



Preparing to Receive Your New Barn Cats

Stock Up On Supplies-- Here Is Your Shopping List:

- Cat food* (feed dry food, but during the acclimation period it's good to offer some canned food too)
- Food and Water Bowls (if possible the water bowl should be stainless steel, ceramic or glass)
- Cat litter
- Temporary Litter Box (if you don't have one you can use a cardboard box lined with a plastic garbage bag)
- One cardboard box with a hole in the side for each cat
- Warm bedding (hay or straw, an old sleeping bag or blankets, etc.) inside the cardboard boxes

Set Up Your Acclimation Facility:

Place a temporary litter box, food and water bowls and warm bedding under some kind of escape cover inside the acclimation facility. Escape cover can be something that is already inside the room, such as the area underneath a work bench, a few boards or a piece of plywood propped next to a wall, or a big cardboard box with a hole cut in the side to form a kitty door. Inside a tent a cardboard box will work. Escape cover is essential because transport from the shelter to a car is a terrifying experience for these cats, and they will likely be quite afraid and want to run and hide after being let out of their crates.

Securely Confine Your Cats For Three Weeks:

Outdoor cats need to be confined in a secure area for three weeks to make sure they acclimate to their new home and stay put when they are finally released. Examples of acclimation facilities include a closed barn, shed or garage, a tack room, etc. If you put the cats in a building, make sure there are no small holes the cats can squeeze their way out of. We have also installed cats in a couple of crawlspaces under houses, temporary cages made of lumber scraps and chicken wire, and camping tents. If you don't have other options but do have a tent, a tent set up under some kind of cover—e.g., in an open barn or shed or under the eave of a house is a fast and easy way to go. Leave a light on at night during the first couple of nights of the acclimation period so your cats can orient to their new surroundings 24/7. Make sure everyone in your family knows to keep the door(s) of the acclimation facility securely closed while the cats are in there.

Corral Your Dogs for a Couple of Days and Release Your Cats At the Right Time:

If at all possible, confine your dogs for the first couple of days after you release your cats to help ensure your cats can explore the outside world without being frightened by your dogs. Release the cats during the day in dry weather so they can orient themselves visually to their new surroundings and won't have to hunker down because of rain. Leave a light on at night in their permanent home for the first week so if they get lost at night they can find their way back home.

Provide Permanent Warm Shelter:

Outdoor cats need a permanent form of warm, dry shelter from the elements. This can be a some type of insulated container that contains warm bedding--preferably straw--placed up off the ground inside a barn loft, shed, or garage. Probably the easiest thing is to buy a large cooler at a thrift shop, and cut a hole at one end so your cats can go in and out. A cooler is insulated, and you can easily change the bedding by opening the lid, plus it looks nice and neat from the outside. The container should be placed where cats can jump up to it, but a predator following them can't. If the container is inside a closed building, either install a cat door, or plan on leaving the door open so the cats can get inside whenever they want. Some owners offer their kitties a heating pad during the winter. Suitable cat heating pads are available at pet stores, or you can buy one online. No matter what you use for bedding, please change it once a month to ensure it stays clean and free of mold.

*Basic cat food, e.g., Friskies or Kirkland Feline Maintenance, will do just fine.