

# COLD WEATHER CARE FOR COMMUNITY CATS



When the cold winter months approach, community cat caretakers from all over bundle up to brave the cold in order to care for these cats. The following tips will be useful information to those who care for or come across community cats in need of a caretaker.

## Feeding Tips

Keep feedings on a regular schedule. The cats will know when to come around, and both the food and the cats will spend less time exposed to the weather. If you can keep canned food from freezing- it's easier to digest, so cats save more energy for keeping warm.

Consider warming canned food prior to feeding. On average, you can expect an adult cat to eat roughly 5.5 ounces of canned food and 2 ounces of dry food daily in temperate weather (add a half cup to that amount if only feeding dry food). In colder weather, make sure to feed larger portions than you usually do for an extra caloric boost.



## Keeping them Hydrated

Change the water bowl twice daily to keep the water from freezing. A pinch of sugar added to the water offers an energy boost to the cats and keeps the water from freezing quickly. Deep, darker bowls work best to keep water from freezing and insulated bowls work even better. Avoid filling the bowl with warm water, as the water will evaporate more quickly from the steam. Shield the water dish from wind by placing it inside a small styrofoam cooler.

## Shelter & Warmth

Rubbermaid has a website with instructions and discounts for a quick and easy shelter:  
<http://erubbermaid.com/roughneck-homes>

When insulating outdoor shelters, use loose and dry insulating material as it works best for burrowing and will be the warmest. Straw is best, but shredded newspaper will also work. Never use hay as it will absorb water and freeze. Avoid using blankets, towels, or folded newspaper. The reason is because cats can only lie on top of these materials so they actually draw out body heat and defeat the purpose. You will want to replace insulating material regularly in order to ensure they stay dry.

## **Safety Tips**

In addition to providing food, water, and shelter for cats in your neighborhood, observe these winter precautions to keep cats safe:

- Before starting your car, give the hood a tap and check between the tires-cats will sometimes crawl into the engine or hide underneath the car for warmth.
- Winter is also the time of year for antifreeze, which often tastes irresistible to cats and other animals, but is toxic and deadly. Keep it out of reach and clean up any spills!
- Remember to shovel out cat shelters when you're shoveling your own driveway. Cats in shelters can get snowed in, so keep entrances clear and shovel an exit for cats who may be taking refuge under bushes, porches, or other hiding spots.
- Stay away from salt and chemical melting products. These products can be toxic to animals and harmful to their natural snowshoes-paws!

## **Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)**

Don't forget, community cats who have not been spayed or neutered can still be safely trapped throughout the winter months. This will aid in the prevention of many kittens being born come spring!

Rescue Village offers a TNR program for just \$25 which includes both the rabies and FVRCP vaccines! Our TNR application can be found under our Programs and Services page on our website or [www.rescuevillage.org/tnr](http://www.rescuevillage.org/tnr)



Sources: Alley Cat Allies [www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org)  
Neighborhood Cats [www.neighborhoodcats.org](http://www.neighborhoodcats.org)