

Relocating Barn Cats

Upon arrival at the new location, the cats must be confined for 2-4 weeks. Confinement allows the cats to adjust to the environment in safety and to accept it as their new home. If set free upon arrival, the cats may run away and become lost in an environment that is unfamiliar to them. Having some time to acclimate to the sights, sounds, smells, people and other animals in their new environment makes them feel more comfortable and safe once they're free to move around and more likely to stay on the property.

Transfer the cats from the traps or carriers to large crates or cat playpens you have already set up in an environment with moderate temperatures – not too hot or cold. Transfer each cat by placing the trap or carrier in the playpen, then opening the door. Be sure the crate door is firmly closed when transferring the cats or they may escape. The acclimation crate should have food, water, a box of some kind to hide in and a litterbox, if you choose to use one. Adding some towels or blankets to the crate will also help the cat feel a bit safer initially. Covering the crate with a sheet can help to limit some stimulation and allow for less fearful behavior initially, but in the summer months, this may not be possible. In the winter months, covering the crate and adding some straw as bedding will aide in keeping the crate warm and dry.



Successful confinement periods range from 2-4 weeks. A much longer confinement period is unnecessary and unhealthy, and can jeopardize the relocation. If confined for too long, the cats may run away upon release, from fear of being confined again.

Make sure the confinement area is located near a place where the cats can hide once they are released from the playpens. They will likely run and hide when first released, but will reappear in a day or two.

While the cat is in its acclimation crate, offer the cat a treat of wet food twice daily, if possible, in addition to its dry food, which is kept in the crate at all times. Using wet food as a way to bond and build trust with the cat can lead to quite successful results once the cat has been given free roam of the environment. When you offer the wet food, use a voice signal of some kind. "Here kitty" or any kind of call or vocal signal associated with the wet food feeding will set the groundwork for the cat to come around at feeding time once it's been released from the acclimation crate. Feel free to spend time quietly talking to the cat, as well. Don't try to pet or pick up the cat if it's especially fearful, this will only add to its level of anxiety and could result in a scratch or bite. People who make an effort to communicate and bond with cats have the most successful relocations.

If a cat escapes from the playpen, set food and water out and then sprinkle used litter (specifically feces) around the barn. Cats often hide for a period of time but usually stay on the premises. Leave plenty of food and water out to encourage the escapee to stay close.

After the 2 – 4 week confinement, open the crate door and allow the cat to come out on its own. This may not happen quickly as the cat has become comfortable in the crate and may find it to be a safe place. Once the cat is out of the crate, leave it set up in the same spot for approximately a week, continuing to fill the dry food bowl and offer wet food twice a day in the crate, continuing to use the same voice signal that you initiated when the cat was in the crate. The cat can then come back to this spot as a safety spot until it's used to being able to come and go as it pleases. Once you notice that the cat is finding spots to hide, or might be showing some signs of social behavior towards you, feel free to slowly move the food and water bowls to a more convenient location. At that time, also feel free to remove crate.