

Socialising timid cats



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Your experience with timid cats?

Word to avoid

Word to avoid

- 'Feral'
- Why?

**To many people
feral = aggressive and dangerous**



What they're really like

- Normal cats, just frightened of people
 - flee rather than fight
- Usually incredibly gentle
- Usually get on really well with other cats and dogs



Ambrose's first anniversary party.

Living with newborn baby.

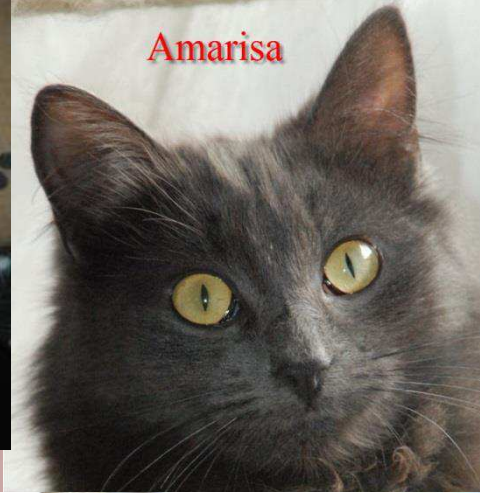




MADLINE



Alyssa Snowshoes



Amarisa



Ishka



Tiani



Mancini



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Grayson



Djembe

Alternatives to 'feral'

- Community cat
- Stray cat
- Homeless cat
- Timid cat
- Frightened cat
- Unsocialised cat
- Cat who is wary of humans

Just imagine...



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Just imagine...

- A giant one tonne monster has grabbed you
- They've removed you from your home – your friends, family and all the things you're familiar with – to a foreign land
- Everything is unfamiliar
- They don't speak your language

Just imagine...

Which would be less stressful for you?

1. Being 'set loose' in a huge area, where you are constantly looking over your shoulder, trying to hide from them. But you can't escape. They always find you.
2. Being in a more confined area, with just one point the monster can approach you from.

Just imagine...

For most of us, we would be calmer in a more confined area, where our basic needs are met.

Cats like confined spaces



Confining them reduces fear

- For unsocialised cats, we are the giant monster
- Start them in a comfortable room (eg bedroom, spare room)
 - Baby gates stacked two high instead of closed door – less isolated
- OR 48” collapsible wire dog crate on table/desk
- Hiding space – igloo, carrier, cardboard box with pillow
 - Ideally, at height

Hiding spots need to be accessible



Avoid rooms where they can hide:

- under bed
- behind wardrobe
- on high shelves etc

Using socialisation crate

- Put it where you spend most time; nice window view
- Hiding place – igloo, carrier, cardboard box with pillow
- Litter tray
- Food, water, cat grass (from nursery or hardware store)
- Scratching post
- Shelves
- Dangling toys
- Interactive feeder
- Cover (sheet)
- Feliway diffuser – attach to crate with powerboard



Sisal scratching post

Dangle toys

Heated pet bed on top of shelf

Shelves

Monitoring chart

Bark scratching post

Covered carrier

Water bowl

Feliway diffuser

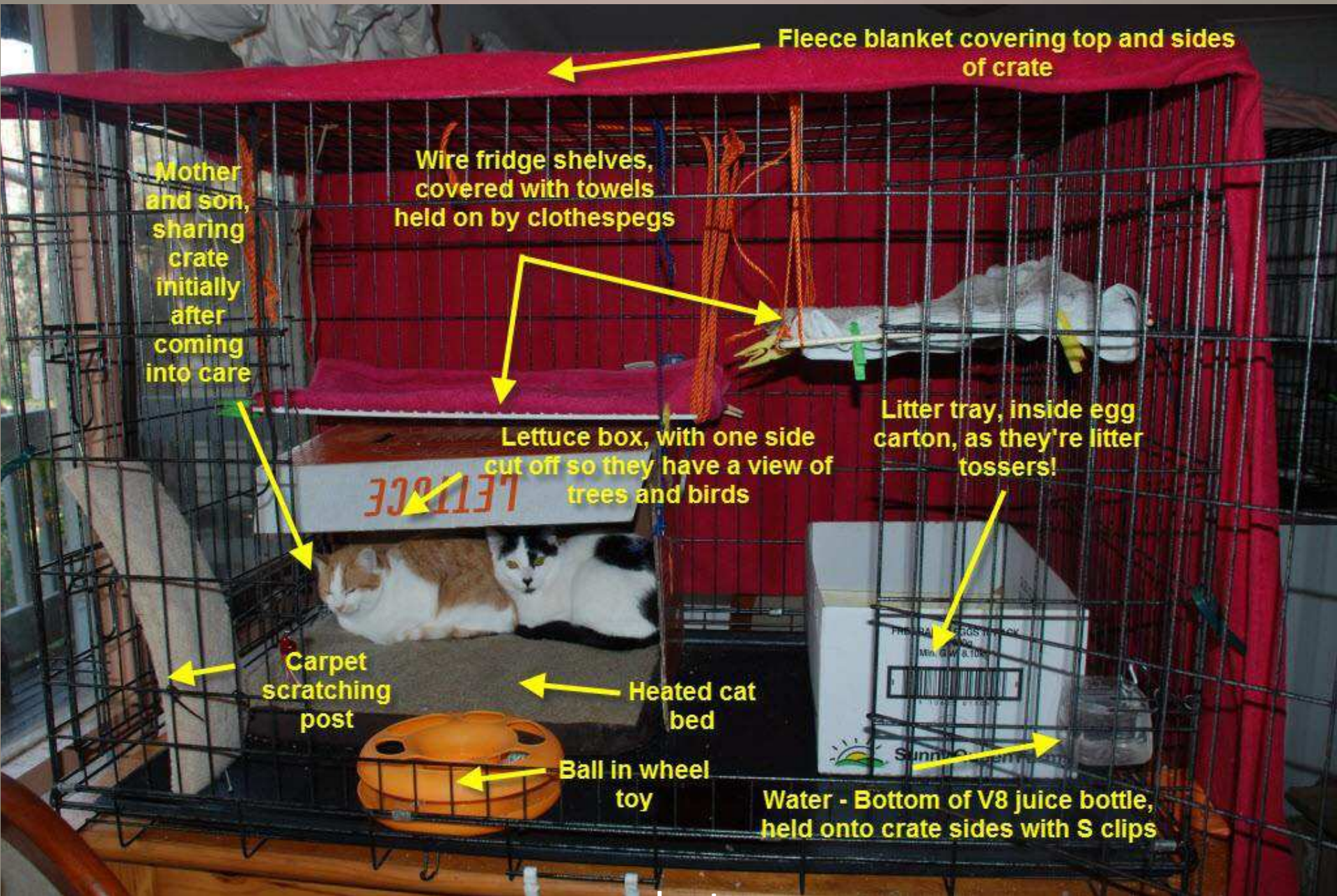
Cardboard scratching post, tied to crate sides.
Can use tree bark.

Secondary
hiding place, for
when more
confident - high
sides give
security

Igloo - Hiding place

Wire fridge shelf,
covered with
carpet underlay.

Clip-on water bowl



Fleece blanket covering top and sides of crate

Mother and son, sharing crate initially after coming into care

Wire fridge shelves, covered with towels held on by clothespins

Lettuce box, with one side cut off so they have a view of trees and birds

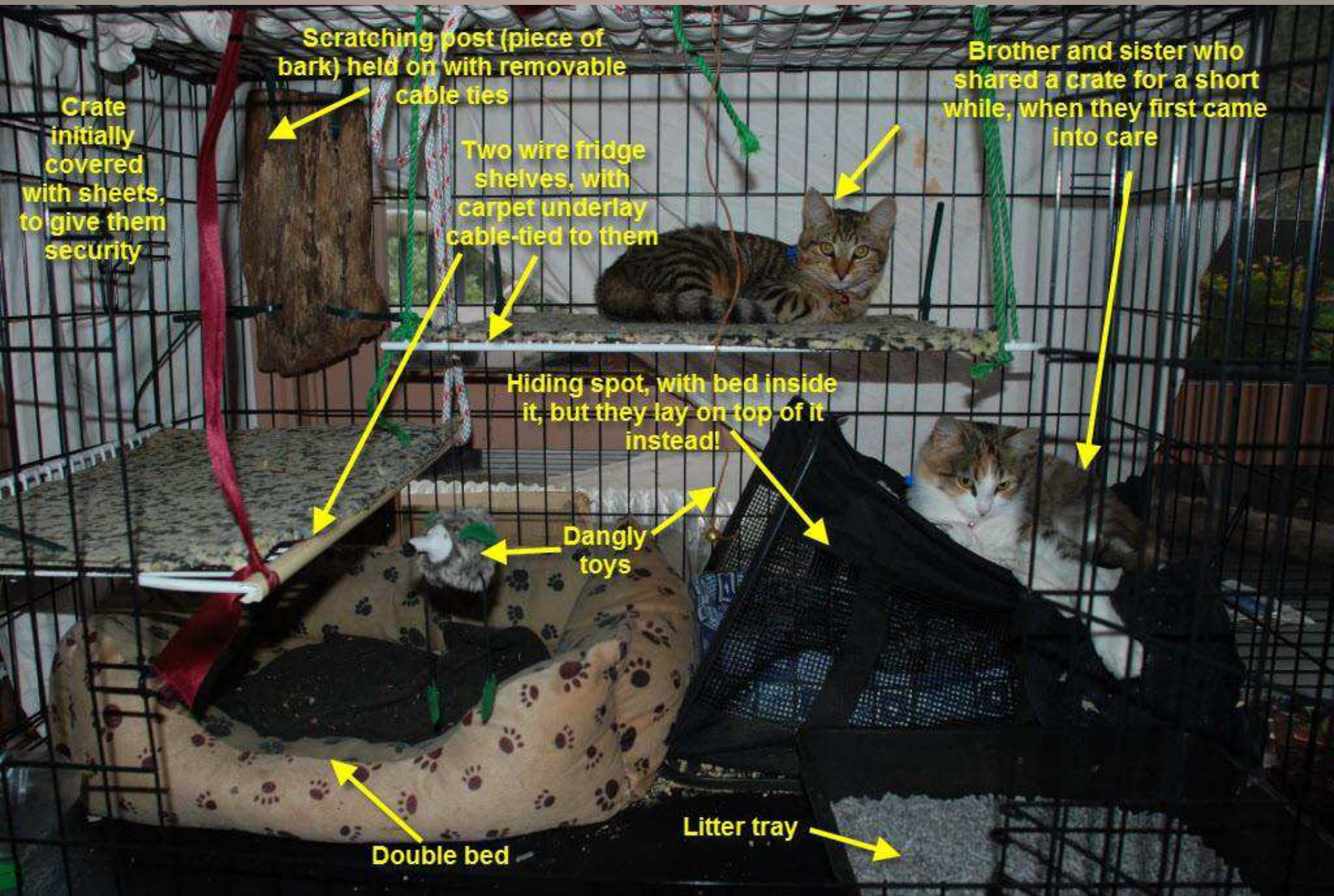
Litter tray, inside egg carton, as they're litter tossers!

Carpet scratching post

Heated cat bed

Ball in wheel toy

Water - Bottom of V8 juice bottle, held onto crate sides with S clips



Scratching post (piece of bark) held on with removable cable ties

Crate initially covered with sheets, to give them security

Brother and sister who shared a crate for a short while, when they first came into care

Two wire fridge shelves, with carpet underlay cable-tied to them

Hiding spot, with bed inside it, but they lay on top of it instead!

Dangly toys

Double bed

Litter tray

Overcoming fears

Dr Gabrielle Carter, Vet behaviourist

- You're frightened of spiders
- I'll give you \$100 if you walk half way across the room towards a spider in a glass jar
- Will you do it?
- Many people will
- Over time, it may help desensitise them

Overcoming fears for timid cats

What \$100-equivalent do we have for unsocialised cats?

- They don't like us (yet!)
- They don't care about fancy beds or a fancy house
- What do we have that they want?

Overcoming fears for timid cats



Associating you with food

- Stay in room while they're eating – don't look at them
- If they won't eat within 15 minutes, leave
- Over time, they will eat while you're in room, especially if you spend time ignoring them
- Eat
 - with crate door open
 - with your hand in crate
 - from your hand/spoon/stick
 - and let you stroke them
 - and let you touch belly
 - and let you lift a micron
- Etc etc

Treats for taming

Use extra special food during taming sessions:

- Dried liver
- Tinned fish – salmon, tuna, sardines
- Hills a/d
- Roast chicken
- Grilled bacon
- Prawns
- Peck's Ham and Chicken Spread (supermarket)
- Royal Canin Persian dry food (must be Persian!)

Three excellent videos

YouTube

- ‘Urban Cat League tough love’
- Demonstrate using food to socialise cats
- From when kittens removed from nest
- To living with carer and being handled
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpEcxlGmhyQ>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfraiHjBNHM>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jP8E-yFXCT4>

Other tools

- 'Hang out' in their room – ignore them
- TV/talkback radio on low when you're not home
- Stroke with taming wand instead of hands – good for fear-aggression
- PetCalm music – Mind Motivations
- Australian Bushflower / Bach Flower Essences
- Tellington Touch

Taming wand

- Long stick eg bamboo garden stake
- Soft material held onto end with rubber band



Over time...

- Look at you (without saucer eyes...)
- Come out of hiding space when you're there
- Let you put food in without hiding
- Eat in front of you
- Eat from your hand
- Approach you for food or contact
- Let you touch them
- Miaow at you (celebrate!)
- Let you lift them

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Next steps

- Socialisation room
- Being picked up
- Introduce to whole house
- Stranger desensitisation (with hiding spot)
- Adoption
 - Explain cat's background
 - May require especially patient adopter
 - People who have previously been adopted by a stray

Keep record

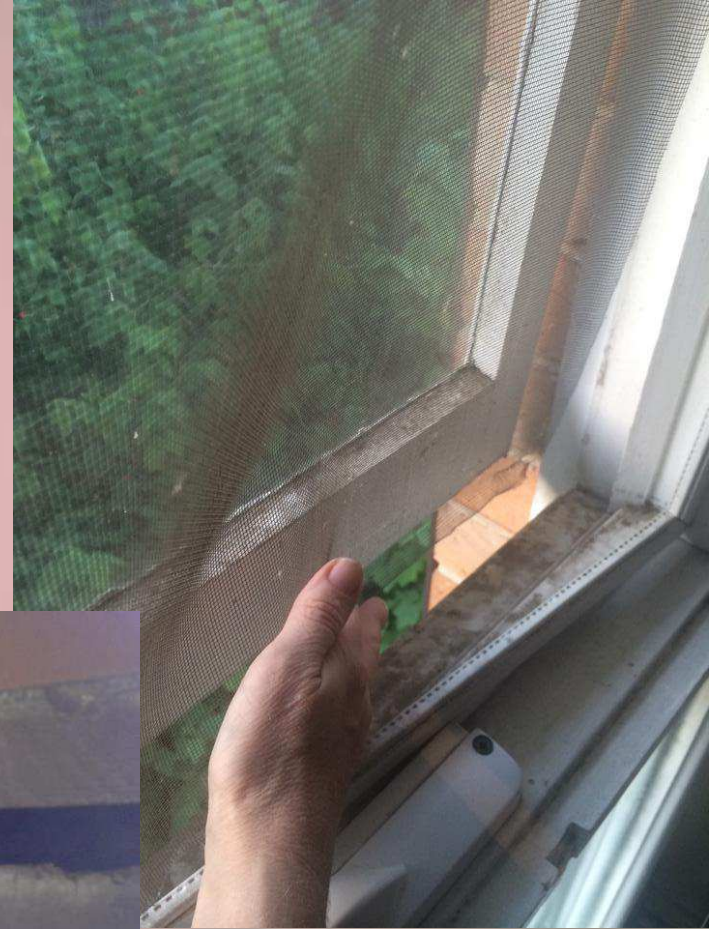
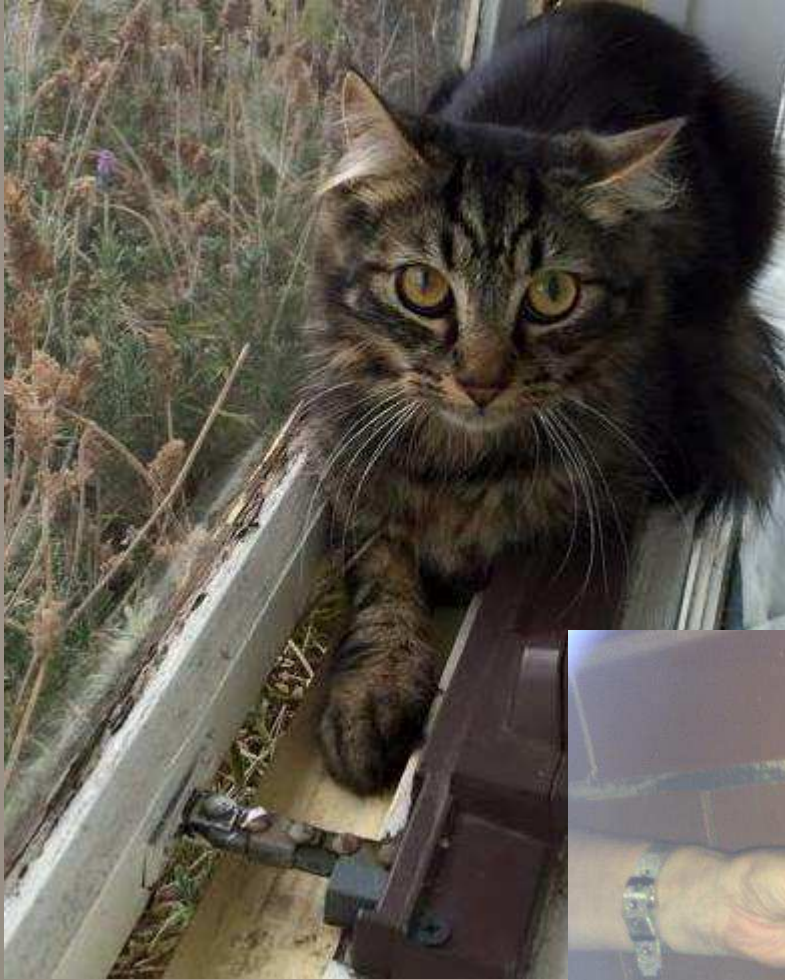
You will be amazed how far they have come.

11-Nov-15	Cowering in litter tray - pupils dilated.
12-Nov-15	Moved to carrier - eyes like saucers.
25-Nov-15	Came to eat b'fast while I was still dishing it out!!
2-Dec-15	Miaowed at me for dinner
8-Dec-15	**Let me touch her face while eating!!!!
26-Dec-15	Ate off my hand!
21-Jan-16	Let me scratch her rump!!
8-Feb-16	***Purred*** while I brushed her, without food!!
25-Feb-16	Head butted my hand!!
24-Feb-16	Picked her up onto bed. Looked shocked but didn't flip out too much
26-Feb-16	Slept against my legs!!! Played with my feet
1-Mar-16	Lay on back for tummy strokes
12-Mar-16	Let me pick her up briefly!!!

WARNING!! Windows and doors

- Cats can get through tiny spaces
 - If their head can fit, their body can fit
- Frightened cats are unpredictable, especially when they first arrive
- Once escaped, frightened cats are very hard to find, even with CSI-type searching

Cats got out of / into these spaces



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WARNING!! Windows and doors

- Windows open maximum 2cm
- Take care when entering/exiting house – do the cat scoop
- Never leave a door open, even for a minute

Recap

- Confine, with hiding space
- Spend time with them, ignoring them
- Use treat food rewards to stretch them
- Take things at their own pace – respect their fears and boundaries
- Take care with windows and doors
- Watch the Urban Cat League videos
- Give them lots of patience and love
- Save more lives!



Foster carers' comments

“The most rewarding experience of my life.”

Ongoing support and guidance

Website

- www.scaredycats.com.au

Feral and stray cats group

- https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/feral_cats/info
- (Search for ‘feral stray cats yahoo group’)

The 'current black'

'My dog/cat is a rescue', said with great pride.

The 'new black'

'My cat is an ex feral', said with great pride.

Contact me if you're in marketing so we can make this happen!

Questions?



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