

State Legislation Affecting Feral/Community Cats (as of September 2019)

	Statute	Title	Key Provisions
Alaska	AS 16.05.940	Definitions Fish and Game	“Game” includes a feral domestic animal
Arkansas	§ 20-19-302 § 20-19-304	Definitions - Public Health & Welfare, Animals Penalties – Public Health & Welfare, Animals	“Owner” includes a person who knowingly permits a cat to remain on or about their premises A stray cat that is not vaccinated against rabies is subject to destruction
California	CA Food & Ag Code § 31752.5	Regulation of cats - Feral cats	Defines a feral cat as a cat without owner identification of any kind whose usual and consistent temperament is extreme fear and resistance to contact with people. Allows for a cat deemed to be feral to be euthanized or surrendered to a non-profit after a shortened holding period (3 days)
Colorado	§ 25-4-601 § 25-4-610	Definitions – Rabies control Rabies control	“Owner” includes a person who harbors a cat or acts as a custodian Unlawful for an owner to allow an unvaccinated cat to run at large
Connecticut	Conn. Gen. Stat. § 22-339d	Municipal control of feral cats	Allows any municipality to adopt an ordinance requiring registration of keepers of feral cats in residential or commercial areas Allows any municipality to adopt an ordinance preventing anyone who keeps or owns a cat from substantially damaging the property of another or from causing an unsanitary, dangerous, or unreasonably offensive condition
Delaware	§ 3013F § 3001F	Definitions – Animal Population Control Shelter Operation Definitions	Defines “feral cat” as a cat that (i) is born in the wild or is the offspring of an owned or feral cat and which may not be socialized, or (ii) is a formerly owned cat that has been abandoned and is no longer socialized. Defines “free-roaming cat caretaker” as a person who provides shelter, medical care, or food to one or more free-roaming cats lacking discernible owner identification and works to reduce colony numbers through TNR. A free-roaming cat caretaker is explicitly different from “owner”. Defines “free-roaming cat program” – release on public lands prohibited
District of Columbia	§ 8-1802	Animal Care & Control Agency	Promotes TNR practices as a means of controlling feral cat population
Florida	§ 823.151	Lost or stray dogs and cats	Reasonable efforts must be made to return lost cats to identified owner w/ extension of holding periods after natural disasters

	Statute	Title	Key Provisions
	§ 585.01	Definitions – Animal Industry	“Owner” includes custodian of domestic animal
Illinois	§ 510 ILCS 5/35	Animal Control Act (liability)	Provides immunity from criminal and civil liability (except for willful/wanton misconduct) to any municipality or political subdivision that allows feral cat colonies and TNR programs Provides immunity from criminal and civil liability (except for willful/wanton misconduct) to veterinarians and caretakers participating in TNR programs
	§ 510 ILCS 92/25	Animal Control Act	Residents who manage feral cat colonies are eligible to participate in low cost spay-neuter program provided the TNR program is recognized by the municipality or county
Indiana	§ 35-46-3-7	Abandonment or neglect of vertebrate animals	A feral animal is not considered to be within a person’s custody for purposes of prosecuting animal offenses
	§ 16-41-27-16	Public Health – Mobile Homes	Statute that prohibits pets from running at large within a mobile home community does not apply to feral cats released from a TNR program.
Kentucky	KRS 258.005	Definitions	“Owner” is defined as any person owning, keeping, or harboring a cat
	KRS 258.015	Animal control and protection	Rabies vaccination requirements appear to include feral cats based on the definition of “owner”
Maine	MRS § 3919	Shelter provisions	For cats without ID, a shelter shall hold for not less than 48 hrs; for feral cats, not less than 24 hrs, after which time the cat may be offered for sale or adoption or otherwise be humanely disposed of....An animal shelter may not sell or give a cat to a research facility
Maryland	§ 10-413	Hunting Restrictions pertaining to dogs and cats	Natural Resources officers and other law enforcement officers <u>shall</u> kill any cat found hunting a game bird or mammal or a protected bird or mammal (any other person <u>may</u> destroy)
Michigan	HB 4596 (proposed)	A bill to promote community cat programs	Creates an exemption for organizations and individuals (“sponsors” and “community cat caretakers”) from other statutes and local ordinances regulating the care, treatment, possession or ownership of cats
Nevada	NRS 574.100	Animal cruelty statute	Prohibition against abandonment does not apply to feral cats
New Jersey	NJS § 4:22-17.2	Unlawful treatment of certain animals	The prohibition on exposing companion animals to adverse environmental conditions and the requirement to make efforts to evacuate animals in emergency situations do not apply to feral cats
New York	§ 17-802	Definitions-Health, Animal Shelters	“Feral cat” defined as animal with no owner, is unsocialized to humans, and has a temperament of extreme fear of and resistance to human contact
	§ 2140	Definitions-Public	“Owner” does not apply to premises owners or occupants of property

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		Health, Rabies	inhabited by feral cats
North Carolina	§ 130A-184 § 130A-195	Definitions - Rabies Destroying stray or feral animals in rabies quarantine districts	“Feral” is defined as an animal that is not socialized Any peace officer or animal control officer has the right to destroy stray or feral animals running uncontrolled in quarantine areas after reasonable efforts have been to apprehend the animal
Pennsylvania	11 Pa. C.S. § 12410	Regulation of pets and feral animals	Allows cities to adopt an ordinance to prohibit and regulate the “running at large” of ...cats, and feral animals
Rhode Island	R.I. Gen. Laws § 4-22-5	Holding At-Large or Impounded Cats	Provides holding period requirements and disposition options (including euthanasia) for feral cats with and without ID; allows for euthanasia of feral cats without ID prior to holding period if determined to be dangerous (at discretion of animal control, licensed vet, or shelter manager)
South Carolina	§ 47-5-120 § 47-3-50	Rabies Control Dogs and Other Domestic Pets	In an order relating to rabies control within a community, efforts to reduce the stray and feral animal population may be undertaken. It is unlawful to allow dogs or cats to run at large
Tennessee	§ 5-1-120	Power to regulate stray animals	Gives counties the power to regulate, capture, impound, and dispose of stray dogs and cats
Texas	§ 826.033	Restraint, Impoundment, and Disposition of Dogs and Cats	Municipalities and counties may adopt ordinances to require that stray dogs or cats be declared a public nuisance, impounded, and humanely disposed of
Utah	11-46-301 to 11-46-304	Community Cat Act	Exempts community cats from 1) 5-day shelter hold period, 2) licensing requirements, and 3) feeding bans Excludes community cat sponsors and caretakers from definition of “custody” as defined in Sec. 76-9-301 Requires maintaining sterilization and vaccination records for a minimum of three (3) years Allows a county or municipality to create a permit process for community cats and requires permit programs to provide notice to adjacent property owners
Vermont	20 V.S.A. § 541a	Feral animals; responsibility	No requirement for a person to be responsible for a feral animal that takes up a residence in a building (other than the person’s home) even if the person occasionally feeds the animal
Virginia	§ 3.2-6500	Definitions – Comprehensive Animal Care	Feral cat included in the definition of companion animal

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	§ 3.2-6546	Confinement & Disposition of Animals	Feral cats can be euthanized after a hold period of not less than three days
West Virginia	§ 19-20C-1	West Virginia Spay Neuter Assistance Program	Grant program - Established, in part, to reduce problems posed by the growing population of stray, feral, and abandoned dogs and cats.
Wyoming	§ 23-1-101 § 23-3-103 §11-31-301	Definitions of wildlife Taking predatory animals Animals running at large	Stray cats fall under definition of a “predatory animal” Predatory animals may be taken without a license in any manner at any time (subject to a few exceptions) Animals running at large may be declared a public nuisance

Notes: This list is not meant to be a comprehensive list of all laws impacting feral/community cats. Other laws with the potential to impact feral/community cats and their caretakers may include public health code, public nuisance ordinances, and laws pertaining to animal care and abandonment (depending on the definition of “owner”).

Search terms: “cat” OR “feline” OR “feral” OR “stray” OR “TNR”

Helpful resources:

MSU College of Law Animal Legal & Historical Center Website: <https://www.animallaw.info>

Attorneys for Animals Legislative Tracker (Michigan only): <https://www.attorneysforanimals.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Legislative-Tracker-18-FOR-POSTING-082719.pdf>

Justia US Law: <https://law.justia.com>

Legal Information Institute <https://www.law.cornell.edu/>

Findlaw <https://statelaws.findlaw.com/>