



ACCEPTING CATS & KITTENS INTO CRAFT

CRAFT cats and kittens are rescued and accepted from a variety of circumstances. Because CRAFT is a small, nonprofit agency running entirely on donations from the public and with the help of a dedicated group of volunteers, a limited number of cats can be housed at any given time. The number can be higher if most of the cats are healthy, old enough, social with each other and are otherwise readily adoptable. The number must be significantly lower if we receive cats or kittens that need medical attention, mom cats with kittens or orphaned kittens too young to be adopted, or an inordinate number of feral or semi-social cats that are not easily placed. Funding is also a factor, since of course all of the cats in the care of CRAFT need to receive appropriate medical and veterinarian care (the largest expense), good food, etc. And advertising to get the attention of potential adopters can also be costly.

The average time for a cat or kitten to be in the care of CRAFT is about 55 days. Some are adopted quickly, while others may take months to place. The longest CRAFT has held a cat is three years, several for two years and many for about a year. That is a lot of cat food and kitty litter! We are no-kill and unfortunately it can take a while in some instances to find the right home. During the past three years we have housed over 1,500 cats and kittens, and a primary goal is to place healthy, social animals into loving, forever homes. If there are too many cats, it is not possible for the volunteers to spend an adequate amount of time with each cat to make sure it is ready for a home.

We at CRAFT take pride in our shelter arrangement, which is constantly being improved upon as time, volunteer efforts and funding allows. However, there is a limited amount of space, and when the number of cats is too high, they all can become stressed and their quality of life and health are compromised.

We try to place all mom cats with kittens and orphaned kittens in foster homes. This allows them to receive more personalized attention, and they are less likely to be exposed to viruses and other infections that can easily kill a kitten since they have no immunity and cannot be vaccinated for a while. Therefore, we are limited by the number of suitable foster homes as well. We do not want fosters to become overwhelmed by too many cats or kittens.

We also work with the Humane Society of Redmond, which is trying very hard to become a no-kill shelter. Within limits, we have agreed to take cats that they find difficult to handle or are considered feral, as we have the ability to deal with these cats and find suitable homes for them as barn or shop cats. These cats are a priority to place because they often do not do well in captivity, become stressed and then can become sick. It is not easy to provide medical care to a feral cat that is terrified of people.

Because of these limitations, priority has to be given to rescuing certain cats and kittens that are consider “at risk”. These can include cats or kittens that:

- Have been abandoned or have no dependable source of food, water or shelter
- Are kittens, old or disabled cats that cannot fend for themselves
- Are at risk due to threat from humans – shooting, poisoning, traffic, etc.
- Are living at large in areas where there is danger from predators or vicious dogs
- Are sick or injured and have no caregiver
- Are pregnant or have kittens with them, nursing or not
- Are shelter cats with no options left to them and their time has run out, or they are the wrong color (black or dark), are too old, too young, too shy, have medical issues, etc. – in short, are considered unadoptable
- Are not altered and are at large, adding to the already too high cat population
- Are at risk at being dropped off at a shelter that kills for space/convenience reasons

In other words, the guardians of cats or kittens that have been altered and are receiving adequate care have other options. If they need new homes, their guardians can advertise, ask friends and families for help, or work with the Humane Societies of Redmond or the Ochocos. (Note: other shelters may euthanize for space or convenience reasons, and you do not want to have your pet end up there. Ask questions about their policies.) Our organization should be considered as a last resort in these instances. If we take in a cat that has other options, this means that another cat that has no one looking out for it may not get the help it needs.

A common reason for wanting to “get rid” of a pet of any kind is moving. Our hope is that when people adopt an animal, it is for life – not until they need to move or it otherwise is inconvenient to keep the cat. If someone knows they will be moving and may not be able to take their pet, that is the time to investigate the options, NOT a week before the move. This is when a lot of pets end up at shelters, or worse.

Another reason for wanting to “get rid” of a pet is behavior problems. Many of these behaviors can be corrected if the caregivers know what to do. There is information on the CRAFT website about this issue, but we also have volunteers who may be able to talk with people about these problems and perhaps offer some ideas to correct unacceptable behaviors. CRAFT volunteers obviously know cats and have learned much through experiences at the cattery or with their own pets.

Help is also available to address behavior problems through several very good resources. One is www.catsinternational.org and Alley Cat Allies at www.alleycat.org is another.

We also get calls from people whose cats need veterinarian care that they cannot afford or that they are not willing to pay, whether it is routine care such as vaccinations or specialized care such as surgery or severe illness. We are not a veterinarian office or clinic, do not have a veterinarian available except during routine visits, and we have to pay for these services ourselves. We can refer people to veterinarians who may not charge as much as others, or who may be able to work out a payment schedule. Except for basic medical care, our volunteers are not trained to treat animals that should see a veterinarian, and we do not have the resources to help people out with their veterinarian or pet medication expenses.

Animal shelters normally charge to take owner release pets. We request a similar donation if we end up taking a cat from an owner. Donations are also appreciated when we take in cats from other situations at the request of concerned citizens to help offset the costs involved, such as veterinarian care.

If a caregiver is unable to have a cat spayed or neutered, we will work with that person to have this done, since unaltered cats are the reason so many remain homeless and without proper care. It may be possible to have the cat altered at little or no cost.

If a caregiver cannot afford adequate food but is willing and able to keep a cat, we can help make arrangements for cat food to be provided. We know that many people care for colonies of cats and providing food can be difficult. However, we will first need to make sure all of the cats are altered and vaccinated, and afterwards the caregiver must agree to let us know if any new cats arrive so we can keep the colony numbers under control. Many cats, especially those that are not socialized, are better off in the environment they know than being transplanted into a strange location.

Working together, we can all help to make Central Oregon a better place for the cats and kittens that depend on us.

Contact: info@craftcats.org, (541) 389-8420 or 598-5488 for further details; or visit www.craftcats.org.

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