

## Caring for an Injured Outdoor Cat

**Learn what to do if the cat you are fostering seems miserable indoors.**

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**Q:** I volunteer with a small rescue group, and I am fostering a cat that is recovering from an injury. Since I brought him home, he hides behind my washing machine and will not come out. I really wanted to keep him, but he seems so miserable here. What should I do?

**A:** The most important thing to do right now is to monitor the cat's health and recovery, and give him lots of space and quiet time. Make sure that the room he is in is safe — often frightened cats get into duct work, etc.

Make sure he stays on any medication prescribed by your veterinarian by putting it in his food.

You need to figure out if the cat is feral or stray, and that may take some time. Give him treats and catnip. Talk to him in a quiet, soothing voice, and don't make any sudden movements around him that may scare him. If he's a stray, he will warm up over time. It can take a few days to several weeks for a cat to calm down after enduring such a trauma. I have rescued a many strays that were so skittish it took several weeks, and in some cases over a month for them to calm down.

If he is an unsocialized, feral cat, he is no doubt miserable indoors. Keep him confined until he is fully healed, and then make a decision about what the best next step is for him. All of my injured feral cats go back to live outside after recovery — whether after a few days, a few weeks or even a month or two. They can come back into the house if they want to (via a cat door), and sometimes they do in the winter. But generally we cannot touch them, and they are happier outside with access to their feeding station, of course.

This may be a feral cat that you have saved, and he is going to live the rest of his life outdoors. With your help, it can be a very good life. All he needs is food, water, shelter and monitoring. Visit the Alley Cat Allies website for information on how to build an inexpensive shelter and other tips on caring for an outdoor feral cat.

Good luck, and please let me know what happens.