



**Animal Talk Rescue
6514 Roosevelt Way NE
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Congratulations, you adopted a previously feral cat!

Your kitten or cat is a fortunate little being. She survived being born in the wild, most likely in a neighborhood full of dogs and cars, and perhaps even coyotes and raccoons. She was trapped and demonstrated enough flexibility to learn to trust and have a relationship with a human being. She or he probably looks just like any other cat you ever had, but this one is a little different. Her initial training from her mom included careful instructions to not trust people. A Feral Cat is simply a domestic cat that was born in a situation where they are not taught to trust humans. If your favorite pet cat from childhood had a litter of kittens in the woods behind your house, if no one ever picked them up or played with them, they would be feral. Being feral is not genetic, the tamest cats can have feral kittens and the wildest mamma cats can produce litters of kittens that will sleep on your lap, play with your dog and happily live their entire life no closer to the outside world than your window.

Many of these kittens when we first get them are totally terrified and wild. They will use whatever means they have to escape close contact with people. We work with them and usually within days all of our cats are safe to handle. Once they realize that people are not going to eat them, almost all of our feral cats will allow themselves to be handled within days of being captured.

Your kitten has been socialized and we have placed it up for adoption because it has responded to human affection. She/he will purr and play and not fight when you pick them up. At first, this kitten might do a lot of hiding, because that's what she was trained to do by her mom. But with careful planning and patience, she will take over your whole house.

The night you get your kitten home.

As irresistible as this kitten is to you; the first night we'd like you to place her in a tiny room like a bathroom with a dish of the food we provided for you, water and cat

litter. Put her carrier down and open it. Then leave the room. The next day she will be ready to meet you. Enter the room, move slowly, feed her. This cat has to learn quickly that you are really in charge, so slowly and deliberately, pick her up. She might hide in a corner or behind the toilet. Get her. If the kitten starts to run around, move more slowly. Wait until she stops running, then slowly move again. All cats will get bored with this, and since your kitten was already socialized, she will eventually get tired of running and will wait and let you pick her up. Some cats will learn that there is 1 safe place in the room to be picked up and will go there whenever you try to pick them up. This is a good way to establish trust, so don't worry about it. The cat itself will gradually enlarge the "safe" area. Pet her, put her down, feed her.

We'd like to stress not using a bedroom for your cat's first time in your home. There are too many places to hide in most bedrooms, and they are too big. Remember, these kittens have learned that small tight places are perfect; big open places are scary. So if you introduce your cat first to your bedroom, it will quickly gravitate to the darkest, most secret place it can find; like the back of your closet; somewhere that is very difficult for you to reach. Your moving of all the furniture to reach your kitty is very traumatic and a big hassle besides; so that's why we suggest a bathroom.

Most feral cats are very food oriented, which is very useful because you can use the food as a training tool. Continue to visit your cat throughout the day, and you will notice that within 2 or 3 days, she will quit cowering, and will come out more and more. If you decide to give her treats (like tiny portions of canned cat food or baby food) the kitten may very well start jumping into your lap in anticipation.

When your cat is totally relaxed and playing; and begging to be let out of your bathroom, you are ready to let her into a bigger portion of the house. This can take up to two weeks or more with some cats. We also suggest that you do this gradually; at first let your cat into the rest of the house while you are home, then put them back in "their room" while you are at work.

Living with a formerly feral cat.

Like most creatures, feral cats thrive on routine. The more routines you establish with your cat, the better a relationship you will have with her. For example, pet her before feeding. If your cat knows that she must be petted before you'll feed her, she will

expect that and it will be a part of her life. The more things you do to engage the cat, the less likely she will be to revert to avoiding people.

Other great routines are playing before bed; and having them do tricks for treats. Each cat is different; so it's hard to predict what tricks will work for your cat. Some cats will learn to sit on high chairs or reach to shelf tops for treats; they will notice when you go into the kitchen and start to perform. Other cats will learn to open cupboard doors or ring little bells. All of these things require human to cat communication and are very useful for keeping a friendly relationship going.

Don't forget to introduce your new kitty to your friends. Cats just like dogs need to be socialized; so if you live a solitary life; it might be good to have some folks over within the first week or two for introductions so that they learn that you are not the only person in the world that they can trust.

If you can sleep with your cat, this is another wonderful bonding routine with formerly feral cats. Many of these kitties will quickly learn to follow you to bed. Some cats like to get under the covers with you and some do not.

As your cat gets older, she might be less interested in playing, but continue to try to find things to do with your cat. Put catnip on her cat scratching tree, buy new toy mice for her.

Other Pets

Unless your kitten has been traumatized in some way, it should adjust nicely to your other cats and dogs. Unless you are adopting this kitten as a companion animal for your existing cat or dog; we suggest that for the first week or two you isolate your new cat from the other pets. This gives you a chance to bond well with the kitten.

Remember each cat is an individual and it is possible that your cat will not respond the way we are describing here. If our suggestions do not help you and you are still having problems, please feel free to call us at Animal Talk and we will do our best to help you and your cat to bond forever. The number is 206-526-1558.

Although sharing your life with a formerly feral cat is a bit more difficult to start with than a cat socialized from birth, we think you'll find that the wisdom they gained from their mothers and siblings and the learning process you and your kitty will have to go through will make them an incredibly more satisfying pet. Good luck.