**What to do if you find a stray cat**

This advice and guidance is given by [Quercy Cats](https://chatsduquercy.fr/en/), one of the regions largest and best respected cat charities.

You must think very carefully before feeding a “stray” cat. If it is friendly follow the advice given here, and if it is a feral or semi-feral cat, then it will usually fend for itself.

Cats are naturally resourceful creatures and can be independent of their owners.

Whilst there are many cats who love lots of attention and cuddles, never roaming far from their owner’s side, there are other cats that are quite happy wandering through fields and gardens, a cat you find could simply be in a normal part of, or exploring potential new expansions of, its home range.

**Is it really a stray?**

* Check around all the local neighbours
* Inform the local Mairie. Whatever they say to the contrary, stray animals are under the responsibility of the Mayor of the town or village where they are found. They are obliged to organise their care and must permanently display contact information of the service.
* At night or on the weekend, an emergency telephone number must be displayed. The identification of pets is mandatory in France and the identification is, in case of loss of a pet, essential to find its owner!
* It is vital to check if the cat is identified. In France identification is by tattooing and microchip, both of which register owner’s details on the Fichier National Félin database.
* If the cat is friendly enough to handle you should take it to a vet to verify the identification, and find the owner. If the cat can be enticed into a box or, better still, a pet transportation case then this is the best way to transport him, cats should never be transported loose in a car.
* Is the cat wearing a collar? This might give the name and address of the cat’s owners. If the cat is looking well fed and yet is not wearing a collar it could still be a far roaming pet. In this instance the cat may well go home of his own accord.
* If he doesn’t, or if there is a risk that he may become injured (for instance if he is found wandering by a busy road) contact a vet who should be able to help you either find the owner or give you the details of any animal rescue organisations nearby.
* If it is a feral cat, you may try to catch it, but only to have it neutered (females can have up to 4 litters a year, leaving you with up to 2000 cats and kittens in just 3 years!). See your Mairie to ask if there are any neutering programmes already in place. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feral_cat>
* Check what the commune policy is on feral/stray cats.Some communes have programmes in place to deal with these cats; some have agreements with either the local pound or independent charity associations to Trap/Neuter/Release. You should never try to tame a stray/feral cat
* Before a new home can be found for a stray cat, it is a legal obligation that it is identified by microchip

**Finding the owner**

* If possible, take a photo, along with details of the cat (the vet should give you an indication of age etc) and make posters. Posters can usually be displayed in the Mairie, La Poste, Vet’s clinics, supermarkets, outside your house and anywhere else you can think of!
* Place the photo and details of the cat on as many websites that you can find, bear in mind that it is a legal requirement here in France for all cats to be microchipped before finding new owners.
* Notify the local fourrières
* Thousands of cats are abandoned or lost every year in France. The difference here is that the infrastructure is fragmented, uncoordinated, disorganised and lacking in good management, so, don’t be surprised if the local rescue centre says it’s full or puts you on a waiting list, especially over the summer months when abandoning is at its height – as is kitten ‘season’.
* There simply are too many stray animals and not enough homes. This is why you should give any rescue centre as much notice as possible, don’t leave it until the last minute or just before you are due to leave, even if you’ve had ‘promises’ from someone who would like the cat, it is much better to keep all options open.
* You can always pass on the rescue centre’s details to potential owners, and don’t forget to contact the rescue centre to tell them that you have found a home for the cat.
* All rescue centres have severely limited space, resources, money, and volunteers; they sometimes have no choice but to put cats to sleep if they are not adopted.
* The cat will need to be tested for FIV and FeLV (Feline Leukaemia), microchipped (legal requirement in France), vaccinated, and neutered. Yes, this will cost money. It costs rescue centres money too (rescue centres rely on donations to cover costs).
* Keep the cat separated from your own cats until it is tested. All this completed will vastly increase the cat’s chances of being taken in by a rescue centre. Offering a donation will help even more.
* The rescue centre will have to provide food, litter and possibly medical care for the cat until it is adopted. All this costs money, and the rescue centres are doing it for dozens of cats at once, not just one.

**Keeping the cat**

If all efforts to find the owner fail, you may decide that you’d like to keep the cat yourself.

In this case, take a look at the advice concerning the Pet Passport Scheme, this will be essential to facilitate your travelling with the cat.

You may need to find a temporary home for the cat while your plans are put into place. There are many catteries that are used to these situations and can help you; it is worth asking for a

Domestic cats don’t normally venture too far from home. If the cat is injured it may be hiding out, so check all possible hiding places. Keep calling and keep checking the neighbourhood, rattling biscuit boxes or using any other means that the cat is used to, to get his attention.

Thank you for reading