

# COMMUNITY CAT GUIDE *for* INDIANA MOBILE HOME PARKS & MULTI-UNIT DWELLINGS

A Guide for Managers & Owners



**PET FRIENDLY**  
SERVICES OF INDIANA



Mobile home parks and multi-unit dwellings across the state have found themselves in need of solutions for cat overpopulation. Cats become homeless when they are lost, abandoned, or born in the “wild”. This happens when people do not fix their pets and is exasperated by owners that abandon their pets. Cats reproduce very quickly, and, in a short period of time, colony sizes can grow exponentially.

Abandoned cats stick around mobile home parks and apartment complexes because of the available shelter from the elements. This poses special problems for residents, who are left to cope with the situation imposed on them by their neighbors and adjoining neighborhoods – the folks who did not fix their pets. They respond by providing food and shelter, but generally cannot afford spay/neuter surgeries for one free-roaming cat, let alone an entire litter.

## Indiana Law Helps Mobile Home Parks

Indiana passed [House Bill 1199](#) (2014) to allow trap-neuter-return (TNR) of feral and free-roaming cats in mobile home parks. The bill was supported by many organizations, including the State Board of Animal Health.

### Statement from the Indiana State Board of Animal Health

[Community cat programs](#) are designed to create safer communities and promote public health by reducing the number of unvaccinated, unsterilized cats. These programs have experienced tremendous results when implemented including improved animal welfare, taxpayer savings and community member satisfaction, as animal nuisance behaviors are mostly eliminated when animals are sterilized. Trapping and euthanizing feral cats is a far more expensive effort and does not decrease the population over time.



## Community Cat Programs Help Cats & Residents

Community Cat Programs trap-neuter-return (TNR) cats to stabilize colony sizes, enhancing the quality of life for both the cats and residents. Most community cat programs are run by volunteers that offer their services free of charge. Services generally include a spay/neuter surgery along with a rabies vaccination, medical care and a mandatory eartip. Volunteers work with residents to schedule the trapping, and volunteers then transport and return the cats. The eartip identifies cats that have already been fixed.



When cats are fixed, there are no more kittens, less roaming, and less fighting. Unaltered male cats leave a strong odor when marking their territory. After surgery, testosterone levels drop, and the strong odor disappears. Kittens and friendly cats are sometimes made available for adoption, which reduces colony sizes.

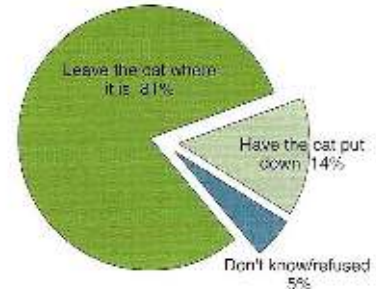
Residents must contact their local community cat program when new cats arrive. The sooner new arrivals are fixed, the better for everyone.

## Park Rules to Properly Care for & Manage Community Cats

Community cat program managers and volunteers have a wealth of information they can share with you. They will discuss proper feeding protocols to avoid attracting wildlife. They will also discuss appropriate shelters and straw bedding for cats. This information can be incorporated into your park or facility rules.

## Cats Are Very Popular with Hoosiers

Did you know that Indiana ranks number six on the list of the 10 states with the highest percentage of cat owners? Community cats are also popular. [A national survey by Alley Cat Allies](#) revealed that 81% of respondents were in favor of leaving community cats in place. Cats provide excellent mouse control and are popular with the majority of residents, especially when colonies are properly managed



## A Case Study: Clifty Creek Mobile Home Park

Clifty Creek had more than its share of cats. The park owner was offered assistance by a local all-volunteer “community cat” program that traps-neuters-vaccinates-returns (TNVR) feral and free-roaming cats. The program spayed and neutered 43 cats, and the results were phenomenal.



Mr. Terry Crank, the park owner, reported that, “There are no more unwanted litters. And because the colony size is stable, cats are well fed and no longer getting into garbage cans. I would recommend that mobile home parks and apartment complexes work with their local community cat programs. The project has been a great success, and the residents are very pleased.”

At the conclusion of the program, Terry even built a shelter for the cats, including warm straw bedding.

## But We Just Want to Get Rid of the Cats

### Still Not Convinced That a Community Cat Program is Right for Your Mobile Home Park or Apartment Complex?

Consider these facts: cat advocates will not raise their hands and offer to trap and remove cats. These volunteers can either trap-neuter-return and to achieve success over time OR to do nothing, while the cat population escalates.

#### The Vacuum Effect

Cats can be territorial, establishing a colony and chasing away newcomers. When cats are simply removed from the colony, new cats freely join. This means that catching and removing feral cats may temporarily reduce the number of cats, but two things happen: intact survivors continue to breed, and other cats move in to the now-available territory. The vacuum effect is just one reason catching and removing cats is so ineffective.

#### Why Don't These Cats Stay Inside?



Feral and free-roaming cats have different personalities and different backgrounds. Some cats warm up to people and will want to become indoor cats. Others may come inside but are intent on going back outside.

Cats that want outside nag incessantly and will likely become indoor/outdoor cats. Other cats, whether friendly or feral, may wish to remain outside. With the number of cats involved in mobile home park colonies, there are often too many to bring indoors.

#### What About the People Who Don't Want Cats on Their Property?

An organization called Alley Cat Allies offers a publication, [How to Live with Cats in Your Neighborhood](#), which explains how to divert cats from yards and gardens. The publication offers many solutions and can be shared online or ordered. A bundle of 20 brochures is just \$5.

Mobile home residents can take additional steps to deter cats, including fixing any gaps in the skirting. Apartment complexes can secure vents and other openings. Be sure not to close openings when cats or kittens are inside. A mama cat whose kittens are inside will try everything to reach them. Residents will have larger problems if kittens perish under their mobile homes. Once kittens are old enough and are not trapped underneath, secure the skirting.

#### State and Local Protections

State laws exist to protect animals. [House Bill 1615](#) was passed in 2019 and strengthens key terms so prosecutors can effectively charge perpetrators and get convictions. Local care and treatment ordinances offer additional protections for animals. For example, Indianapolis has a comprehensive [Care and Treatment Ordinance](#) that covers a variety of topics and encourages citizens to [report animal abuse and neglect](#). You are encouraged to check your local ordinances for more information.



## The Only Solution

The only solution is to take a strategic approach. Community Cat programs slowly but surely reduce colony sizes. These programs are humane and are supported by the community. The sooner you get started, the sooner your area will experience success.

### Want to Learn More?

This guide was compiled by Pet Friendly Services of Indiana. We are funded by grants, donations and the #4 selling Pet Friendly specialty license plate. We provide spay/neuter financial assistance to community cat programs across Indiana.



### Contact the Community Cat Program Nearest You

[Visit our website](#) for a list of community cat programs that may be able to help your mobile home park. Keep in mind that most community cat programs are volunteer based. Please allow them time to respond to your inquiry.

## Pet Friendly Services of Indiana

[www.PetFriendlyServices.org/Community-Cats](http://www.PetFriendlyServices.org/Community-Cats)

### LINKS:

House Bill 1199: <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2014/bills/house/1199/#document-a1769a11>

State Board of Animal Health: <https://www.indyneighborhoodcats.org/statement-from-indiana-department-of-health-on-community-cat-programs/>

A national survey by Alley Cat Allies: [https://www.alleycat.org/resources/what-americans-really-think-is-humane-care-for-cats-truth-card/?print\\_this](https://www.alleycat.org/resources/what-americans-really-think-is-humane-care-for-cats-truth-card/?print_this)

How to Live with Cats in Your Neighborhood: [https://www.alleycat.org/resources/how-to-live-with-cats-in-your-neighborhood/?print\\_this](https://www.alleycat.org/resources/how-to-live-with-cats-in-your-neighborhood/?print_this)

House Bill 1615: <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2019/bills/house/1615/#document-bef673b6>

Care and Treatment Ordinance: [https://library.municode.com/in/indianapolis\\_-\\_marion\\_county/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=TITIIPUHEWE\\_CH531AN\\_ARTIVCATR\\_S531-401GEREANCATR](https://library.municode.com/in/indianapolis_-_marion_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TITIIPUHEWE_CH531AN_ARTIVCATR_S531-401GEREANCATR)

Report Animal Abuse and Neglect: <https://www.indy.gov/activity/how-to-report-animal-complaints>

Visit Our Website: <https://petfriendlyservices.org/spay-neuter-services/community-cats/>