



Q. There are cats in my yard!

A. Yes. If you live in Hudson County, there probably are (or there will be at some point). Before deciding if any action is necessary there are a few things you'll need to assess:

1. Do you know of anyone caring for the cats?
2. How long have the cats been there? Do they come and go?
3. Are any of the cats missing the top part of their ear, like this? →
4. Do the cats appear healthy? Are they adults or kittens?
5. Do the cats come to you or want to be touched?
6. Do the cats try to come inside?



It's OK for Some Cats to be Outside: Generally, only cats and kittens who are highly social and want to live in a home with people should be taken in or brought to a shelter. Attempting to tame cats who are older than 8 weeks is not a good or easy option. It is in the best interest of these, and many other cats, to continue to live outside. These cats should be vaccinated and spayed/neutered so as not to reproduce. They rely on human caretakers to provide food, shelter from the elements, and medical care when necessary. We call these outdoor cats *community cats*, and the people who care for them *caretakers*. LHS can assist you in determining which course of action to take with the cats you are seeing.

The Caretaker is the Key: Generally outdoor cats have a home base territory where they eat and sleep. But because they move around it's not uncommon for several different people to be involved in their feeding and care. Before taking any action about cats you see on your property you need to try and identify if they have a caretaker. Ask your neighbors if anyone is feeding them (and when); how long they've been around; or if they have seen where the cats sleep. Be ready with a description of the cats and when you have seen them.

If one or more of the cats has a cut ear, known as an *ear tip* (as shown above) that means they have already been spayed/neutered and released back where they were found by a caretaker. This is called *Trap, Neuter Return (TNR)*. The caretaker is signaling to you that these cats are being monitored and there is no need to intervene unless they appear to be sick.

For more detailed information on how TNR works and how to get started with your local cats, see [Alley Cat Allies' TNR Overview](#)

Check for Health: If any of the cats appear sick or injured and you haven't been able to identify a caretaker, confine the cat and call the Animal Response Team (ART). If the cat cannot be confined, the ART may work with you to trap the cat so it can be taken for a medical assessment and later returned to your property.

Lost or Not?: If a cat attempts to come into your house, meows or makes other noises, or appears to be looking for help from a human, it may be a housecat who has either escaped or been abandoned. These cats are more likely to appear suddenly and stick around, not come and go like community cats. If you think you have found a tame lost cat, confine them and call the Animal



Response Team. Take a picture and distribute “Found Cat” flyers in your neighborhood and on social media. Be sure to tell potential owners to contact the shelter to reclaim their cat.

No Eartip - What Now?: If the cats don’t have an ear tip that means they have not yet been spayed/neutered (fixed). That means they will soon reproduce and there will be more cats! Cats go into heat when they’re approximately 6 months old, so the sooner they can be fixed the better. Spaying/neutering outdoor cats is the only humane way to keep the population stable, limit nuisance behaviors like spraying and digging, and eventually decrease the number of cats living outside. If you have been able to locate the caretaker of the cats talk to them about TNR and the benefits of having the cats spayed/neutered.

The cost of spaying/neutering cats is often the biggest obstacle to those who care for them. There are no federal or state subsidies for TNR, but there are non-profit clinics and organizations that strive to make spay/neuter surgery more affordable and accessible. LHS can assist by providing rental use of humane cat traps and other supplies, logistical advice, and subsidies when available. The closest public low-cost spay/neuter clinic for Hudson County is [People for Animals](#), located in Hillside New Jersey. LHS sometimes offers special low-cost public spay/neuter days at the shelter; these are announced on our website and [social media](#).

Kittens with Mom: If you have found young kittens with a feral (wild) mother, watch from a distance while you make a plan. Do not approach or mom will likely move the kittens to hide them. If mom and the kittens are safe from predators and can remain relatively undisturbed, their best chance of survival is to remain where they are until the kittens are approximately 6-8 weeks old. This means the kittens (not including tail) are roughly the length of your hand from fingertips to wrist. At this point they can walk, scamper, are ready to eat solid food, and—most importantly—can be vaccinated against disease.

If mom cat is tame, it’s best to confine her and the kittens when they are young and keep them in your home in a crate until they can be vaccinated and either brought to the shelter or adopted. Call LHS when you first find mom and kittens so we can help you decide on next steps and get you the supplies you’ll need.

If you have found young kittens and you do not see a mother, **watch and wait**. They may have been permanently separated, but more likely mom is out finding food or taking a break. As long as it is relatively warm and the kittens are in a sheltered spot they are ok by themselves for a while. If 24 hours pass and mom has not returned, bring the kittens inside, warm them, and call the Animal Response Team.

Animal Response Team Contact Information

201.547.4888