Austin Pets Alive! Barn Cat Program: Adoption Procedures

Application Screening:
The Barn Cat Adoption Application will first be screened for overall suitability. Adopters must be willing to:

- Provide shelter in a permanent building (barn, shed, garage, coop, etc). Dog houses/igloos or placement such as ‘under a non-enclosed porch or deck’ are not typically acceptable.
- Provide daily food and water
- Provide long term medical care, as needed
- Location is at least ½ mile off a busy road
- Not have repeated or ongoing predation losses in the past year
- Must be willing to confine cats for the recommended 2-4 week period
- Must be willing to adopt a minimum of two cats
- Any deviations from these items requires approval of the Barn Cat Manager to proceed.

Once the application has been screened for all mandatory requirements, the applicant is emailed a more detailed canned response regarding the cats in this program, the requirements and expectations, and asked to confirm if they would like to proceed. Adopters may not select their cats, but reasonable requests will be accommodated whenever possible.
Once applicant has replied to proceed, the barn cat adoption will be scheduled during normal business hours. All barn cat adoptions are scheduled in advance as loading these cats into carriers may take extra time and/or staff.

Adoption Day Protocols:
- On the day of adoption, the cats will be placed into cat carriers prior to the appointment. This procedure will only be performed by staff members trained in the Barn Bat Program. Once inside a carrier, cover the carrier completely with a towel.
- Once confined, each cat’s microchip will be confirmed.
- The adoption contract should be modified to remove the requirement for a veterinary visit within fourteen days and Behavioral Issues should be noted as “Feral Barn Cats”.
- During the adoption process with the adopter, the counselor will ensure the adopter has a place to confine the cats, plans to confine them for the 2-4 week period, and plans to feed the cats daily. Answer any questions at this time and explain to the adopter that cats like these are euthanized at shelters daily due to temperament so adopting today has saved their lives, ask them to kindly spread the word of this program, and always offer our assistance if the adopter has any questions once the cats arrive home.
FERAL CAT HOUSING AND HANDLING PROTOCOLS

For the safety of personnel and cats, the following protocols are to be used by all departments housing or caring for feral cats, semi-feral cats, or cats suspected of being feral.

HOUSING
Every feral cat must have a Feral Cat Den inside the condo. If a Feral Cat Den is not available or does not fit inside the condo, you may substitute a cat carrier with door propped open.

The den should have a working portal door and properly fitting front panel.

The front panel should stay on the den inside the condo and the portal door should remain open for the cat to use for entry and exit.

The den should be placed at the rear of the condo with the front panel against a wall and the round portal facing the middle of the kennel. The front panel should not face the front of the condo as this does not provide as much privacy.

To clean or feed the cat, reach through the condo door with a stick and close the portal door. You can then safely open the condo door to clean the cage, feed the cat, or remove the cat entirely from the condo unit.

When finished, close the condo door and open the portal door with the stick.

The entire condo should be in a quiet room with as little disruption as possible. To further reduce stress, cover the condo completely.

Also remember to feed the feral cat wet food at night, as most feral cats will only come out in the quiet of night to eat.

NOTE: Feral Cat Dens are very expensive at over $80/ea. and APA! has no budget to purchase them. All dens are donated and very valuable.

It is expected that you take good care of the den, do not lose the front panel, and return the dens in good working order. Do not leave them laying about, leave them in truckport, etc.
HANDLING
The goal is to never handle a feral cat at all. All efforts should be taken to avoid ever having to touch or pick up a feral cat. Any attempt to move, handle, medicate, or treat a feral cat must only be made by approved, trained personnel.

MOVING
Do not attempt to pick up a feral cat with your hands. Do not try to remove a feral cat from a condo, cage, or carrier with your hands.

To remove a feral cat from a cage or condo when the cage does not have a feral cat den inside, take the front panel of the feral den off. Place the feral den inside the cage and allow, or encourage, the cat to go inside the feral den. You can use the front panel as a shield to encourage the cat to enter the den. Truly feral cats will willingly seek out a dark, safe place like the feral den. Once the cat is inside the den, replace the front den panel and you can now safely move the cat and den about.

Removing an alert feral cat from a carrier or den should only be performed for medical necessities and should only be done by specially trained personnel. If this is necessary, the feral cat den is placed on the exam table. Through the front panel, one of more large bulky towels are inserted to completely cover the cat. Once cat is completely covered, one person will apply firm pressure downward on the cat’s shoulders and hips and one person will slide the feral cat den away. The feral cat must continually be kept fully covered and securely held down through the towels while the second person attends to medical needs. Bite gloves may be worn for this.

MEDICAL HANDLING
INTAKE
Intake on a feral cat consists only of a cageside exam and administering an FVRCP vaccine, if needed. All other routine intake services will be provided under anesthesia at spay/neuter.

PANLEUK
Follow the same housing instructions above. Feral cats in the Panleuk Ward will not be weighed. Treatment may vary based on what the veterinarian believes can be safely administered. Make sure these cats are offered a buffet of food options each night to encourage them to eat, including junky dry kibble, tuna, baby food, and other enticing options.
INJECTIONS
Feral cats can be given vaccines or injections in the following ways, without handling them:
• Inject through a hole in a feral cat den or live trap. You will need to tilt the den upward so gravity moves the cat toward the rear of the den.
• While the cat is inside a carrier or den, use one or more large, dense towels, cover the cat up completely then firmly press the cat's shoulders to the wall of the den while a second person administers the injection. The person holding the cat in this scenario may use bite gloves if desired.
• Subcutaneous medications are administered by one person covering the cat inside a den or carrier with one of more large, thick towels and pressing firmly down on the cat's shoulders. The second person will peel back a small area of towel to expose the injection site and administer the medication.

ORAL MEDICATIONS
The first choice for oral medications is to try to get the cat to eat the meds in wet food. If that is not successful, administer oral medications in the following way:
• Close the portal door of the feral cat den and rotate the den so the front is facing you. Insert a large, thick towel to cover the cat as much as possible; it’s ok if the cat’s head protrudes. Wrap one hand in a large, thick towel making sure your fingers are well protected. Open the front panel of the feral den about half-way, enough to get your toweled hand through. The syringe should approach the cat's head from the side. Being quick, as soon as the syringe is at the mouth, inject the medication and withdraw your toweled hand through. The cat may hiss, you may also inject the medication then while the mouth is open. You may use bite gloves underneath the towel though they will significantly impair dexterity.

SYRINGE FEEDING
Syringe feeding is done much the same way you administer oral medications. With the cat inside a feral den or carrier, insert a large, thick towel to mostly cover the cat. Wrap one hand in a large, thick towel with only the food syringe tip sticking out. Approach the cat’s mouth from the side and inject the food into the mouth. Do not inject food into the mouth when the cat hisses as this is a greater volume of liquid than medication and the cat may aspirate.

NOTE:
It is common for feral cats to allow medicating and syringe feeding when they are very ill. Often they will even allow a person to groom or clean them. As the feral cat begins to feel better, the cat will become increasingly difficult to handle. Do not assume that a feral cat is safe to handle because you can do so when he or she is ill!
Protocol for determining outdoor release candidates

Austin Pets Alive! works hard to evaluate the temperaments of all cats before bringing them into our program. However, shelter conditions often make full behavioral evaluations difficult. Therefore, while indoor-only or indoor-outdoor placements are the goal for most APA! animals, some cats may thrive in an outdoor-only or barn placement. Below are the criteria for determining whether a cat is viable for an outdoor-only placement.

To be considered for placement, cat must be healthy, not declawed, and at least 5 months old but no more than 10 years old. In all cases, cat must be evaluated by the Behavior Team manager (either in person or via communication with involved parties) before a cat can be approved for outdoor placement.

1) Undersocialization/pronounced fear of humans.
   a. Adult, undersocialized: may be handleable at TLAC, but in foster not handleable or consistently runs away from foster parent.
      i. Cat must be in program at least 4 weeks and show no or little improvement.
      ii. Cat must be evaluated by Behavior Team manager.
   b. Kitten, undersocialized: if kitten is pulled into APA’s socialization program and is continuing to exhibit hissing, fleeing behavior, aggression or hiding 6 weeks after entering foster, kitten should be considered a candidate for release.
      i. If aggressive behavior, hissing and fleeing are noted in the foster home after 6 weeks, kitten should be evaluated by Feral Team manager or Behavior Team manager. If manager determines cat is a poor candidate for continued socialization, kitten will be released.
      ii. If kitten reaches 6 months old in foster and is continuing to exhibit antisocial behaviors and demonstrating limited improvement kitten is automatically a candidate for release.
      iii. At the discretion of the Feral Team or Behavior Team manager, a socialization-program kitten that meets release criteria i. and/or ii. may be placed in an experienced foster home for a maximum of 3 weeks to determine kitten’s socialization viability.
2) Aggressive cats.
   a. Adult, arousal aggression or pronounced hyperesthesia:
      i. 2 or more skin-breaking bites must be reported.
      ii. If safe, foster should try play therapy and Feliway for 3–4 days and evaluate for improvement.
      iii. Cat must be in foster care or at APA’s facility for at least 3 weeks after neutering or spaying, except in extreme cases.
   b. Adult, redirected aggression:
      i. Behavior demonstrated in response to known stressor, e.g., presence of another animal.
      ii. Injuries inflicted on foster or caretaker must be substantial, e.g., deep puncture wounds or slashes.
      iii. Stressor must be something difficult to avoid, such as viewing stray cats outside the window, or loud noises.
   c. Adult, aggressive, OTHER: aggression not triggered by known stimuli or dominance aggression:
      i. 2 or more skin-breaking bites must be reported by foster.
      ii. Injuries inflicted on foster or caretaker must be either substantial or frequent.
      iii. Cat must be evaluated by Behavior Team manager.

3) Elimination problems
   a. Adult, social, spraying: these cats are viable for outdoor placement where they are guaranteed human interaction (e.g., outdoor-only backyards or barns with frequent human presence).
      i. Cat must be cleared by veterinary staff as free of UTI.
      ii. Cat must be neutered/spayed for at least 4 weeks before release can be considered.
      iii. Foster must have experimented with non-clumping litter, Feliway, an uncovered and consistently clean litter box, and isolation in a bathroom.