



Fall is Stray Cat Season How to Help the Homeless

by Heather Reimer

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Every fall, it's the same story. The leaves turn color, the wind gets chilly, and stray cats start roaming the streets and alleys of Virden looking for warmth and food. Lately, there's been a predictable spike in the number of people contacting the Virden Pet Network with stories like this:

"A nice, friendly cat showed up at our house and we've been feeding him. We can't keep him but we don't want him to freeze this winter or be put to sleep. What should we do?"

Tippy, the tabby cat in the photo, is a case in point. He must have sensed winter was on the way because he recently adopted a Virden couple and wormed his way into their hearts. But they already have cats so are trying to find a good home for Tippy, who wants and deserves to be part of a family.

For homeless cats, the future isn't bright. Strays tend to die young. And as long as they're unneutered, they contribute to the problem of unwanted kittens who also end up living wild and reproducing.

So what can responsible animal lovers do to help strays like Tippy?

First, ask around your neighborhood to make sure the cat hasn't just wandered away from home. Then...

- Contact the animal hospital and town/RM to see if anyone has reported their cat missing.
- If you're sure he's a stray, put up posters, place ads in the paper, and spread the word that he's available.
- Send a digital photo or photos to the Virden Pet Network along with a full description of the cat. Your free listing will run on the website as long as needed.
- If you have a big heart and enough cash, consider having the cat vet checked and spayed / neutered to improve his chances of finding a home.
- If you can't care for the cat indoors until he's adopted, consider setting up a cat shelter in a safe part of your property to help him get through the winter. This also means providing food and safety.
- Ensure your own pets are spayed / neutered so they aren't adding to the stray population.

To learn more about Tippy and other cats who need homes, visit the Virden Pet Network website. (Google "Virden Pet Network")