

Cats Help Rehab Inmates

Under unofficial program, Kentucky prisoners look after stray felines.

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The Kentucky State Penitentiary has become home to about 15 stray cats that are looked after by inmates as part of an unofficial rehabilitation and animal placement program.

The nine-lifers are strays that slipped beneath the fence and have taken up residence. They're cared for and fed by inmates, who look for homes on the outside for some of the cats and their kittens, and make the others pets inside the prison.

The cats are an informal rehabilitation and animal placement program at the prison and neither endorsed nor halted by prison administration.

Inmates buy cat food and scout out potential homes for the kittens among family members, prison staff and inmates being released. Inmates have been known to pool their meager prison funds to pay for medical care for injured or sick cats.

Prison officials accept that the cats are on the grounds and the inmates have pets, but make no special accommodations for them other than allowing the inmates to buy cat food, Nancy Doom, an assistant warden at the prison, recently told the Associated Press.

The cats are kept outside – regardless of weather – and inmates are encouraged to find homes for them outside the prison, Doom told the news service.

The cats have a noticeable effect on the inmates, Doom said. "You can see that compassion and respect for a living being, because they have something to take care of. That's their child. That is their baby," she said.