



Oak Tree Animals' Charity

A Guide to Stray Cats

“I’ve found a stray cat, what do I do?”

This is one of the most frequently asked questions here at Oak Tree. Cats naturally roam up to 2km and will visit any property where they can obtain food.

Please don't feed any cats until you are sure they are unowned or stray.

Is the cat injured?

Take it to your nearest veterinary practice for medical treatment and to be scanned for a microchip. Vets have a duty of care to the animal to relieve pain, beyond that, clinics have individual protocols for handling strays requiring treatment. **If you are struggling to take the cat to a vet, you can contact us** on 01228 560082 (phone lines open 10.00am to 4.00pm).

Is the cat already owned?

There are a few ways to identify a stray cat, but it is not always easy. **Here are the first 4 things you should try to do if the cat is approachable...**

- 1 Place a paper collar onto the stray cat for 7 days** (use our template or a strip of paper will do) - write 'if this is your cat please let me know' along with your contact details.
- 2 Take the stray cat to a veterinary practice and scan for a microchip** (this is a free service). If unable to take the cat to a vet, please look on the 'Scan Angels' website to see if someone is available in your area or contact our Community Team who will arrange to come and scan the cat.
- 3 Posting on social media** (a photograph really helps) is a great way of reuniting missing pets and their owners. There are many missing cat groups and pages on Facebook depending on your area, we can recommend some good ones so feel free to ask us.
- 4 Please report the cat to your local veterinary practices** as the owner may have contacted their vets already.



Identifying the type of cat...

Every year Oak Tree sees more and more stray cats being brought in to be rehomed each year, but how do we identify a stray cat? There are four types of domestic cats, all of which have various identifiable features...

Feral Cats

Feral cats are free-living, as single or colony cats, and do not always depend on, or interact with people, and are very rarely seen. They behave like wild animals. Feral cats will be fearful of people and will not approach unless you are their regular feeder. Feral cats are not used to a usual home environment and can only be socialised as a kitten (younger than 8 weeks old).



Community/Farm/Street Cats

This type of cat is very similar to a feral cat but has some form of human contact. They are usually fed by people to some extent. They form attachments to their caretaker or feeder and may approach them for attention, but are unlikely to approach a stranger (without food). Farm cats are usually found in the countryside and around farm buildings, whereas community or street cats are found in urban areas. They may also be referred to as 'working' cats as they are integral for keeping down rodent populations.



Stray/Abandoned Cats

These are cats which have been socialised and were previously pets. They tend to tolerate some direct contact with people. Stray cats may appear underweight with an unkempt coat. They may have recently appeared in the area and look distressed. The cat could initially appear fearful but given time may become friendly, however they might never be comfortable as an indoor pet.



Pet Cats

These are normally the cats we see and enjoy being in a home environment. It is important not to feed pet cats as they may be on specialist diets or medication.



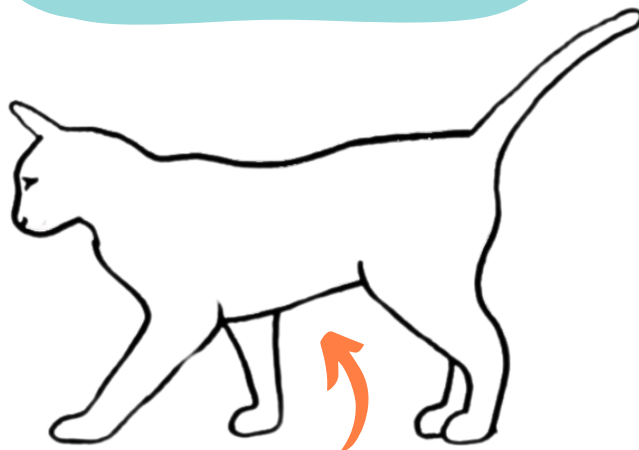
Is the cat healthy?

Unhealthy cats may look dirty or unclean, healthy cats are usually well-groomed and have healthy coats. **It is worth remembering that although a cat may look unhealthy, it may just be old or already be receiving medication.**

If the cat is injured, contact your local vet.

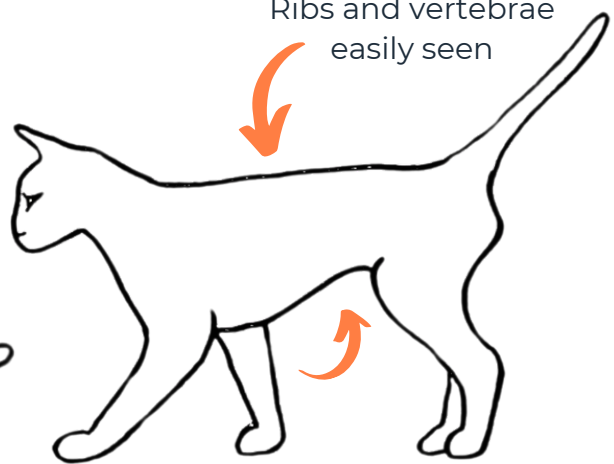
Too Thin

Ribs are visible on shorthaired cats, obvious waist behind ribs, can't feel any fat, minimal muscle mass and lumbar vertebrae obvious.



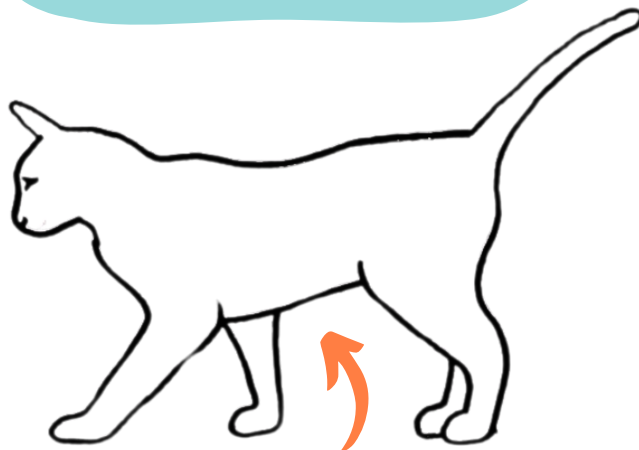
Visible waist with minimal fat

Ribs and vertebrae easily seen

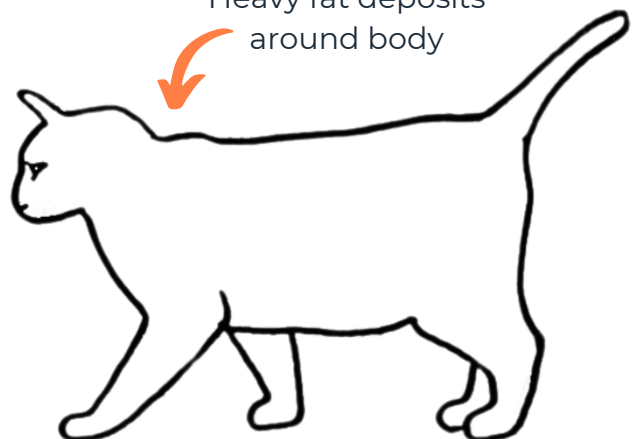


Ideal

Well-proportioned, waist behind ribs, slight fat covering which can be felt and abdominal fat pad is minimal.



Heavy fat deposits around body



Too Heavy

Ribs not easily felt or seen, excess fat covering across body, no waist or waist barely visible, round abdomen and head disproportioned to body.



Microchips

From June 2024 it is the law that **all owned cats must be microchipped**, some community and feral cats are classed as unowned so do not require microchips. If an owned cat is not microchipped or the owner's details are not updated, it can result in a hefty fine.

A microchip is about the **size of a grain of rice** and has a unique number which can be scanned and should be registered to an owner. Any veterinary practice or animal shelter can **scan for a microchip (for free)**, but it is up to the **owner to ensure the details are updated** and the chip is registered. You can also look on the 'Scan Angels' website to see if someone is available in your area to come to you to scan a microchip or contact us.

Microchips are a very cheap and easy procedure for a vet.



Keeping your own pet's details up to date...

If your pet's microchip chip is not registered or is not updated it will be of little help in reuniting you with your pet should your pet go missing.

Where to find your pet's microchip number:

- You may have received a certificate or similar at the time of implant
- It may be recorded on your pet's vaccination card
- Your vet may have this recorded in your pet's medical records

Once you have the microchip number, our Community Team will check the chip is registered and that the owner and address details are correct, or you can use the 'Check-a-chip' website at www.check-a-chip.co.uk

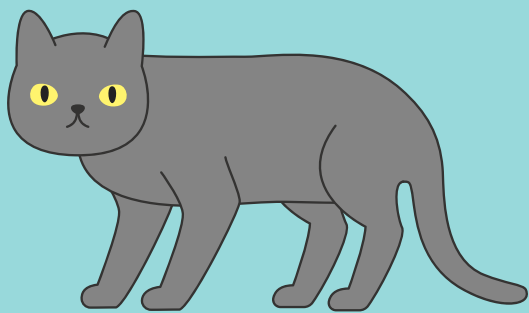
If you want to update the details you will have to do this yourself by contacting the chip database.

Is the cat approachable?

It isn't always easy to identify how a cat is feeling, but their body language can tell us a lot. Here are some basic signs of fear and anxiety that may indicate if a cat is feeling uncomfortable in your presence...

Key signs of fear or anxiety...

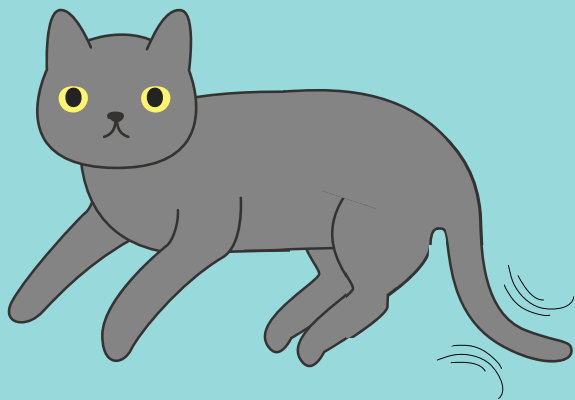
- Dilated eyes
- Furrowed brow
- Ears back or alert
- Staring or focused
- Tail down or flicking
- Sudden licking or excessive grooming



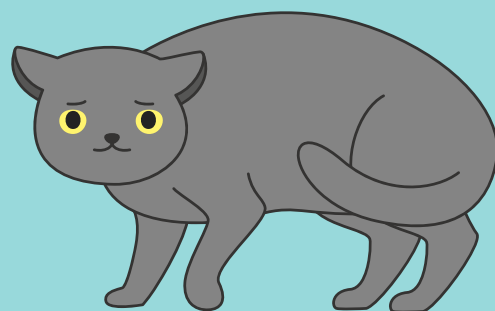
Tail down, walking with a flat back and head down



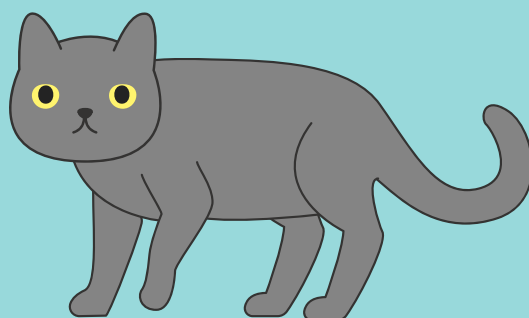
Hair raised, staring, ears turned back



Lying on side, tail flicking



Crouching or hiding under something, ears turned back, furrowed brow



Alert or ready to move, wide eyes, tail low

These diagrams are a guide only, if you need further advice, please get in touch.

Please do not feed the cat if you have not already done so.

If the cat is not approachable...

- 🐾 Check if the top of the cat's left ear has been removed or ear tipped. If it has then no further action is required.
- 🐾 If the top of the cat's left ear has not been removed the cat may be part of a feral colony and it will need to be neutered. Please contact Oak Tree about our Trap, Neuter and Return programme.
- 🐾 We always try to return the cat to their original location but in some situations that isn't possible. If you are interested in rehoming an outdoor cat, please do get in touch.

Email: community@oaktreeanimals.org.uk

Visit: www.oaktreeanimals.org.uk/community

Struggling to locate an owner after 7 days?

We are unable to add a cat to our waiting list unless you have advertised it as missing for 7 days.

If the owner is not located via the microchip or after the stray cat has been wearing a paper collar for 7 days, please contact Oak Tree Animals' Charity.

At this point an 'Intake Request Form' will be sent to you which we require to be completed and the cat will be assessed for its suitability for adoption. A member of our team will be in touch as soon as we are able to help. If the cat is reunited with the owner after being placed on our waiting list, please inform us so that we are able to make a note that the cat is no longer a stray.

Email: intake@oaktreeanimals.org.uk

Call: 01228 560082

(phonenumber open between 10.00am to 4.00pm)

What is an ear tip?

All feral cats that have been neutered have the tip of their ear painlessly removed by a vet to avoid any unnecessary trapping in the future. If the cat has been ear tipped, leave it be.





If you have a regular cat visitor and you are wondering if they need support, this guide is for you...



**Need more support
and advice?**

Email community@oaktreeanimals.org.uk
or call us on 01228 560082



Registered Charity Numbers 116951/SC048389

A **Is this your cat? Please contact this person to let us know. Thank you.**

To use, loop around and fix A to back of B with Sellotape.

Telephone:

B

Email

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