



# Paws on the Job

*Homeward Bound's Working Cat Program*

## **Transition and Care Instructions for Paws on the Job Cats**

### Allow Time to Acclimate

- Each new Paws on the Job cat should be confined to an escape-proof area for 3-4 weeks. For office/shop/store/warehouse cats this can be a break room, office, or other room where cats will have access to people but can't reach the outside. For outdoor cats safe confinement areas may include a tack room, empty stall, garage, or other enclosed area. If these spaces are not available where the cat will be employed, Homeward Bound can loan you a wire crate. The confinement area should be part of the cat's future territory.
- The confinement period is crucial to the success of your new employee! It gives them a chance to get used to their new surroundings- the sites, the smells, the sounds- and allows them to learn where they get their food, where the litter box is, and where they will get attention. The confinement area will serve as the cat's home base once they are allowed to roam freely. (If released from confinement too early, indoor cats may develop litter box issues, especially if their territory is a large building, because they won't know where to find the litter box. Outdoor cats, especially the semi-feral cats who would prefer to live without human presence, may run away as soon as they are released if they aren't allowed time to learn where the food is served). **\*\*Keeping outdoor cats confined for four weeks doubles the chances they will stay around when released (compared to a 2 week confinement period).**
- The confinement area must include food, water, a litter box, a hiding box, and bedding (or straw for semi-feral cats). If using a crate, lining the bottom with newspaper makes for easier clean up. Litter boxes should be scooped daily for cats confined to a crate.
- If your cat is crated in an environment that isn't temperature controlled, you may need to provide supplemental heat or cooling. This could include a frozen water bottle in the crate or a fan directed at the cat on hot days, and space heaters or a heated bed for cold days. We are happy to help with additional ideas for keeping your crated employee healthy and comfy during their confinement period.

## Lunch Breaks

- Feed your feline employee regularly and at the same times each day. This will allow them to get used to the location and time that will receive food once they are roaming free. (We recommend feeding canned food during the transition period because most cats enjoy it more than dry and it will keep them coming back for more).
- Keep putting food and water out for the cats after you have released them, even if you do not see them for a few days. They are most likely hiding and will come out for food and water when everyone has left for the night.

## Continued Care

- You will be given veterinary records for each of your new feline employees. Please hold on to these so that you know when they will need their rabies and distemper vaccines, annual deworming, and/or flea treatments. Homeward Bound will fax a copy of the records to the vet you will be using so they will also have a copy.
- Semi-feral cats may become more social after they get to know you, but do not be surprised if you see very little of them.
- To prevent wildlife and rodents from eating the cat's food, we suggest you feed your feline employee twice a day at the same time each day, and remove the food at the end of the day.
- The cats should ALWAYS have access to a warm, dry shelter with clean bedding.
- Your new employee should always have access to a safe elimination spot- whether this is outdoors or a regularly cleaned litter box.
- We request that the benefit package for your new employee includes an annual trip to the vet for vaccinations and parasite control. At the time of adoption you will be given a voucher for a free vet exam, to be used within 4 weeks of adoption (the voucher covers the office visit fee). If you are able to make use of the voucher it will allow your vet a chance to become familiar with your new four-legged employee.
- For semi-feral cats who can't be touched, ask your vet for parasite control that can be put into their food. Should your semi-feral require vet care, Homeward Bound can loan you a humane trap to catch and transport your cat to the vet.
- **Homeward Bound Paws on the Job cats are not temporary employees. You are adopting your new employee and all adoption requirements apply. If for any reason you are no longer to care for the cat, we ask that you return the cat to Homeward Bound.**

## Job Hazards

- If you live in an area known for wildlife predation, **please consider confining your outdoor cats to a safe indoor area at night**- at least until they know the area well enough to stay safe on their own.
- There are a lot of great tips online about how to keep outdoor cats safe from predators. There are a few examples below, and we are happy to help brainstorm additional protections if you have unique circumstances.
  - Predators may be attracted to leftover food so we recommend keeping waste to a minimum. Picking up fallen fruit from trees and picking up uneaten food or bird seed are all ways to prevent predators from being drawn to your property.
  - Consider possible escape routes. Areas around the home/business may have low-clearance sheds, barns or decks for cats to dash under or on top of. If not, an 8-10 foot post or 4x4 with a small platform on top provides a safe escape that cats can climb to escape.
  - Consider building or purchasing a shelter that is safe from predators. We recommend finding a shelter with entrances the cat can fit through but predators can't. Feral Villa makes a great predator safe shelter if you are looking to purchase one.

## Final Considerations

- All cats adopted through Homeward Bound are microchipped, however you may want to purchase a good-quality breakaway collar for your indoor or indoor/outdoor employee (not recommended for semi-feral or barn cats). A tag with your contact information is also highly recommended.
- Your new employees will enjoy the same comforts as any pet cat; soft places to sleep, perches where they can watch from up high, cat towers, scratching posts (highly recommended), and cat toys will help keep your new employee happy. Cats that aren't feral will appreciate human attention and affection, but please be aware that they may have a lower threshold for handling than your cat at home.

If you have any questions or concerns about Paws on the Job cats that you have or would like to employ, please email the shelter at [feline@homewardboundanimals.org](mailto:feline@homewardboundanimals.org)