

Feral Cats Will Work for Food

A feral cat colony from Maryland needs new place to settle.

By Soraya Gutierrez

Posted: May 12, 2008 2 a.m. EDT

Max, a feral cat, is looking for a new outdoor home because his guardian no longer can care for him. Farmers looking for an effective way to get rid of rodents might find their solution in a few outdoor cats that are in need of new places to patrol mice. The undomesticated cats were taken in by Alley Cat Rescue, and they will work for food, says the nonprofit group's director, Maggie Funkhouser.

The colony of nearly 20 feral cats was living in Burtonsville, Md., under the care of a woman who gave them water and food. The woman also paid to have all of the cats vaccinated and spayed or neutered, Funkhouser says.

The problem, she says, is that the woman is experiencing health issues and soon will move into a nursing home. Her family plans to sell the property that she shared with the cats, and they want the cats to be taken care of as well.

Joe the cat also needs a new place to live. The woman has looked after these cats for several years. "She's quite attached to them," Funkhouser says.

The cats are available to anyone with a farm, horse stable or a few acres of land who is open to give one or more of them a new place to live. The cats must be restricted to a barn or other space for at least the first two weeks to increase the chances that they will stay put, Funkhouser says.

"It's an opportunity for feral, or undomesticated, cats to have a second chance at life," she says. "They are not necessarily adoptable animals, but they do serve a purpose. They're beautiful creatures, and we don't have to kill them just because they're feral."

The reward for participating barn owners is superior and dependable rodent control, she says. Individuals do not have to be farmers, so long as they own a few acres of land and neighbors that don't mind outdoor cats.

Feral cats are cats that either are born outside and have never lived with humans or were house cats that became lost and went without human contact long enough to become unsocialized to people. Feral cats revert back to surviving on instincts.

The cats available for adoption require safe shelter from inclement weather. Individuals from Maryland or surrounding states are preferred. For information, e-mail Funkhouser or call 301-277-5595.