



Tompkins County SPCA

Feral Cat Series

How to Keep Cats out of Your Yard

Tompkins County backyards play host to a variety of animals, including cats. All animals fill important roles in our environment, but if you want to keep cats out of your yard, there are many humane ways to deter them. Keep in mind that what may work for one cat may not work for another, so it helps to be willing to try more than one solution.

- Cats dislike the smell of citrus: try putting orange and lemon peelings out; spraying the area with citrus-scented sprays; or sprinkling with an orange-scented pet bedding like Citrafresh.
- Spray cat repellent (available at pet supply stores) around the perimeter of your yard and along the top of the fences.
- Sprinkle cayenne pepper in the area you want to keep the cat away from.
- Scatter coffee grounds or pipe tobacco in the area.
- Try growing the herb rue – cats dislike the smell. You may also be able to buy it dried in health food stores.
- A motion activated sprinkler that sprays intruding animals with water is manufactured by Contech (800.767.8658).

If the cats belong to your neighbors, talk to them and try to work things out amicably.

If the cats are feral (also called “wild,” “barn,” or “alley” cats), these are animals—previously abandoned or born wild—who are not accustomed to humans. Since feral cats are not tame or socialized, they cannot be placed in homes and so are routinely killed if taken the animals shelters.

The most humane and effective way to control the population of feral cats is through spaying and neutering. The Tompkins County SPCA provides free and low-cost spay/neuter for feral cats. The altered cats, identified by a notched ear, are then released back into their habitat.

