

# Colony Caretaking: Tips & Tricks



NEIGHBORHOODCATS



THE  
COMMUNITY CATS  
PODCAST

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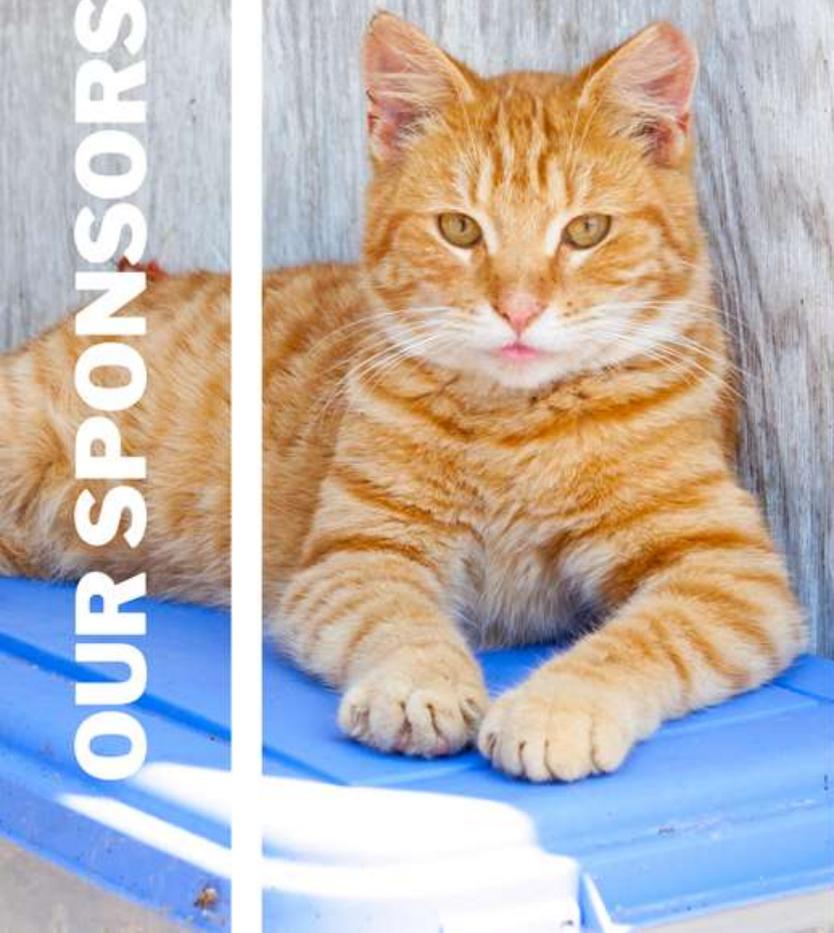
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**TNR substantially reduces  
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Join host Stacy LeBaron every week for insightful interviews, educational discussions and supportive advice for cat caregivers and animal welfare advocates.

Plus visit the website for thoughtful weekly blog posts and while you're there, apply for a Community Cats Grant. Qualifying organizations gain access to a mentoring program, plan a fundraiser for their group and earn grant money!

Learn more at [communitycatspodcast.com](https://communitycatspodcast.com).



## Check out some of our recent guests!



**Cats at Play** with  
Dr. Mikel Delgado,  
Co-Owner of Feline Minds



**Honoring Our Best Friends**  
with Cheryl Richardson,  
Author of How to Survive  
the Loss of a Pet



**How to Reunite Pets and  
Owners** with Corinne Bourgoin,  
Operations Coordinator, MSPCA  
Boston Adoption Center



**Same Team** with Sterling  
Davis, Atlanta's "Trap King"



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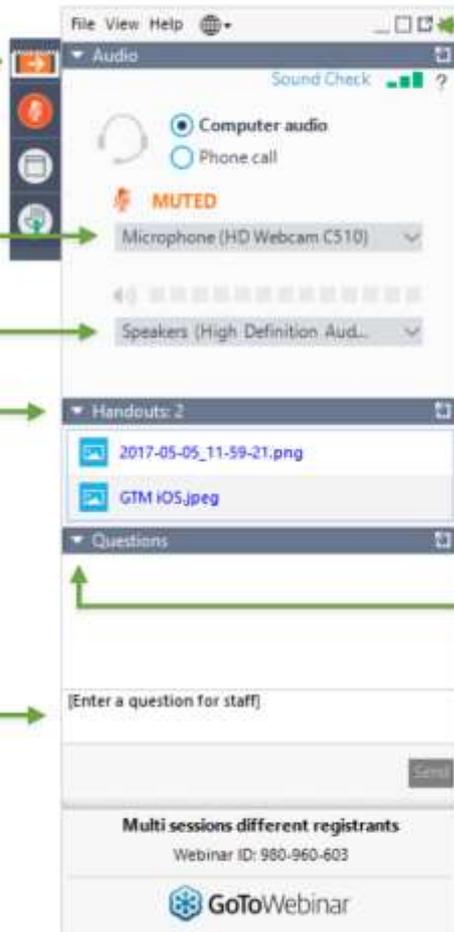
Click the dropdown menu and make sure it's set to the speakers or headphones you'd like to use.

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**Susan Richmond**  
Executive Director  
Neighborhood Cats



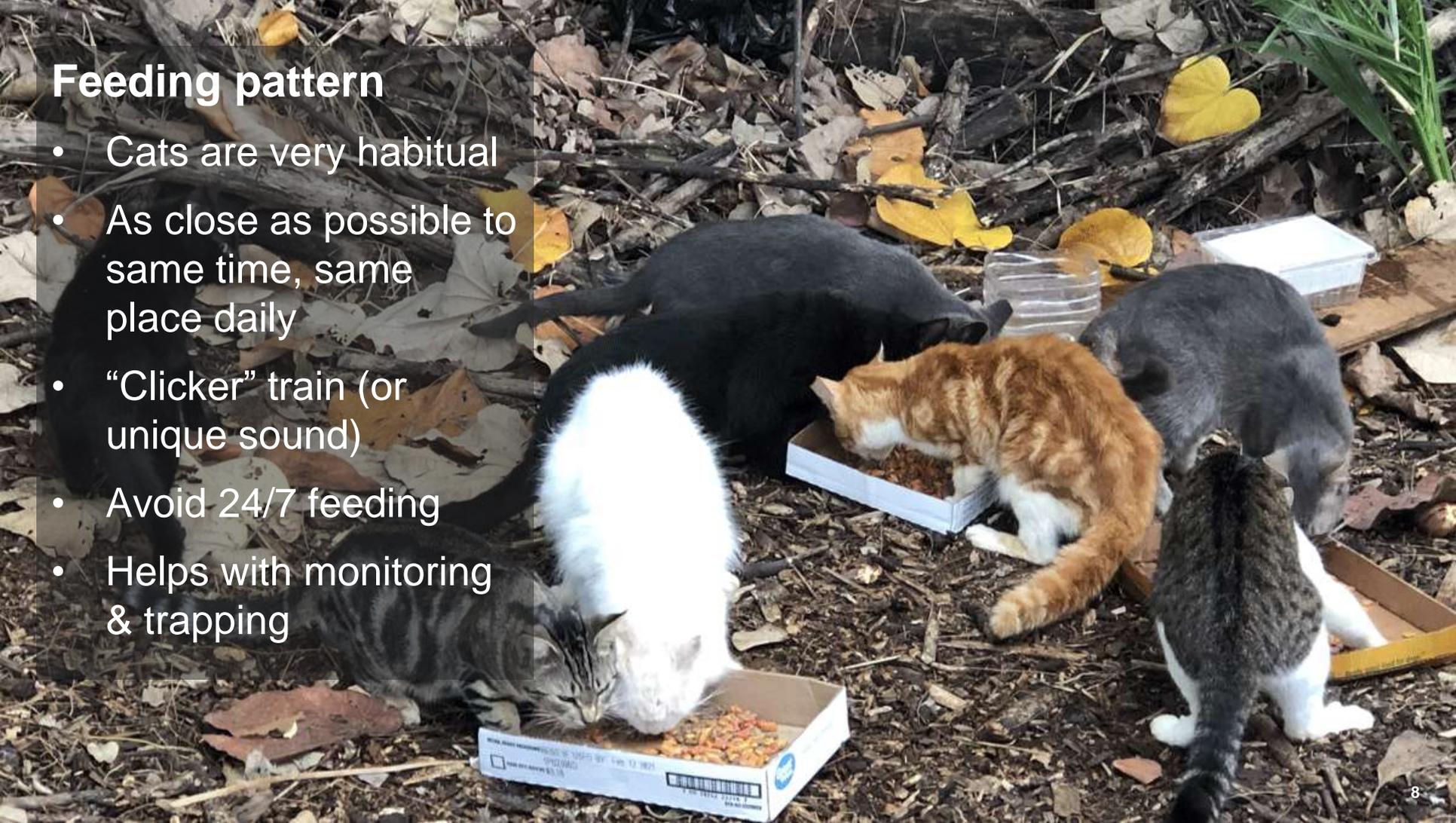
**Bryan Kortis**  
National Programs Director  
Neighborhood Cats

The bond



## Feeding pattern

- Cats are very habitual
- As close as possible to same time, same place daily
- “Clicker” train (or unique sound)
- Avoid 24/7 feeding
- Helps with monitoring & trapping





## Avoid attracting wildlife

- Feed during daylight – most wildlife (except birds) are nocturnal
- Train the cats to eat during a window of time (e.g., 5 to 6pm) and don't leave excess uneaten food behind

# Raccoons, opossum & skunks

**Raccoon-proof feeder** – for wildlife that can climb, but not jump vertically

Main elements:

- Platform (2 ft. square) raised off the ground on a post
- Grip-proof skirt around the platform (metal flashing)
- Smaller jump-up platform 2 ft. away

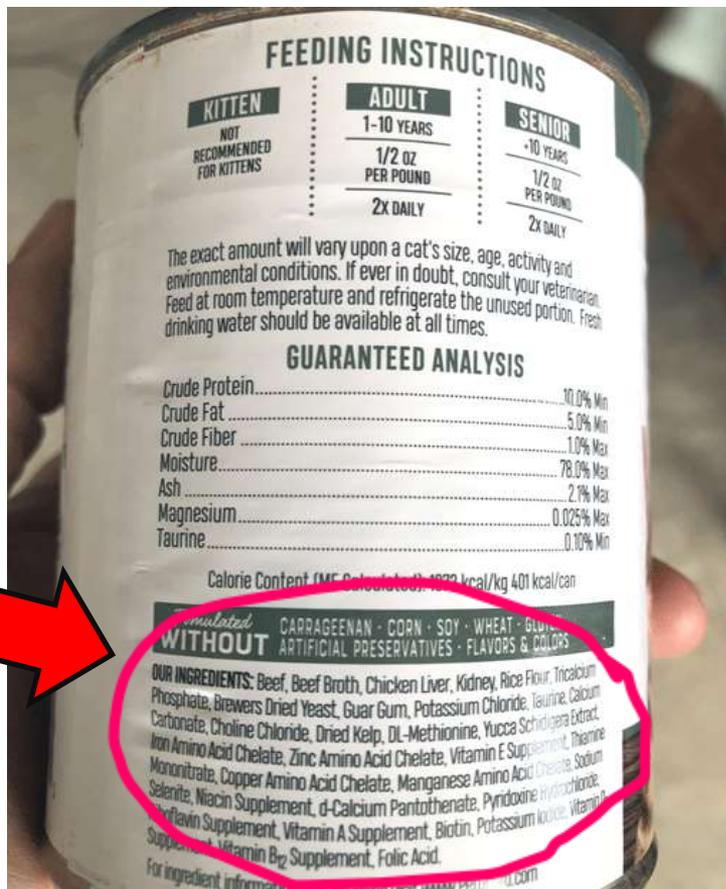


plans: [Forgotten Felines of Forsyth](#)

# Birds

- Are diurnal and inactive at night, so feed cats at dawn, dusk or when dark out
- In daytime with a feeding station, attach door flaps like plastic strips
- Most birds will eat cracked corn or chicken scratch, so can feed separately





## Read the ingredients label

- Ingredients listed in order of volume
- More nutritious = whole meats
- Less nutritious = grains, by-products
- Better = pricier

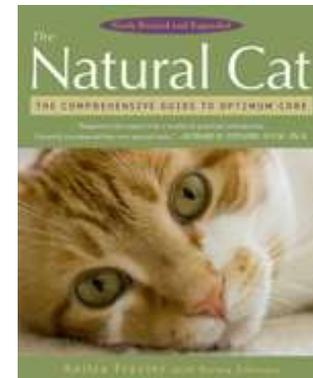
### Learn more:

[\*The Natural Cat\*](#) by Anitra Frazier

[feline-nutrition.org](http://feline-nutrition.org)

[catinfo.org](http://catinfo.org)

[littlebigcat.com](http://littlebigcat.com)



# Wet vs. dry

Which form of meat do you think is more nutritious?



**Wet**



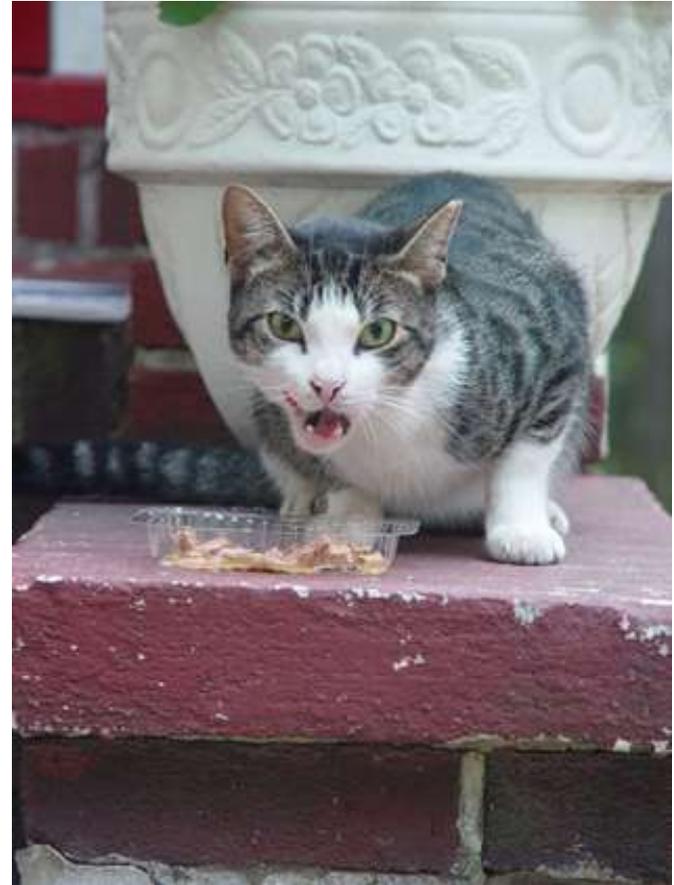
**Dry**

# Value

Choose the best quality and type (wet or dry) you can comfortably afford

Good value brands (dry):

- Kirkland Signature Maintenance Cat Chicken & Rice Formula
- Rachael Ray Nutrish Natural Chicken & Brown Rice
- Diamond Naturals Active Cat Chicken Meal & Rice Formula

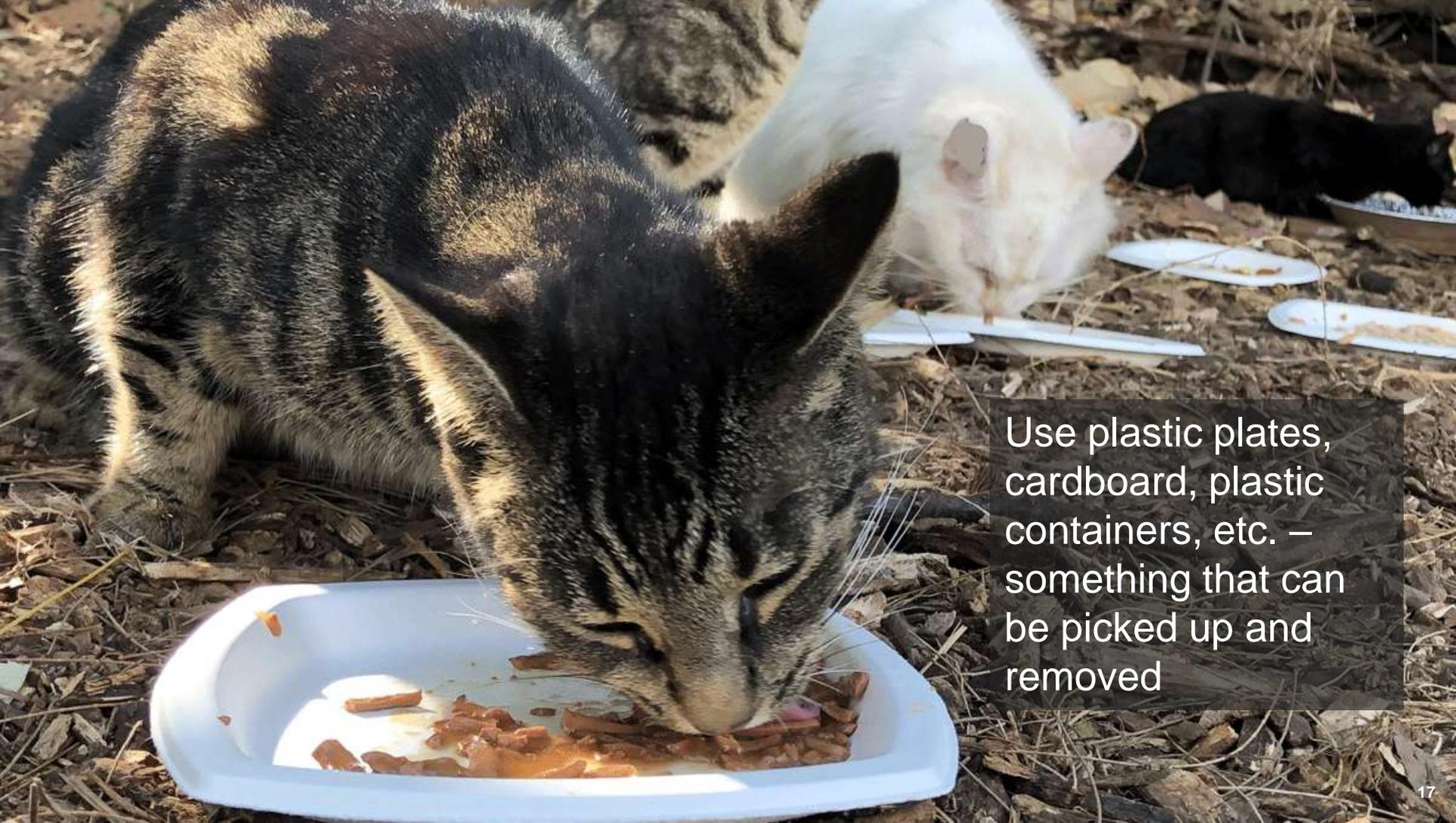


## Where to feed?

- Low visibility (as discreet as possible, e.g., backyard not front yard)
- Minimal impact on neighbors or work site
- Safe and quiet for cats
- Accessible for you
- Distant from any threatened wildlife

**Avoid** putting food directly on the ground, curb, sidewalk, etc.





Use plastic plates, cardboard, plastic containers, etc. – something that can be picked up and removed

## Clean up!

- Number one complaint against cat feeders is leaving a mess
- Pick up all trash, including non-cat
- Don't leave bags of trash on-site with any food scent inside - can get ripped open or trap/suffocate wildlife





## Gravity feeders & auto-waterers

- If feeding regularly is a problem (limited access, weekend trip, etc.)
- Use smallest needed
- Could attract wildlife, rodents, other cats
- Clean fresh water needed year-round – change frequently

## Feeding stations

- Protect food and/or water from elements
- Keep site clean & neat
- Large opening or multiple doorways



30-gallon trash can



30 gallon

30 to 55 gal. storage bin



DIY wooden

18-gallon storage bin



Large Feralvilla  
[www.feralvilla.com](http://www.feralvilla.com)



Small Feralvilla  
[www.feralvilla.com](http://www.feralvilla.com)



## Drop trap station

- For side-door trapping
- See [The Drop Trap – A Trapper's Best Friend](#)



# Mock rocks



DekoRRa Rock Enclosures

- Short Model 101 (from [The Pond Guy](#))

- Keep feeding stations hidden, even in plain sight
- Lightweight, available in a range of sizes and shapes
- Use a jigsaw (with the correct blade) to cut a doorway
- DIY: [YouTube](#) videos. Search: “Make a fake hollow rock”

# A few tips



No feeding station and it's raining or going to rain?  
Take-out dishes!



Vittles Vaults to store dry food on-site (keep vault in a storage bin) - [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



Arm extender/grabber for fences, hard-to-reach spots - [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

## Feeding in winter

- Cats expend more calories in colder temperatures keeping warm & active
- Cats need an average of 15% more food in winter
- Avoid metal bowls (unless heated) in below freezing temperatures





## Water in winter

- Healthy cats don't need much water, but do need some daily
- Especially important when main source of food is dry food
- If cats are present, feed some wet food right away with a little extra water mixed in

# Products to stop freezing



Solar Sipper (solar heated  
to 20 degrees F.)

[SolarFlairLighting.com](http://SolarFlairLighting.com)



SnuggleSafe  
Microwave Heat Pad

[www.entirelypets.com](http://www.entirelypets.com)



Electric heated bowl

Farm Innovators 1.5 gal.  
Heated Pet Water Bowl

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

# Do-it-yourself



Deep, wide, thick plastic bowl  
Petmate (10 cup)  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)



Small Styrofoam shipping box:  
1. line interior with plastic bag  
2. cut small drinking hole in top lid



Styrofoam cooler  
(buy while in season  
during the summer)

## Clearing a path

Rock salt and chemical de-icers can be highly irritating and toxic to cats

A safe solution:

- 1 teaspoon Dawn dish detergent
- 1 tablespoon rubbing alcohol
- ½ gallon warm water
- Mix
- Spray or pour on ice

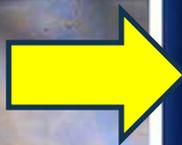




## Ants can't swim

- Ant-proof pet bowls (search on [Amazon](#))
- Build your own – cookie sheet pan

# Pan-in-pan moat



# Flies

- Most attracted to wet food on hot days
- Less attracted to dry food
- They sleep at night – train cats to eat at sundown (at least during summertime)



## **PETLIBRO wireless auto feeder**

Program meals on your  
smart phone

[Find on Amazon](#)



# Slugs

- Diatomaceous earth – **food** grade only (*Don't inhale! Wear a dust mask when spreading.*)
- Crushed eggshells or chalk powder
- Sheet of sandpaper
- Feed separately - a bit of food on the ground a few feet away



Diatomaceous Earth  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

# Cat Trivia!





## Winter shelter must be:

- Waterproof
- Well insulated
- Minimal empty air space

Cats' body heat is captured and warms the interior

# Neighborhood Cats Winter Shelter

Plans: [www.neighborhoodcats.org](http://www.neighborhoodcats.org)



## Styrofoam boxes

- Shipping containers (meat, fish, vaccines, etc.) Can order in bulk online.
- Cut 6" round or square doorway in short side (leave lip a few inches above ground)
- Use silicone glue to attach top
- Deck paint to camouflage





## Storage Bin & Styrofoam Winter Shelter

Plans & other ideas:  
[www.neighborhoodcats.org](http://www.neighborhoodcats.org)

Photo: Carole Milker



**Feralvilla Outdoor  
Cat Shelter II**  
[www.feralvilla.com](http://www.feralvilla.com)



## Emergency winter shelter

Made from two cardboard boxes, newspaper, plastic drop cloth (or large trash bags) & duct tape

Plans:

[www.neighborhoodcats.org](http://www.neighborhoodcats.org)

## Placement

- Paint and/or camouflage to blend in
- Discreet
- Near feeding station



# Interior insulating materials



Straw (not hay)  
[Home Depot](https://www.homedepot.com)



Mylar blanket  
[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



Shredded  
newspaper



Carolina Pet Company Purr Padd  
[www.petco.com](https://www.petco.com)



Flat newspaper



Blankets, towels

# Deterrents

Keep cats out of gardens & yards

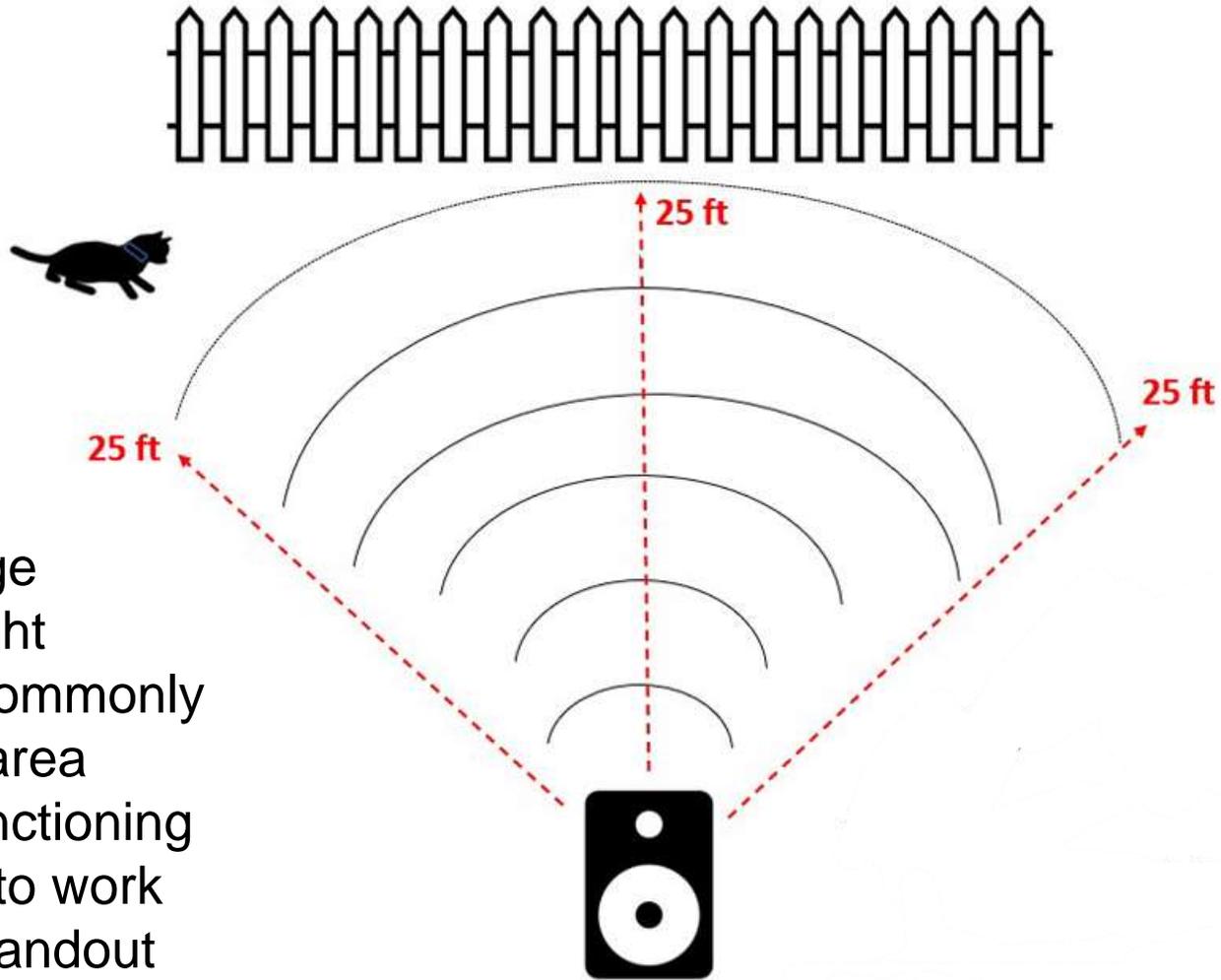
- Motion-activated sprinklers
- Ultrasonic devices



Yard Gard  
[www.bird-x.com](http://www.bird-x.com)



Critter Ridder  
[www.havahart.com](http://www.havahart.com)



## Ultrasonic

- Correct range
- Correct height
- Pointed in commonly frequented area
- Batteries functioning
- Give it time to work
- Download handout

# Physical barriers

- Car covers
- Cat-proof fencing
- Cat Scat mats
- Stones / lattice



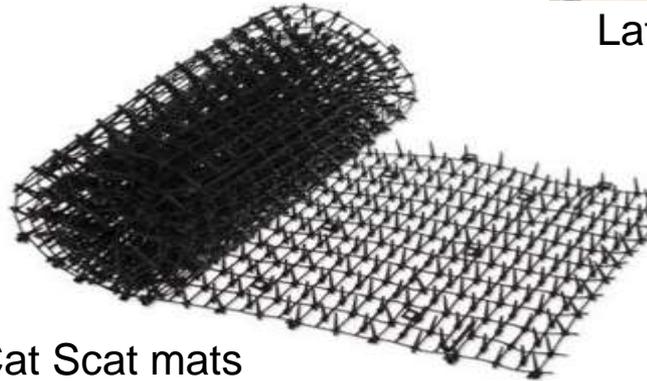
Unique Bargains  
[www.walmart.com](http://www.walmart.com)



Lattice fencing



Purrfect Fence  
[www.purrfectfence.com](http://www.purrfectfence.com)



Cat Scat mats  
[www.gardeners.com](http://www.gardeners.com)



River rocks





Naturally Playful Sandbox II  
[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

## Alternative litter boxes

- Sandbox
- Pile of peat box
- Storage bin (with litter pan and doorway)



## Health hacks

Safeguarding your colony's health doesn't have to be costly or difficult.

Try these simple tips to keep cats purring along!



## Vitamin C

- Bolsters immune system during times of stress (trapping, trips to the vet, severe weather)
- Use powdered supplements or organic tomato sauce (without onion as an ingredient)
- Give up to 250 milligrams (1/8<sup>th</sup> teaspoon) per cat with each meal

## D-mannose

- Cranberry extract
- Helps eliminate harmful bacteria in the urinary tract
- Maintenance dose equals 1/8<sup>th</sup> teaspoon twice a day (per cat)
- Especially helpful for cats prone to feline lower urinary tract disease



# Probiotics

- Promotes healthy intestinal flora (good bacteria that lives in the intestines)
- Healthy gut = stronger immune system
- For cats on antibiotics, helps replenish good intestinal bacteria killed by the medication
- Add to food or water –  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon per cat daily



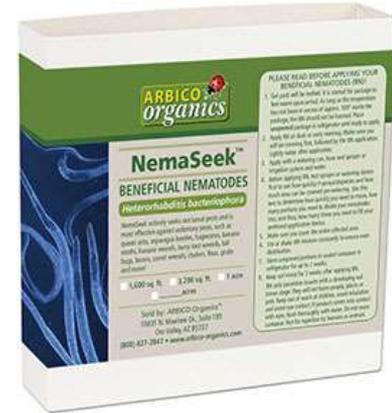
Nutra vital biotic  
[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

# Fleas - natural

- Sprinkle **diatomaceous earth** (food grade) in cracks, crevices, shelters or other areas fleas gather – kills on contact
- Be careful not to inhale (powder is tiny sharp objects) – use a mask!
- **Beneficial nematodes** are microscopic organisms that eat flea larvae – spray over grass in shady areas during cooler part of day



Diatomaceous Earth  
[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



NemaSeek  
by Arbico Organics  
[www.arbico-organics.com](http://www.arbico-organics.com)

# Fleas – over-the-counter, ingestable

- [Capstar](#) begins killing adult fleas within 30 minutes – over-the-counter, no prescription required
- Dose is one tablet – can be administered in food
- Safe for kittens over 2 lbs.
- Does not kill eggs or larvae
- Active ingredient is **nitenpyram** – [generic versions](#) are cheaper







# Neighborhood Cats TNR Certification Workshop –

**Saturday, Dec 7, 2024**

**2 – 4:30pm ET**

**\$10.00** [Register](#)

Are you ready to be part of the solution for feral and stray cats in your neighborhood? Learn what TNR is, why it works, and how to get started. Our expert instructors will teach you the best practices for Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) and colony management. Plus, you'll receive a certificate of completion after you attend.



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**DATES: SAT, JAN 25 & SUN, JAN 26, 2025**

**TIME: 10:00AM-5:00PM ET**

**[REGISTER NOW](#)**

**EARLY BIRD SPECIAL \$50 (until 12/27)**



# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

