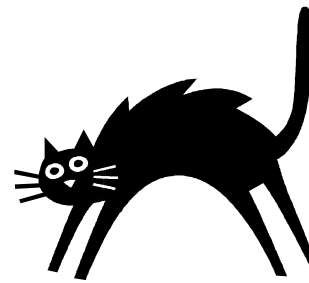




**Bristol and District Branch**  
Registered charity number 205858

**RSPCA Bristol Animal Clinic**

## **FERAL CATS**



### **What are feral cats?**

- Feral cats are cats that live wild. They may be descended from other wild cats, or have ancestors which were once domesticated.
- Feral cats are not used to interacting with human beings, and are extremely frightened of human contact, just like a wild animal.
- They tend to live in colonies in any environment that gives them a food source without coming into contact with people - this can be in towns and cities, but also in rural areas and forestry.
- A stray cat that is timid and perhaps aggressive if cornered, is not necessarily a feral cat.

### **What are our health concerns for feral cats?**

- The lifespan of a feral cat is shorter than a domesticated cat because of food availability and uncontrolled population expansion, as well as untreated disease and injury.
- These cats have a high level of infection with internal and external parasites.
- A very large number of feral cats carry serious viral diseases such as herpesvirus/calicivirus ('cat flu'), leukaemia virus (FeLV) and immunodeficiency virus (FIV).

### **Our policy on feral cats**

- We operate a neuter and release program for true feral cats, if, to the best of our knowledge, there is a food source available at the release site.
- Feral cats which are trapped and brought to the RSPCA Bristol Animal Clinic will be sedated or anaesthetised for a full clinical examination.
- Blood samples to test for FeLV/FIV are taken. Cats which test positive for either disease are euthanased on humane grounds and to reduce risk to the rest of the cat population.
- Feral cats with injuries or illnesses that are impossible to treat, due to the temperament of the cat, are also put to sleep on humane grounds.
- Healthy cats are neutered and released back to the area they came from, with an ear tip removed. This is to easily identify them as a neutered animal and avoid the distress of unnecessary trapping in the future.
- Our work with ferals is free of charge – we are grateful for any donations.

### **IMPORTANT: Cats trapped that are not true ferals**

- We have to reserve the right to make our own assessment of a cat's behaviour to determine whether it is truly feral. We would not want to release a domestic cat to live wild if we felt it could be successfully homed into a better welfare situation. If, in our opinion, a trapped cat brought in as feral is, in fact, just a nervous stray domestic cat, our Stray Policy will apply.
- Full details of our Stray Policy are available, but in summary:  
The person who has trapped the cat may choose to take full responsibility for the cat's welfare themselves, and cover the cost of its neuter +/- veterinary treatment.  
Alternatively they may choose to pass responsibility for the cat's welfare to the RSPCA. In this case, the RSPCA will fund all treatment and if the cat is healthy & suitable for rehoming it will be transferred to the Bristol Dogs and Cats Home for adoption. We generally do not rehome a stray cat to the same area it has come from.