



## Barn Buddies

### Barn Cat & Confinement Training Guide

Congratulations on the adoption of your new Barn Buddy!

In preparation for your new friend's arrival, you will need to purchase a few supplies. You will need to prepare the following items before you bring your new cat home:

- Cat food-dry and canned
- Food and water dishes
- One or two large litter boxes
- Cat litter

#### Arriving Home & Confinement Training:

Relocating feral cats and outdoor cats is not as simple as physically placing them in their new environment. Cats are very territorial and will often try to find their way back to where they came from. Cats who escape upon arrival usually bolt, never to be seen again. Not only is this dangerous for the cat, this can also be traumatizing for the caregiver. Although some see the confinement period as cruel, a short confinement period is very necessary. Fortunately, cats can be acclimated to a new environment fairly easily.

Cats need to be confined initially in their new home for at least three to four weeks in order to familiarize themselves with the new environment. The process usually takes about 30 days and is referred to as re-colonization.

The relocation of cats can be challenging but following these steps below will help toward making the transition successful:

- Place the cat in a large cage or secure area such as a tack room. Line the crate with newspaper; place a blanket inside, litter box, food and water. If the cat is being relocated in colder weather, straw will need to be provided for warmth. Clumping litter is not recommended in this case as it makes a sticky mess that is more difficult to clean up should the cat make a mess of its cage overnight. The entire carrier should be placed in the cage with a bungee cord holding the door open for the cat.
- Clean the litter box and give fresh food and water daily. It is recommended that the food, water and litter be placed near the front of the crate allowing easier litter scooping, feeding and watering.
- The cat should remain in this enclosure for 3-4 weeks. After that, the cage door may be left open overnight allowing access to a large secure barn or building. This should be done right before everyone leaves for the night, allowing the cat the opportunity to explore its new home on its own. The crate should still remain set up as they may wish to return to the cage during the night.
- After 1-2 more weeks the cat should be more comfortable with its new home and the cage can be taken away. The food and water bowl should remain near where the cage was set up so the cat is still able to locate its food source. The food dish may be moved in the future once the cat is comfortable and knows a constant supply of food and water is available.
- Caring for your barn cat is as easy as providing fresh food and water daily. In the winter, remember to refresh the water frequently as it will freeze. Never rely on outdoor cats to sustain themselves on rodents alone, they need a nutrient rich diet to sustain a healthy life.
- Do not release your new barn cat(s) if it is raining or if there is potential for rain. Cats find their way home based on scent.

### Making a Cat Shelter:

In addition to the basic food and water, cats also need a place to keep warm in the winter months. Basic or more elaborate structures can be made for the cat, all serving the same purpose – keeping the cat warm. There are several different options that may be suitable for your barn or building. Below is one example of a DIY winter cat house. There are several more ideas for housing online as well.



### Medical Care:

Your barn cat should be seen by a Veterinarian yearly for regular vaccines, de-worming, and flea prevention and more frequently in cases of illness or injury. In the case of feral or under-socialized cats, it may be necessary to trap the cat humanely and have a mobile veterinarian attend your property.

With the cat living outdoors it is always recommended the cat be vaccinated for Feline Leukemia, Rabies. The cat should also receive its yearly vaccine of FVRCP.

Regular de-worming is also important as the cat can get worms from a variety of sources outdoors. Tapeworms can be contracted by eating the host, i.e. an infected mouse or flea.