

Saving Grace Pet Adoption Center Return To Field Program Policy

Program Information: This program provides an avenue for live outcomes for cats and kittens who previously would have been euthanized due to lack of space. Because the reclaim rate of stray cats is less than 2 percent nationally, cats have a better chance being reunited with their families if they are returned to the area where they are found rather than kept at the shelter.

Eligibility: To be eligible for the program, cats must enter the shelter as strays and be no younger than three months and no fewer than three pounds. They must be in healthy body weight as determined by our veterinary medical team and they must not be sick or injured. Declawed cats are not released back to the outdoors and are instead placed up for adoption. Cats will not be released to high traffic or other unsafe locations.

How it works: Cats and kittens enter the shelter as strays. The finder is alerted at the time of drop off that the cat that the likely outcome for that cat will be that they will be examined by our Veterinarian, sterilized, vaccinated, eartipped and returned to the spot where they were found. No less than twenty four hours following this procedure, the cat will be transported back to the place where it was found and released.

Why this program matters: Outdoor cats are often times cared for by many households in a neighborhood. Their territory can extend to a 5 mile radius or more. These cats are much more likely to find their way home if they are returned to the area where they were originally located after they are spayed/neutered, vaccinated and eartipped. Although it is not what we traditionally think of as a home, these cats are often times thriving in their outdoor homes. By returning cats to their outdoor homes, we prevent them from becoming homeless and free up shelter resources in order to help more cats who are truly homeless.

Program eligibility:

The basic assumption regarding a cat's eligibility for the RTF program is the same across the board: If a cat is of healthy weight and body condition, then she probably has a reliable food and water source, and sufficient shelter provided by one or more caregivers. For this reason, Saving Grace considers it unnecessary to identify a caregiver before returning cats to their original location.

The best option for an individual cat (given the information available at the time a decision must be made) should be determined by a range of factors, including (in no particular order):

- Cat's health
- Cat's age
- Location from which the cat was trapped
- Potential impact on other animals in the shelter's care

Microchipped cats or cats with collars and ID tags

Stray cats who are brought to the shelter are checked for microchips and ID tags upon entry. Cats who have collars with ID tags and owner contact information will be held for three days, cats who have microchips will be held for ten days. If after the hold period the owner has not been located, the cat will either be placed for adoption or put through the RTF program and returned to their original location.