Feral Cat Awareness

WHAT IS A FERAL CAT?
Feral cats are the wild-born offspring of other feral and stray cats that are not used to human interaction. Feral cats live in colonies that provide food and shelter such as abandoned buildings, dumpsters, warehouses, etc.

FERAL VS. STRAY?
Stray cats have either been lost or abandoned and are familiar with human interaction. Feral cats were either born in the wild or have reverted back to a wild state and are fearful of handling. Strays will more readily approach humans for food; however some feral cats may approach humans.

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PROTECT MY FAMILY AND PETS?

- Feral cats should be avoided due to the public health risk they pose. Feral cats or strays may carry diseases such as Rabies, Lyme disease, Mange, Chlamydiosis (a bacteria based respiratory infection) and Toxoplasmosis (a mammalian parasite).
- Vaccinate your pets against rabies and report any potential exposures to your local Health Department immediately.
- Spay and neuter your outdoor cats. Only 2% of the wild cat population is spayed/neutered. Two uncontrolled, breeding cats can produce up to 5,000 kittens in five years through subsequent generations.
- Secure any trash around your home and do not feed feral cat populations.

CAN’T WE JUST RELOCATE THE FERAL CATS?
It is difficult to trap an entire colony of feral cats and likely that another colony would move in to take advantage of the newly available resources. The best defense is to control reproduction through spay/neuter programs.

IF YOU OR YOUR PET ARE EXPOSED TO A FERAL/STRAY CAT:

- Wash human wounds thoroughly with soap and water. DO NOT contact animal wounds, due to possible rabies transfer.
- Confine the wild biting animal, if possible to do so without risk or exposing yourself or others to a bite or scratch.
- Kill the animal only as a last resort but do not damage the head as the brain tissue may need to be tested for rabies.
- Report any exposure involving humans or animals to your local Health Department immediately and call your physician if you have been exposed.

To report an exposure, call (410) 546-4446.
For more information: www.wicomicohealth.org.

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