

Oakland Animal Services *Preferred Cat Pathways*

While OAS desires to treat every cat as an individual, and to find an outcome that is in the cat's best interest, the goal of this document is to outline how we consider pathway decisions for cats under different circumstances.

UNSOCIALIZED CATS

General Philosophy: Whenever it is safe for the cat to do so, it is our preference that cats who are not socialized to people be allowed to stay in their outdoor homes. For cats who are not already spayed/neutered, OAS supports Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), to get the cats altered without having to stay in the shelter. This stops reproduction, while allowing the cats to live out their lives in their current location.

As further explained below, when unsocialized cats are brought to the shelter, under most circumstances, we believe they should be returned where they were found, and that they should be relocated only as an absolute last resort.

Pathway options for unsocialized cats

1. Trap-Neuter-Return – no intake (TNR) when all the following conditions exist:

The cat is evaluated and appears to be thriving:

- Has a good body condition, including healthy weight (indicating a food source)
- Exhibits no injury or illness (ringworm, minor wounds, mild URI ok)

The citizen wants the cat back and has known history for/with the cat

There is a history of the cat living in the area

We have a known location for release

Cat is aged at least six months (with younger cats released on a case-by-case basis)

Cat's temperament is not obviously socialized

Cat has no current ID tag or traceable microchip

Pathway: TNR.

2. Return-to-Field – intake with possible return (RTF) (usually unsocialized cat) who meet these conditions:

All the above for TNR except that the person bringing the cat in does not know the history of the cat, but is ok with the cat being returned. While we would prefer TNR, we might intake a cat if the finder has reason to believe the cat is lost or abandoned and can be made available for adoption, with an agreement that we may return the cat if it is determined to be in the best interest of the cat. Typically, this determination would be made if the cat does not appear socialized in the shelter.

In addition, an unsocialized cat with a treatable medical condition, where treatment can safely be provided and would not cause undue stress for the cat, such as from visible illness or injury, may be kept at shelter for treatment and then returned once cleared medically.

Pathway: First option is diversion – if ear tipped, healthy and not in danger, offer resources, etc. and explain why it's best for the cat to remain in its habitat. If not ear tipped, make appointment for spay/neuter.

3. Relocation via Working Cat Program (feral or nonsocial cat)

OAS has very limited capacity to relocate feral cats and must reserve those resources for the most urgent situations, such as when a cat's habitat is being destroyed through development or when the cat is in immediate risk of injury or death. Relocation is not a stress- or risk-free process for the cats so will only be undertaken as a last resort.

Meets one of the following conditions:

The cat is at least five months old. Kittens under five months will be considered for RTF or relocation if efforts to socialize them fail.

There is imminent threat to the cat's habitat

The cat has a significant medical condition that requires a more controlled placement such as limp, amputation, declawed

There is a reliable threat to the cat's life such as:

- Poison, dog attacks, reasonably verified violence

There is no known address/neighborhood to return the cat to

The cat has presented from a public health/unmanageable situation such as:

- Hoarding cases, unsustainably large groups of cats, public nuisance hot zones, ecologically protected project areas

Pathway: Working Cat Program or a similar relocation effort. Adopters of Working Cats will be vetted and must agree to properly acclimate the cats and provide food and other care for their lifetime.

Unless there is an urgent reason for intake, to minimize stress on the cat, OAS will not do intake for an unsocialized cat until a suitable relocation spot is available.

For requests for relocation of cats because their feeder is no longer able to care for them, we will work with the person to find an alternative to relocation, still considering it a last resort.

4. Euthanasia (feral or nonsocial cats)

Serious medical issues that are not treatable with shelter resources and that would cause chronic suffering for the cat, or where the treatment would cause undue stress, such as treating burns or other cases that require prolonged treatment and handling.

Pathway: Medical staff to evaluate the cat, document specific findings and recommend humane euthanasia

SOCIALIZED CATS

General Philosophy: When a pet guardian requests to surrender their cat for rehoming, we will first attempt to provide help to allow the person to keep their cat or rehome the cat themselves. When individuals find a socialized cat outdoors, we don't assume the cat needs intervention, but instead want to make an effort to find out if the cat has a home or caretakers. It is our goal to bring socialized cats into the shelter only when they are lost, abandoned or injured. Additionally, it is our goal to reunite lost animals with their families whenever possible.

Pathways for socialized cats

Pre-Intake:

1. Owner surrenders:
 - a. Determine reason for surrender and offer resources to either help them keep or self-rehome their cat
 - b. Ask if they adopted from another agency and if they have contacted that organization. If not, encourage them to do so.
 - c. Schedule appointment for surrender if above not successful

2. Strays:

Outdoor cats are often "rescued" by well-intentioned civilians who inadvertently remove them from loving families that allow them to roam freely. OAS wants to ensure our intake policies don't contribute to this practice.

- a. Injured or healthy?
 - i. If injured, schedule appointment to bring in
 - ii. If healthy, assess concerns for the cat
- b. Gather information on cat and provide resources for finding possible owner
- c. If at risk, schedule intake appointment

Post intake pathways:

1. Adoption
 - a. Medically clear
 - b. Social cat: able to pet, pick up, some level of engagement w/people
2. Transfer
 - a. Medical needs
 - b. Under socialized, shutdown, stressed
 - c. Cats approved for adoption may also be transferred
3. RTF

- a. Not doing well in shelter and is believed to have thrived outdoors
 - b. No transfer options available
 - c. Has a safe outdoor home to return to
4. Euthanasia

Serious medical issues that are not treatable, when the cat is determined to be suffering. For cats with serious medical issues that are treatable, transfer is the preferred option. When there is no transfer option, cats with serious treatable medical issues may be euthanized.