

# Humane Rescue Alliance Community Cat Programs Tip Sheet

## Guidelines for Responsible Feeding of Community Cats



Providing food for community cats enables them to lead healthy and happy outdoor lives. When cats are fed, they are less inclined to riffle through trashcans looking for tasty morsels, becoming a nuisance. Remember to be a responsible neighbor when feeding community cats by following good practices such as those listed here.

**DC Law allows for the feeding of community cats; however proper measures must be taken to keep your feeding area clean and free from pests, such as rats and flies.** Failure to remove uneaten food remaining on the ground after the cats have eaten is a violation of laws designed to discourage rats and prevent the spread of disease. (21 DCMR § 707.12)

### Caregiver Tip: Build a Feeding Station

To keep food dry and protected, you can create a feeding station. Alley Cat Allies ([alleycat.org](http://alleycat.org)) has instructions on how to build a wooden, lean-to type feeding station. Or you can make a simple one from a large storage bin.



Community Cats live outside with no specific home or owner

Learn more about how you can help them at

[humanerescuealliance.org/catnipp](http://humanerescuealliance.org/catnipp) or  
contact 202-608-1358 or  
[catnipp@humanerescuealliance.org](mailto:catnipp@humanerescuealliance.org)



**Feed only what the cats will eat.** A half hour should be enough time for all the cats to eat, especially if there is a pecking order and the cats need to take turns. A general guide is to feed  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 1 cup dry per cat. Cut the amount if you are also feeding canned food. Adjust the amounts for your individual cats. Some cats eat more than others. Remove the leftovers.

### **Be wary of feeding unwanted dinner guests.**

Conflicts with rats and nocturnal wildlife are one of the prime reasons neighbors complain about community cats, so try to feed when they are not around. It is also easier to monitor your cats' condition during daylight hours. And of course, don't leave food out overnight.

**Feed on a regular schedule.** When cats show up at the same place and at the same time each day makes it easier to monitor their health and identify new arrivals. It also facilitates trapping the cats when you need to (for medical care or spay/neuter surgery).

**Clean up after yourself.** Pick up food dishes and any trash in the area (even if it isn't yours) once the cats are done eating. Watch for anything that may have blown away.

### **Feed the cats in a location that is out of the way.**

Ideally, you'll be feeding the cats on your own property or in a public alley behind your home. If you are feeding in a communal space at your apartment building or by your workplace remember to be considerate of others. Never feed cats on private property unless you have explicit permission.

**Talk to others in the community.** Find out who else may be feeding. You may be surprised to learn how many cat caretakers are on your block!

**Provide fresh water.** In winter, use a heated bowl (if there is an electrical outlet nearby) or an insulated dish to prevent water from freezing.

**Feeding, not Breeding.** Make sure all the cats are spayed or neutered as well-fed cats can have a lot of healthy kittens if they are allowed to breed. WHS provides free spay/neuter surgery for DC's community cats. Contact us to learn about opportunities for Trap-Neuter-Return. Particular