

# How to Help Sick or Injured Cats Outdoors



LUCKY  
New Jersey

A  
Quick Guide  
to Save Cats' Lives

**Field Edition**

About

Alley Cat Allies

Alley Cat Allies believes every cat deserves to live out his or her life to the fullest.

Founded in 1990, Alley Cat Allies is the leading advocacy organization for cats with a mission to transform and develop communities to protect and improve the lives of all cats and kittens. Together with our over 1.5 million supporters, we work toward a world where cats are valued and every community has humane and effective programs and policies to defend them.

Through our fearless advocacy, humane care, education and outreach, and law and policy activism, we equip and mobilize citizens, advocates, grassroots groups, shelters, veterinary professionals, and elected officials across the United States and around the world to improve their communities for cats through nonlethal, evidence-based approaches.

Visit our website at [alleycat.org](http://alleycat.org).

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## Introduction

This guide will help you humanely and effectively help cats.

Community cats, or unowned cats who live outdoors, live long and healthy lives in their outdoor homes.

However, there may come a time when you spot a cat outdoors who appears unwell. Maybe she is limping, or lethargic, or you can tell she is wounded. In these cases, it is critical to take action **IMMEDIATELY**.

This quick guide includes information on:

- Determining the nature of a community cat's illness or injury
- Creating a plan to take a community cat to the veterinarian
- Developing a long-term care and recovery plan
- Tips to medicate cats outdoors
- Preventative measures against health issues

Find the web version of this information at [alleycat.org/SickOrInjured](http://alleycat.org/SickOrInjured)

**Thank you to Marcella Bonner, DVM,  
for contributions and review.**

**This information is not intended to act as veterinary or other licensed medical advice for animals/cats, or to be a substitute for the advice of a licensed veterinarian or other animal medical professional. A licensed veterinarian should always be directly consulted for any health issues related to a cat.**



## PLEASE READ:

If you trap a community cat because she is sick or injured, the cat must see a veterinarian **IMMEDIATELY**. Do not trap a cat without a prior plan in place for her care.

It is **NOT** acceptable or effective to bring a community cat indoors, confine her to a cage for days, weeks, or months, and not seek veterinary care. Doing so is not helping, it is **CRUEL**.

Do not wait; contact a veterinarian before even setting out to trap the cat. If your usual community cat-friendly veterinarian is not open or available at the time you trap the cat, then you must rush the cat to an emergency veterinary facility.

## What NOT To Do:

- **Do not bring a sick or injured community cat indoors without consulting a veterinarian.**
- **Do not medicate cats with DIY (Do-It-Yourself) remedies.** There are a lot of misinformed suggestions and myths online. **ALWAYS** consult with a veterinarian before treating a cat.
- **Do not treat cats with human medications** unless directed by a veterinarian. The painkillers that work for you can be harmful or fatal to cats.
- **Do not treat cats with medications for other animals.** For example, a dog's medication is not always a one-to-one match with a cat, especially by weight.
- **Do not give cats supplements without consulting a veterinarian.** Vitamin C, L-Lysine and other supplements are often given to cats with the assumption that they are helpful. Some, if given in too high a dose, can be harmful.

## TNR: The ultimate community cat health program

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) is the only humane and effective approach to community cats—and the best way to address any health concerns! Spay and neuter eliminates the risk of certain reproductive diseases and cancers. And, all TNR should include vaccinations, particularly the rabies vaccine and FVRCP vaccine.

FVRCP stands for “feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and panleukopenia.” This common vaccine prevents three highly contagious and potentially life-threatening feline viruses from spreading amongst cats.



Additionally, cats can receive other treatments and long-term preventatives while under anesthesia for TNR. For example, your veterinarian can provide preventative flea, tick, ear mite, and other parasite medications, antibiotics for certain conditions, dental care, and more.

Learn more about the incredible health benefits of TNR at [alleycat.org/TNR](https://alleycat.org/TNR).

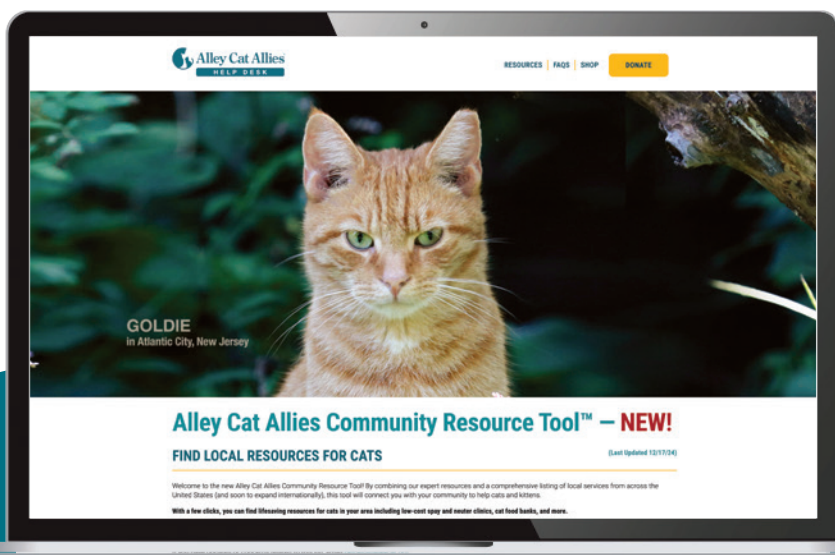
### **Please know:**

Community cats, and all cats, are very stressed by long-term confinement. It can be detrimental to their health and well-being, especially when they are already ill or injured. The goal is to ensure they can recover without cramped confinement, potentially even in their outdoor home, depending on the nature of their illness or injury.

### **Seek local resources to help**

If you feel you are unable to provide immediate care, contact a local advocate, organization, or veterinarian who can take the necessary steps to help. You can find resources for cats in your area with the **Alley Cat Allies Community Resource Tool™**.

Access our  
**Community Resource Tool**  
at [GetHelp.alleycat.org](https://GetHelp.alleycat.org)





1  
Example of panting

# When to Seek Emergency Veterinary Care for a Cat

**Warning: some of the photos contain graphic content.**

If you see one or more of the following signs, consult a veterinarian IMMEDIATELY:

## 1. Respiratory distress

Cats are coughing constantly, open-mouth breathing, struggling to breathe, or breathing too fast. Watch for excessive panting and abnormal movement of the chest or abdomen.

## 2. Open wounds or other visible injuries

A wound is apparent and/or there is blood anywhere on the cat. Look closely at areas where you can tell the cat has lost fur to see if an injury is visible.

## 3. Limping, dragging part of body

Cats may not always make their pain or limping apparent, so watch to see if they are walking differently than usual, like an inability to walk in a straight line or favoring one leg over the other.

## 4. Clouded, crusted, runny, or injured eyes

Eyes that are crusted shut, leaking, swollen or protruding, clouding or cataracts in one or both eyes, or holding one eye or both closed.

## 5. Crusted mucus around the nose

An overly running nose, and crusting of the nostrils, are signs of respiratory infection and could impede breathing.



2  
Example of an open wound



4a  
Example of crusted eyes



4b  
Example of crusted eyes

## 6. Constant vomiting or repeated failure to vomit

A cat is vomiting multiple times in one day, or the cat appears to be heaving and choking but nothing is coming out.

## 7. Lethargy or immobility

The cat appears to be lying limp, is not moving for prolonged periods of time, or is struggling to get up.

## 8. Swollen limbs, mouth, and other areas

Swelling is apparent on any part of the body, even if the cat does not appear to be limping. Mouth swelling can indicate dental infections.

## 9. Bump or mass on body

The appearance of a swollen or protruding area, a tumor, or a growth will need to be checked by a veterinarian.

## 10. Constant diarrhea or constipation

Constant runny stool, stool with blood (bloody stool can appear black) or repeated attempts and failure to go to the bathroom.

## 11. Severe hair loss

Hair loss can indicate a skin infection in a cat, or other concerns.

## 12. Severe hair matting

The matting of hair can indicate that a cat is not feeling well enough to groom herself or has another health issue preventing her from doing so.

## 13. Severe weight loss and emaciation

Being able to see a cat's rib cage and hip bones, a very skinny face, and/or a clear and sudden drop in weight.

## 14. Yowling or crying that indicates pain

If a cat is vocalizing loudly or making any other abnormal sounds.

## 15. Neonatal kittens who are:

- Not moving or barely moving
- Cold to the touch
- Dirty or covered in fleas



Example of crusted mucus around nose



Example of a tumor/growth



Example of severe hair loss



Example of emaciation





**GREY**  
West Palm Beach,  
Florida



STEP

**ONE**

Consult a veterinarian with  
community cat experience



A veterinary professional can evaluate whether a cat needs to be brought to the clinic right away for an illness or injury. Contact your chosen veterinarian and describe the cat's condition. If you can, share photos or videos of the cat.

For community cats with mild issues, it may be best to allow them to heal in their outdoor home rather than trapping them. Ask about the animal hospital, clinic, or veterinarian's policy regarding treating community cats (they may better understand if you use the term 'feral cat') as well as their euthanasia policy. Depending on their answer, you may consider consulting another veterinarian.

### **Important information on euthanasia**

Euthanasia should only be considered if a cat is in terminal condition. Unfortunately, some veterinarians who haven't been trained to work with community cats may suggest "euthanizing" (i.e. killing) community cats rather than treating them. Testing positive for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) or Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) is NOT a reason to euthanize a cat. Learn more at [alleycat.org/FIVandFeLV](https://alleycat.org/FIVandFeLV).

### **Go to an emergency veterinarian rather than wait**

If a cat has an emergency condition, an emergency veterinarian may be necessary. Your usual veterinarian may not have space or could be closed for the day, though you can call them first to determine.

### **Make sure the veterinarian is ready to:**

- Handle a community cat, including in a humane trap
- Scan the cat for a microchip to determine if she has a family or is a colony cat



**Alley Cat Allies Feline Frenzy®  
in Tennessee**



- Depending on the cats' condition...
  - Provide fluids
  - Take bloodwork for testing
  - Provide X-rays, or other types of scan
  - Provide medications and other treatments that last long-term, including flea treatment/preventative, ivermectin for ear mites, and Convenia® injections to help with common infections and illnesses
  - Provide ear cleaning and tooth cleaning, as needed, for ear mites and dental concerns



## Explore the “spectrum of care”

The AAVMC defines “spectrum of care” as “the wide range of care options veterinarians can provide...tailoring care options based on contextual factors, such as client goals, abilities, and resources.”

In short: More veterinarians are exploring a spectrum of care for animals that factors in the unique circumstances and financial situation of individual clients.

Veterinary care can be highly expensive, and we know the hurdles that can create. Talk to your veterinarian about offering different care plans for a cat’s condition at different price points so you can choose the option affordable to you.

Because what matters—and why you both are there—is to help the cat and provide relief and recovery as much as possible. This can be accomplished through a basic treatment plan or a treatment plan involving more extensive panels, tests, and surgeries.

## Telemedicine may be an option

While severe illness and injury require an immediate trip to the veterinarian, pursuing a telemedicine consultation may be appropriate for smaller medical concerns. Telemedicine is the remote treatment of a patient by a medical professional—and it can be cheaper than a clinic visit.

Keep in mind that telemedicine is a still-evolving field. Depending on local law, telemedicine veterinarians may not be able to prescribe medications or work with new clients.

Research options; you may be able to find critical professional advice without needing to trap a community cat. A telemedicine veterinarian will also be able to advise you on if the cat must come in for an appointment.

**Choosing a  
veterinarian with  
community cat experience  
who is willing to work collaboratively  
with you to treat is key.**



STEP

**TWO**

**Humanely trap the cat**





## Be creative with trapping

Sick or injured cats may be more wary of entering humane traps. We have tips that can help you trap skeptical, cautious community cats.

These include:

- Using smelly, enticing food as bait—like canned mackerel
- Using a bigger trap to encourage cats to enter. A larger entrance may be easier for an injured cat to navigate
- Covering the trap with a natural material, like burlap, to better disguise it. A covered trap will feel more enticing and safe to a cat—especially an unwell community cat
- Using a drop trap. Drop traps bypass the trigger plates of regular traps and allow you control over exactly when, and on which cat, to drop the trap. However, we do not recommend experienced trappers utilize drop traps, especially for injured cats. If not utilized correctly, drop traps can cause further injury.

## Add comfort padding in a cat's trap or carrier

Consider the condition of the cat and if she will need extra padding to be more comfortable. A cat with an injury may experience discomfort without a thick towel or blanket covering the bottom of the trap or carrier. Apply the padding of your choice **BEFORE** the cat is trapped.



### **Cover the trap or carrier and move carefully**

The moment the cat is safely in the trap or carrier, immediately cover it with a blanket or towel if it is not already covered. Hold the trap or carrier by the handle and use protective gloves if holding a trap elsewhere (a cat, especially one who is not feeling well, may try to scratch—and could potentially reach through the wire mesh of the trap).

Keep the trap or carrier upright and steady when transporting it to jostle the cat as little as possible. Move swiftly but carefully to the transport vehicle.

### **Transport the cat to the veterinarian immediately**

Place the cat in a car (NOT in a trunk or open truck bed) and take the fastest route to the veterinarian. Avoid bumpy roads and navigate turns as gently as possible to avoid jostling the cat.

### **Do NOT open the humane trap or carrier**

Do not crack the door open at any point, even to check on the cat. Otherwise, the cat may escape and become panicked in your vehicle or at the veterinary clinic. Your veterinarian should be the next person to open the door, and may not do so until the cat is sedated.



## Help with transportation

If you don't have a car to transport cats to the veterinarian, you can consider the following options:

1. **Use an Uber, Lyft, or similar transportation service.** Ask, as it could be at the driver's discretion whether they allow animals in their vehicles. These services may have a specific option to bring pets or other animals as long as they are in a holding compartment like a trap or carrier.
2. **Research a local animal transportation service.** There may be options in your area.
3. **Ask your veterinarian if they provide a transport service.** Some clinics may have such services, especially for emergency situations.
4. **Ask a friend, family member, or neighbor.** Before you've trapped the cat, call in someone nearby who has a vehicle and ask if they can get you and the cat to the veterinarian. Try to secure this as far in advance as possible!
5. **Post on neighborhood social media pages.** On your neighborhood's local Facebook page, or a networking site like Nextdoor, ask if people in your community are willing to transport you and the cat to the veterinary clinic.



Transporting community cats in Florida

Learn more tips to trap cats under challenging circumstances at [alleycat.org/HardToTrap](https://alleycat.org/HardToTrap)





STEP

# THREE

Develop a long-term  
recovery plan

In the best-case scenario, the cat will be returned to her outdoor home as quickly as possible. Determine if the cat can be treated outdoors rather than confined to an indoor space.

Any treatment for a community cat should be as easy and non-invasive as possible to minimize further stress.

## Outdoor recovery for sick or injured community cats

Have a serious discussion with your veterinarian about the most humane and effective way to ensure a community cat can heal from a sickness or injury. Determine if the cat can be medicated in an outdoor environment and determine if you can make a commitment to regular monitoring. A community cat will be less stressed and better able to heal in an environment that is familiar to them.

Provide any prescribed medication as ordered by the veterinarian and monitor the cat in her outdoor home as often as possible. If she shows signs of her condition deteriorating, call the veterinarian immediately.



## Longer-term confined recovery for sick or injured community cats

Based on the severity of illness or injury, a cat might need to be placed in a long-term holding area for recovery. Whether that recovery is done in your home or the veterinary clinic, plan beforehand so you don't have to scramble at the last minute. A good plan makes for an easier recovery for the cat.

Connect with your veterinarian and determine if they will house the cat during recovery, or for advice on how to create the best possible recovery space in your home. Remember that any indoor recovery must be for as short a length of time as possible to minimize stress.

### Longer-term confinement should NOT be...

- A humane box trap
- A carrier
- A small cage
- A room with places the cat can climb into, squeeze under, or otherwise be unreachable

### How to set up a community cat recovery area

Utilize as large a holding area as possible. If you have an enclosed area, like a catio, it can be an ideal recovery area for a community cat who is still mobile. Be sure she has a carrier or cardboard cat den to hide in and feel at ease.

- Make sure the recovery space is in a temperature-controlled area kept at around 70 degrees.

For cats who need to be more immobilized to heal:

### Set up a feral cat recovery cage

A large crate, cat condo, or cat playpen is ideal.

- Line the bottom of the holding area with newspaper. This way, regular cleaning is easier.
- The bigger the better: You can even connect two cages to double the space!

### Set up a smaller cat den inside the space

Place a feral cat den (best option) or carrier (acceptable but less ideal) inside the larger space, flush against one of its back corners. This is a critical step to give the cat a safe place to hide and relax, and to make it easier to clean the space or remove the cat when ready.



The cat should be INSIDE the closed den or carrier and then placed into the larger space to avoid injury or other difficulties in transferring. If the cat was formerly in a humane trap to travel to the veterinarian, the veterinarian can place the cat in the den or carrier before you take them home.

A yardstick, broom handle, or other large, firm object can be inserted in to help open the den or carrier's door to let the cat out (slide the stick just in front of a carrier's door to keep it from opening all the way as you latch or unlatch it).

### **Provide food, water, and litter**

Place the food and water in an area you can easily access, but that is away from the litter box. You will need to provide nutritious food and water regularly, as well as clean any soiled newspaper or litter.

To ensure your and the cats' safety, coax the cat into their den or carrier and close it before opening the larger enclosure. Community cats will usually dart into their "safe space" immediately upon seeing you.

### **Cover the entire setup**

Use a sheet or other breathable cover that can cover the whole large enclosure to help the cat feel safe. She must be as stress-free as possible to successfully and swiftly recover.

### **Monitor the cat regularly**

You should have eyes on the recovering cat multiple times a day, and keep regular contact with the veterinarian to ensure recovery milestones are being met and to relay any concerns about the cat's condition.

However, avoid spending too much time in the room—for community cats who are not socialized, your presence could cause stress that hinders the healing process.

### **Provide the best nutrition**

Throughout the cats' treatment and recovery process, provide wet food, which is far better than dry for hydration. Try to provide the highest quality wet food that is possible to afford; the cat will need all the nutrients she can to heal.

### **Return the cat back outside ASAP**

As soon as the cat has recovered enough, return her to her outdoor home and continue any further medications or antibiotics there. Consult your veterinarian on when the cat can safely return to her outdoor home.

Remember: Returning a cat as soon as possible is the goal! Community cats are extremely stressed by confinement, and it should be minimized as much as possible.

Closely monitor the cats outdoors to ensure they are recovering on track and doing well back in their outdoor home. Be ready to contact your veterinarian if you notice the cat's condition is worsening again, or new issues arise. Continue to provide nutritious food, clean water, and any needed medications daily.

The next section of this guide will walk you through ways to medicate community cats!



Returning a community cat  
New Jersey

Tulip at a Maryland  
veterinary clinic



Find all of the information in this guide  
in digital form, including a downloadable  
PDF, at [alleycat.org/SickOrInjured](https://alleycat.org/SickOrInjured).



STEP

**FOUR**

Treatment  
and prevention

How we medicate indoor cats versus outdoor cats can look very different. While some indoor cats can be given medications by hand (AKA piller), community cats do not generally tolerate handling—and attempts to do so could harm both cat and caregiver.

With that in mind, medicating community cats is all about the hands-off approach that is stress-free for the cat but effective.

### **Prioritize oral medications:**

- Ask for liquid suspension, powder, or granule formulas of medications. These can be mixed into wet food.
- Some medications can even come in treat form that a cat may eat right away!
- Try a pill pocket. If need be, pull off only a small piece of the pocket and wrap the pill completely in it. A whole pill pocket may be more than a cat wants to swallow.
- Some pills can be cut or crushed to make it easier to hide in food. Consult your veterinarian or pharmacist first!
- BEFORE feeding the cat her full meal, hide or mix the medication into a small dollop of wet food. You can also try hiding the pill in a liquid, lickable treat to make it extra enticing!
- If putting medication in food, the cat who needs medication should be monitored at all times to ensure she is the only one who eats the medicated food (and that she eats it all). Do not walk away. Medication can be harmful to cats for whom it was not intended.
- Do not feed the cat who needs treatment right near other cats. Feed her from a separate plate or bowl to ensure she is eating and another cat is not taking her food.
- If the cat in need of medication tends to hang out in a certain area, jump onto a bench or chair, or anything else that separates her from other cats—take advantage! Set the medicated food/treat there.

### **If considering topical medication:**

- Use your best judgment. Giving topical medications (applied directly to the body) may be possible depending on the community cat and her relationship with you. Leverage your knowledge of the cats as individuals and consult with your veterinarian.
- Most topicals will be applied directly to an affected area, or to the back of the cat's neck. WASH YOUR HANDS THOROUGHLY before and after application and take note if wearing gloves is necessary to handle the medication.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** If possible, feed the cats the highest quality wet food that is affordable, and feed extra. They'll need the nutrition and calories to aid in recovery! Consult with your veterinarian, as they may be able to recommend cat food that is designed for cats who are recovering from illness or injury.

# PREVENTATIVES AND TREATMENTS for common cat health issues

## Fleas, ticks, and mites



Using a flea comb  
on a kitten  
in Oregon

**Ask your veterinarian for topical flea/tick treatments:** If a community cat is at the veterinarian for TNR or any other reason, this is a good time to ask the veterinarian to apply a topical flea-control product like Advantage®, NexGard® COMBO, or Revolution® PLUS.

**Provide oral medications:** Medications like CAPSTAR® can be added to wet food. Be sure to feed cats out of separate bowls so there is only one dose per bowl. MONITOR each bowl to ensure each cat eats only one pill. This method works best for a small colony, or a cat used to eating individually.

Keep in mind that while CAPSTAR is fast-acting, it only kills adult fleas and not eggs or larvae. Adding a topical flea treatment in addition, if possible, will finish the job!

**Provide topical medications:** Use your best judgment and knowledge of a community cat to determine if administering a topical is possible. Topicals should be applied to the back of a cat's neck, just above the shoulder blades. Try applying it while the cat is distracted by eating, and make sure the medication touches skin!



- Revolution® Plus lasts about a month and targets more parasites, including ticks, ear mites, and mites that cause mange. However, it requires a prescription.
- Advantage or FRONTLINE® Plus also last a month and are available over the counter.

**Change outdoor shelter bedding multiple times a year:** Changing bedding will eliminate many eggs/larvae and pests. Before placing new bedding down, you can spray the floor with a cat-safe flea-control product (consult with a veterinarian).

**Try diatomaceous earth:** Food-grade diatomaceous earth is a safe choice to put down in and around outdoor cat shelters and feeding stations. You can also sprinkle food-grade diatomaceous earth or mint under shelter bedding to deter fleas. It is critical to only use diatomaceous earth that is FOOD GRADE to ensure cats' safety should they ingest it.

**Try beneficial nematodes:** These worms feed on flea eggs and larvae without doing any harm to cats or other animals! They can be sprayed around cats' shelters and in areas you believe fleas are gathering.

## Intestinal parasites



Community cats may get worms by swallowing fleas during grooming. They'll look like little pieces of rice in the cats' stool. See our suggestions on flea prevention on page 26 to help prevent worms and other parasites in your colony.

**Ask your veterinarian for long-term treatment:** While a community cat is at the veterinarian for TNR or anything else, request the application of highly-effective, long-lasting treatment and preventatives for worms.

### **Oral dewormers**

Complete dewormers are the most effective treatment, but will require a prescription. Drontal® contains the critical ingredients of pyrantel pamoate, praziquantel and febantel, and can be given orally. You can also request NexGard COMBO (topical dewormer AND flea/tick control).

In a pinch, opt for over-the-counter medications like PANACUR®, but prescription dewormers are recommended.

These medications treat the most common parasites in cats (some medications treat all parasites in this list, some only a fraction. Consult your veterinarian), including:

- Tapeworms
- Roundworms
- Hookworms

If providing oral dewormers, then monitor the cats closely while they eat to ensure only one cat gets one dosage of medication. See our tips on page 24

### **Topical dewormers**

You can also opt for a topical dewormer like CENTREGARD®. Use your best judgment and knowledge of a community cat to determine if administering a topical is possible. Topicals should be applied to the back of a cat's neck, just above the shoulder blades. Try applying it while the cat is distracted by eating, and make sure the medication touches skin!

CENTREGARD can also be used to prevent heartworms in cats. However, flea prevention is the most important way to fend off heartworm. See page 25.

## Diarrhea



ANNIE  
New Jersey

If you notice a community cat has diarrhea, quick action can make a lifesaving difference. Cats with this condition can easily dehydrate, as they are expelling water faster than they can intake it.

Diarrhea can be the result of many conditions: parasites, thyroid conditions, infection or inflammatory condition. However, diarrhea can also simply be caused by too many variations in diet—changing from dry food to wet food, or too much variety in food brands or flavors.

If a cat is experiencing chronic diarrhea, straining/struggling to go to the bathroom, vomiting, or decreased eating—you should make an appointment with the veterinarian right away.

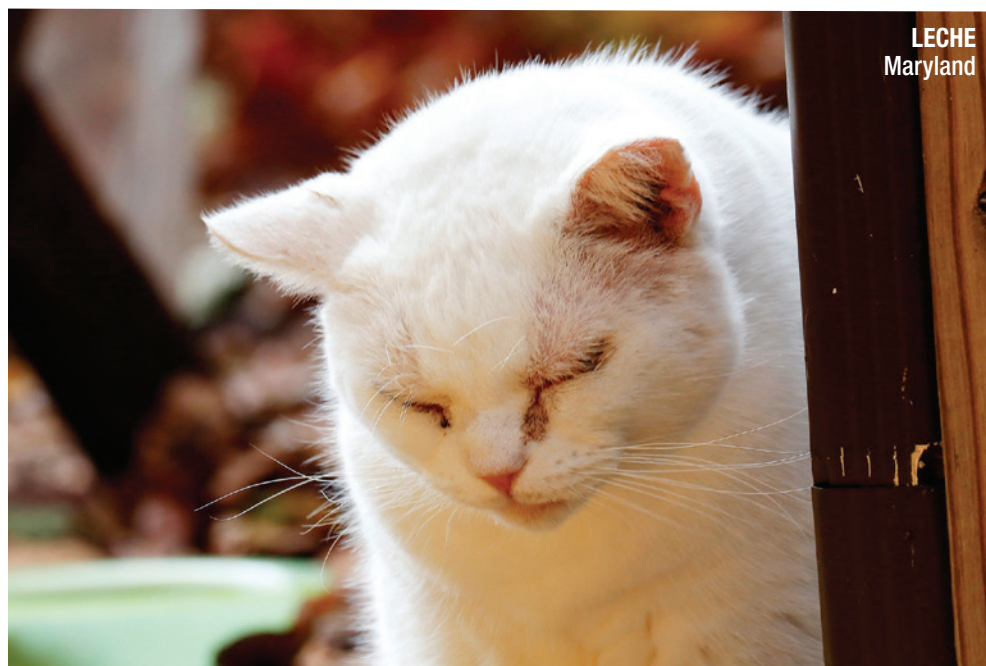
### **More ways to address and prevent diarrhea:**

- Change community cats' water frequently. Wash water containers and provide fresh, clean water at least once a day.
- Do not leave food out for more than 30 minutes (if cats are not actively eating it) when feeding community cats. Pick up all uneaten food each time you feed to avoid the development of bacteria and spoilage that can cause diarrhea.
- Replace the cats' food, and go for a high-fiber, highly-digestible cat food option.



- If you recently changed a cat's food brand/flavor then the diarrhea may be the result of too fast a switch of food, causing inflammation in their stomach. Trial a return to the cats' previous food and see if their condition calms.
- Add a fiber-rich, safe food like a scoop of canned pureed pumpkin (plain, no seasoning) to the cat's normal diet. You may also try fiber-rich treats.
- Feed cats wet food to help them regain hydration. Wet food can also be easier to digest than dry food. Be careful if the cat has not eaten wet food before; the change could trigger more diarrhea. Transition by adding wet food to their current dry food and gradually shifting the percentage of each.
- Consult your veterinarian about adding probiotics to the cats' meals. These can come in powder form that can be mixed into wet food.

## Upper respiratory infections



Upper respiratory infection, or URI, is characterized by a runny nose, runny eyes, sneezing, wheezing, and coughing. If you see these symptoms, contact a veterinarian immediately. Treatments will almost always include antibiotics, which must be prescribed and given under veterinarian advice.

### **Consult with veterinarian on antibiotics:**

Ask your veterinarian for medications as compounded oral suspensions so you can mix them into cats' wet food. Common antibiotics that come in

oral form include:

- Clavamox® (amoxicillin)
- Doxycycline

## Provide the right nutrition to help healing:

Ensure cats have access to extra clean water and provide the most nutritious food affordable to help them beat the infection!

## Dental disease



Dental issues in cats' teeth and gums can easily lead to loss of appetite and infections that can affect the organs, leading to severe or even fatal health issues.

When bringing a cat in for TNR, consider asking the veterinarian to perform a tooth cleaning or other long-term treatment while the cat is under anesthesia. However, preventatives are the most important way to address periodontal disease!

**NOTE: Avoid brushing community cats' teeth.** Most community cats will not allow their caregivers to touch near or in their mouths. To avoid potential harm to yourself and the cat, we advise choosing hands-off preventatives.

Recommendations include:

- Dental disease prevention food. If you are concerned about the oral health of community cats, there are special foods formulated to help fight off dental disease in cats.
- Dental treats. Choose treats formulated specifically for cats to remove tartar and prevent disease.
- Water and food additives. The Veterinary Oral Health Council recommends the following:
  - ProDen PlaqueOff® Powder
  - CEVA Clenz-A-Dent ProDen PlaqueOff® powder for Cats
  - Healthymouth® Water Additive for Cats

## Special considerations





Under some circumstances, decisions about returning sick or injured community cats outdoors can only be made on a highly individual basis. These circumstances include:

- **Cats who had to have a limb amputated**
- **Cats who are blind**
- **Cats with severe, debilitating arthritis**
- **Cats who had all their teeth removed as a treatment for stomatitis**
- **Cats who were declawed for any reason**

In some cases, community cats with these conditions may be able to thrive outdoors with a lot of care and highly regular monitoring. In others, you may find they can adjust to being indoors without constant confinement, or in an indoor/outdoor catio setup. The decision you make depends entirely on whether you believe the cat can have a high quality of life. And, they are highly circumstantial and personal.

Take a hard look at the cat as an individual, what you can provide as a caregiver, and the cat's environment to determine what is best for that cat. But the bottom line is: You cannot keep any cat confined in a small space for an unlimited period of time.

## Help funding needed care



As a community cat advocate, it's always wise to plan ahead for how you'll pay for veterinary bills, including any beyond the usual spay or neuter, vaccination, and eartip. See our information on potentially negotiating a unique, affordable treatment plan with a veterinarian on page 12.

We have more tips on finding and developing financial resources for cat care at [alleycat.org/Economy](https://alleycat.org/Economy).

## Thank you!

Alley Cat Allies is deeply grateful for all compassionate, dedicated community cat advocates. We are proud to provide you with expert guidance to help you care for and protect the cats in your community. It's people like you who make a huge difference—be proud!

You may also be interested in this important information to help community cats:

- Protect cats in your community and around the world by joining our movement at [alleycat.org/SignUp](https://alleycat.org/SignUp)
- Give to support Alley Cat Allies' work to protect cats and kittens at [alleycat.org/Donate](https://alleycat.org/Donate)
- Learn about Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), the only humane and effective approach to community cats, at [alleycat.org/TNRGuide](https://alleycat.org/TNRGuide)
- Find out more ways to help cats outdoors at [alleycat.org/FoundACat](https://alleycat.org/FoundACat)
- Find local resources for cats in your area at [GetHelp.alleycat.org](https://GetHelp.alleycat.org)
- Take home more lifesaving, informative resources to protect cats at [alleycat.org/Shop](https://alleycat.org/Shop)



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