

BOOK REVIEW

Feral Cat Manual

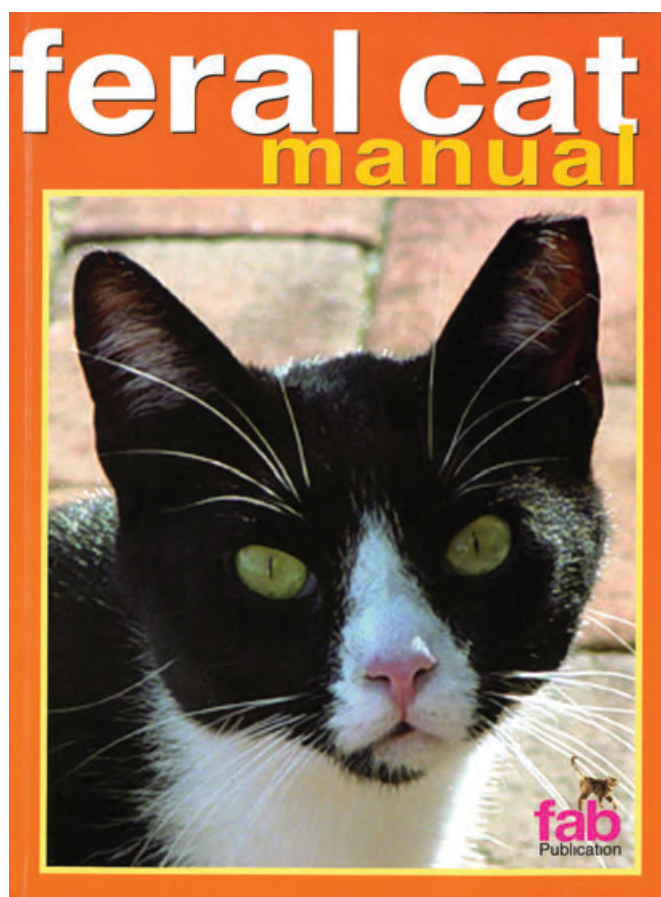
Edited by Claire Bessant

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The *Feral Cat Manual* is one of a series of publications published by the Feline Advisory Bureau (FAB), a charitable organisation dedicated to the well being of cats. Other manuals in the series are directed at such topics as boarding, maintenance of catteries, cat rescue and general health. The manual contains 96 pages divided into 13 chapters written by eight authors whose backgrounds range from veterinary practitioner to a social psychologist and feral cat program coordinator. All authors are very experienced and versed in managing feral cat populations. Similar to other FAB publications, the text is clear and concise, and is augmented with many high quality glossy photographs. The *Feral Cat Manual* begins with the assumption that feral cats are inherently good, and is then devoted to the care and maintenance of these populations. The stated goal of the manual is to provide "reliable advice for the hundreds of volunteers working tirelessly with feral cat populations in the UK and abroad".

The text begins with an excellent chapter on the history, behaviour and social structure of both pet and feral cat populations. Within this chapter is a very brief (three paragraph) discussion of problems caused by feral cats, directed almost exclusively to nuisance issues such as spraying, faeces, and noise. There is no mention of the huge debate regarding killing of wildlife. In chapter 2, different methods that have been attempted to control feral cat populations are discussed, and trap-neuter-release (in addition to public education) is introduced as the best present solution to the problem. An excellent chapter titled "Before You Start" follows. Any person interested in becoming involved with feral cats should read this chapter completely, as it provides honest questions regarding expertise, time commitments and financial realities. There is also a good discussion of relationships with veterinarians from both sides of the coin.

The remainder of the manual is dedicated to the nuts and bolts of trap-neuter-release and feral cat management. Topics such as trapping, feeding, sterilisation, vaccinations, and specific issues related to queens and kittens are all addressed honestly and in detail. There is an excellent straightforward discussion of the health issues pertaining to feral cats, and a no-nonsense approach advocated when cats are sick or injured beyond a certain level. The manual concludes with chapters on feral cats as pets (good luck), working around the world, animal hoarding and project histories.



The *Feral Cat Manual* provides the most comprehensive literature presently available for the layperson on feral cats. Unlike online websites and other publications from feral cat advocates, it speaks honestly to the pitfalls, costs and hardships (as well as rewards) that may be encountered. So who should buy this manual? Certainly any layperson who presently works with feral cats or is contemplating working with them in the future. Veterinary practitioners will also find this manual very useful when advising clients actively involved in feral cat management.

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Robert McCarthy is a Clinical Associate Professor in Small Animal Surgery at Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine. His special interest is in management of feral cat populations and he coordinates several trap-neuter-release programs internationally.