



WELCOMING AND CARING FOR A WORKING CAT

Working cats can provide rodent control and companionship in an environment that may not be appropriate for a typical house cat. Cats may be placed as working cats for a variety of reasons – they may be fearful and avoidant of people, frustrated or bored with indoor home life, or unable to be litterbox trained. A barn, warehouse, workshop, studio, or other safe structure along with proper care can provide one of these cats with the opportunity to thrive. Follow these guidelines to help your barn cat get comfortable and stay safe in their new home.

Confine the cat to a small subsection of the structure for an initial period of 2-4 weeks. This may be a small room (a workshop or tack room, perhaps) or an extra-large dog crate tucked safely into a quiet corner.

Why? This allows the cat time to get used to the sights, sounds, and smells of their new environment while remaining in a safe space.

During this acclimation period, be sure that the cat has everything they need within their safe space: plenty of food and fresh water, litterbox (cleaned regularly), and a nice warm hiding spot. If you can, keep that space accessible to them as a “home base” even after they are granted access to the rest of the structure.

Why? The goal is for the cat to recognize this as a safe space where they have access to everything they need, so even if they wander further away from time to time, they will be more inclined to return.

Remove or secure anything that may be hazardous to the cat once they are given access to the full structure. This may include equipment, chemicals, plants, or traps/enclosed spaces that may be dangerous or toxic to a cat.

Why? Cats are naturally inquisitive creatures and will investigate the things around them, so it's important to make their environment as safe as possible.

Even if the cat is a skilled hunter, continue to provide food and clean water for the cat in an easily accessible place.

Why? Having consistent access to resources will keep the cat in the area. They need to have a reliable food source if rodents become scarce, they become injured and cannot hunt, etc.

**TIP: Offer the food in a space just large enough for the cat to enter – like a plastic tote with a hole cut out – to prevent other animals from getting to it. The same can be done with a litter box. Offer food on a schedule and avoid leaving it out overnight to avoid drawing other animals to the area.*

It's not unusual for a working cat to go unseen for days, weeks, or even months after they move into a new space. They are likely to be more active at night, and may become more visible as they get more comfortable in the environment. Some cats become more social and want to spend more time with the people around them, while others will always prefer to keep their distance.

Make a plan for veterinary care. Some cats can be picked up and placed in a carrier as needed, others may need to be lured in with food, while others may need to be trapped.

Why? Even tough working cats need preventative care (vaccinations, flea/tick preventative) to remain healthy, and they will need veterinary care in the event they become injured or ill.

**TIP: Keeping a cat carrier accessible all the time as a regular feeding or resting place for the cat can make it much easier to get them inside when it's time to go to the vet.*