

Finding a backup caretaker

Be prepared for life's unexpected - or expected - challenges.



Do you have a plan for your community cat or cats when you are unable to take care of them? Finding a substitute caretaker is important for life's unexpected (or expected) challenges, from falling ill to taking a planned vacation. If you are the sole caretaker of your community cats, don't hesitate to start your search for a substitute.

- Start with people who know about your cats and may be willing to volunteer. Ask neighbors, friends, family. Find others in your area who are caring for cats and see if they might be willing to help.
- If you have information about the cat's age or medical history, ensure that the substitute has it on hand. Include a photo so that the substitute caretaker will know each cat.
- Let your substitute know the details of your feeding schedule and ongoing care system. Describe behaviors or any special needs your cats may have. Explain what you do each day to keep your community cats healthy and happy.
- Decide on a caretaking arrangement. If the substitute caretaker is not able to help out financially, you might need to stock up on items such as food, medicine, etc. You will need to decide which vet you want the cats to go to in case one or more falls ill or becomes injured, and decide whether this will be at your expense or the substitute's.
- Write up an agreement that you and the substitute caretaker can both sign. It should state the arrangements that have been made between you. Be sure to include both parties' contact information.
- Do everything you can to avoid having the cats relocated. This should be an option only in an extreme situation, such as when the cats' lives might be in danger. It is hard on the cats and rarely successful.

You may feel that no one can fill your shoes when it comes to your community cats' care, but finding a substitute that you trust will give you that extra assurance that your cats are being well cared for.