



IS THIS CAT REALLY LOST?



As we all know, cats love to wander and they can stray very far even if they do have a loving home to go to back to. But, how do we know if the cat we've found wandering the neighbourhood is lost, just out for the day, or is used to living outdoors?

The first thing to consider is whether the cat is feral or a true "stray". A feral cat is essentially a wild cat which lives outdoors and doesn't have a home. Normally these cats aren't used to being handled by people, will look healthy and may live as part of a group. These cats are happy living outside and should be left well alone. On the other hand, a stray cat who is looking for their home is more likely to be friendly, trying to get inside your house and looking a little sorry for themselves. Take a look at this poster made by Cats' Protection to help you differentiate http://www.cats.org.uk/uploads/documents/Stray_feral_Facebook.png



Most importantly with cats, regardless of whether it's stray or feral, you should ask yourself does the cat look unwell; if so, it is important to seek veterinary attention for the cat. If possible, call the RSPCA and they will provide you with a log number, then bring the cat straight to a veterinary practice and they will provide emergency care.

If you think the cat is truly a stray and seems healthy, there are some things you can do to try to find the cats' owner:

1. Ask all your neighbours if they know of anyone looking for a cat.
2. Put up 'found' posters around the local area (these can be found on the RSPCA website)
3. Post messages on social media – Facebook, Twitter, any other local group pages (a quick way to spread the word)



If safe to do so, take the cat to your local vets where they will scan the cat for a microchip. If chipped, the veterinary practice will be able to reunite the cat with its owner very quickly. Unfortunately, it's often the case that the cat may not be chipped or indeed the chip details are not up to date. In this circumstance it is not possible for the veterinary practice to take on the care of the cat if it is healthy. The vet will however check that the cat is well, check whether it is male or female and give you advice on what to do next. If you cannot bring the cat to the vet then Cats Protection can send someone out to you with a microchip reader.

If the cat does not have a microchip then you will need to contact Cats Protection so they can start to look for a new home for him/her. You can call the National line on 03000 121212 or look online and they will refer you to your local branch.

Please remember that the Cats Protection is a charity run by volunteers so they may not be able to get to you immediately. In the meantime the best thing to do is to put the cat back in its original environment, provide some shelter from the elements and offer fresh food and water.

We hope these tips will help ensure that all cats who have lost their way can find their way home, and if we can't do this, ensure we get them a new forever home with the help of the fantastic local charities.

