozen container of water inside the kennel, replace when thawed. Be sure there is fresh water at all times.

### After two weeks: Release Day

- Set up a feeding station so the cats know exactly where to find food and water. To discourage dogs and other wildlife put the feeding station in a secure location.
- If possible, close the shelter in the morning, open the cage door and let the cat find its "special" place in the barn. Daylight release is safer due to predators.
- Leave the cages and hiding boxes set up for 4 or 5 more days.
- Return any borrowed equipment to BCHS within 4 weeks following adoption.

## Hints and Tips

*After release it is possible the cats will not stay at what we have decided is their new home, but there are a few steps you can take to encourage them to stick around:*

- Try to talk to the cats each day while in the cages so they know you are a friend.
- Cats are more likely to stay where there is permanent food. **Catching mice is a game, not a sufficient form of nutrition. A well fed cat is more likely to “play” cat-and-mouse games!**
- Prepare special hiding places for them in the barn, shed, or garage. You can use large boxes or a plastic tub with a hole cut in the end. You can also put in a “hiding box” (dog house, large box, etc.) for them or secure a “high place” on top of a stall or high beam.
- *You may not see the cats after release.* Cats are nocturnal, so the best time to spot them is sunrise and dusk.
- Some cats “travel” to other barns but then will return “home” after a week or so.
- You can give them canned food at the same time and place each day to encourage them to stick around.
- If the food is disappearing, but you aren’t seeing the cats, they may be hiding, or they may be gone. Another possibility is that other critters are eating the cat food.
- Cats will almost always use a litter box if one is provided. If you put out a box and it is used, you know the cats are still around, even if you aren’t seeing them.
- You should see less mouse droppings around if the cats stay.
- **If it is raining or rain is forecast the day of the release, wait until the next non-rainy day to release the cats.** Cats find their home by scent and rain will wash it away. Waiting one more day will not hurt.