

A Guide to Understanding the "Working Cat"

Although being a pet in a home is one function an adoptable animal can have, there are also other, more independent functions that provide usefulness when animals do go home from the shelter. There is a population of cats who have a difficult time being adopted and taken into homes, as they are better in environments residing outdoors and are "mousers," warding off unwanted pests and critters. This population is referred to as the "working cat." Due to their abnormal behavior, it is difficult for some of these cats to get adopted and placed in environments that are indoors. Due to their unique temperament, this can make a cat more suitable for outdoor living in environments like a farm, barn, stable, or any other type of suitable environment where the cat essentially has a "job" to accomplish. They can also be great companions to horses and other animals besides humans.

According to Riverside Rescue, working cats tend to be feral cats that have lived their lives on the street and don't have such a great outcome when adopted into a residential home. Feral cats of this sort, because of their active temperament, are at risk for being euthanized because of their low adoptability rate & high stress level in a shelter environment. They are usually more successful in places where rodents reside, like warehouses, barns, and stables, which, according to research, rodents will smell their presence and be simply warded off. Instead of the use of glue traps or painful poisonous deaths, rodents simply leave by the mere presence of the cat.

Identifying a working cat isn't too difficult, as they are typically cats who have resided in outdoor environments before making their way to the shelter. Other identifiers include cats who regularly display behavior of house soiling, overstimulation, or have issues of being held for more than a short period of time. These cats tend to be more independent and better at living lives where they are in protected environments but essentially take care of themselves. Some working cats can interact with humans, while others are a bit more uncomfortable, but can reside among humans.

When bringing home a working cat, there can be some steps taken to ensure that it doesn't subsequently wander away from its new home environment. According to us, it's best to first confine the cat to a subsection of the overall area it will be residing in for about 2-4 weeks. During this period, the cat should have plenty of food, water, and a clean litterbox in order to best acclimate to its new environment. This time period allows for the cat to get used to new smells and sounds as well as get a feel for the environment. It is important to keep this space available for the cat as it will become the cats "safe space" even when released into its environment. Having somewhere the cat can go back to is important for recognizing a home base.

Another step to take after bringing these cats home is to ensure the removal of anything that could eventually cause harm to the cat including equipment, toxic chemicals, plants, or even wires. Although these cats could have previously been used to unstable environments, ensuring safety as much as possible will better help the overall health of the cat along with their lifestyle and daily experiences. Also, ensure that there is still ample food and water after releasing the cat into the overall enclosed environment. Although working cats often double as hunters, they need a reliable food source in order to stick around.

Some extra tips in fully understanding how these cats function include the acknowledgment that an individual may not see their cat for a few days or even weeks. This disappearance can be attributed to most of these cats having a nocturnal schedule and functioning most at night time.

A working cat is a great way to improve the cleanliness of an individual's outdoor environment, keeping it pest and rodent free. Employing these cats is also a great way to get them out of the shelters and at work, with their active personalities and independent living styles functioning best.

Either way, it is a win-win situation for the cat and owner where both subsequently benefit from the experience, and another cat gets to go home.

In return for them working for you, you must make sure they have access to clean drinking water and food. This will not make them less of a mouser... it will ensure they stay in your environment and not go find the next place that has food.

Remember... cats are nocturnal so you may not see them working and more or less just sleeping during the day. But rest assured, they are on the job!

We at Riverside Rescue make sure the cats are free of parasites like fleas, ticks, ear mites and internal worms.. They are also Spayed/ neutered, vaccinated for FVRCP & Rabies and tested negative for leukemia and feline aids. With this you can be sure you are getting a healthy cat to assist you with any current or impending rodent issue.