Is that Cat Feral?

Tips and Myths about Feral Cat Behavior
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Poll: Can you tell if this cat is socialized?

Submit your answer in the poll box on the right.

a) Yes, this cat is socialized.

b) No, this cat is unsocialized.
Topics Today

• What we thought we knew about behaviors to identify Socialized Cats

• Behaviors or characteristics that don’t do a good job of predicting socialization level

• Behaviors unique to more socialized cats

• Cat behavior in shelters

• Next steps
The Fear Factor

Feral?  Semi-socialized?  Socialized pet?

How do we tell the difference?
Socialization

Level of fear/comfort with humans:

Least Socialized
extremely frightened of humans and unaccustomed to their close proximity

Most Socialized
extremely accustomed to interacting with humans and very comfortable with them

NOT adoptability or aggression
HOW DID WE ELICIT BEHAVIORS FROM CATS?
Four Observation Periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM Intake</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four Interactions/Assessments In a Cage
Four Assessments

• Greet & extend hand to cat, cage condition
• Crack cage door open
• Jiggle string toy at front
• Stroke and push with a rod
Crack Cage Door Video
Stroke/Push with Rod Video
What are some specific cat behaviors you or your organization use to identify socialized cats?

Type them into chat.
What we THOUGHT was important

Vocalization:
- Meow/purr vs. hiss/growl

Aggression:
- Paw raise, swat, lunge

Cage messiness:
- Litter box dumped, torn up bedding

Licking lips or nose:
- Social behavior

Blinking with eye contact:
- Social behavior
Example: Stroke/Push with Rod

Percentage of cats who meow/purr

- less socialized
- more socialized
Example: Stroke/Push with Rod

Percentage of cats who growl/hiss

- less socialized
- more socialized

pm 1 am 2 pm 2 am 3
### What we THOUGHT was important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Behavioral Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stretch:</td>
<td>Social behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach toward front of cage:</td>
<td>Social behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sniff:</td>
<td>Affiliative behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stiffen/flinch with touch with rod:</td>
<td>Less socialized behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example: Greeting

Percentage of cats who blink with eye contact

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WHAT DO ONLY SOCIALIZED CATS DO?
Obvious Ones:
if do once = socialized

• Chirp
• Rub
• Knead
• Touch
• Play

• At the front of the cage
• Tail up in the air
Touching…

Percentage of more socialized cats who touch

- Greet
- Crack door
- Interactive toy
- During stroking with rod
- During push with rod

![Graph showing the percentage of more socialized cats who touch during different activities and times of day.](chart.png)
Less Obvious: need to do 4 or more = socialized

- Yawn
- Groom/shake
- Approach toward front of cage
- Sniff
- Roll
- Reach
- Standing or still moving around in the cage
**Most Common Assessments for Rolling**

**Percentage of more socialized cats who roll**

- **Greet**
- **Crack door**

- pm 1
- am 2
- pm 2
- am 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Greet</th>
<th>Crack door</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pm 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>am 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pm 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>am 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example: Stroke with Rod

Percentage of cats who sniff

- Blue line: less socialized
- Orange line: more socialized
Example: Crack Door

Percentage of cats who yawn

- less socialized
- more socialized

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BUT:

• Not all socialized cats did these behaviors

  Didn’t do every time period
  more than ½ did NOT do on first day

  Didn’t do in all assessments

• Probably won’t see if shy or not very demonstrative or “needy”
Poll: Which of these less obvious behaviors did you find most interesting or surprising?

Submit your answer in the poll box on the right.

a) Yawn
b) Groom/shake
c) Approach toward front of cage
d) Sniff
e) Roll
f) Reach
g) Standing or still moving around in the cage
SOME OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS WE LEARNED
Next Steps

• Evaluate the consistency of different people for in-cage measures

• Put together a training package

• Test in several shelters

• Revise

• Share on ASPCApro.org
Welfare Implications

Cats eat during the night in the dark and quiet
Cats use their litter boxes then too

Percent of cats who ate during the night

- [Bar chart showing the percent of cats who ate during the night for more socialized and less socialized cats.]

- am 2
- am 3
- more socialized
- less socialized
Bed and Shelf
Soft Bed and Shelf or Kuranda Bed Used

On shelf during Crack Door

- less socialized
- more socialized
What was the most important thing you heard about in this webinar?

Type your answers into chat please!
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aspcapro.org/webinars

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• Saving Lives with Animal Relocation  (Oct. 29)
• Successful Financial Management for Nonprofits  (Oct. 30)
• Beyond the Box: Closing After-hours Drop Boxes  (Nov. 14)
• Parvo 101  (Dec. 5)