



# ***Tompkins County SPCA***

## **Feral Cat Series**

### **Caring for Feral Cats in the Winter Months**

*Feral cats are hardy survivors, thriving in some of the coldest climates in the world. Even so, winter in upstate New York can be challenge for all of us, so if you are caring for a feral cat, or several, there are a few steps you can take to make them more comfortable during the winter months.*

#### **Food and Water**

- Provide extra food for the cat(s) to keep their energy reserves up.
- Fresh water is very important. Replace water daily, as it may freeze.
- Place food and water under cover to prevent it from being covered by snow. A plastic box turned on its side can work well.

#### **Humane Trapping for Spay/Neuter**

*We do not recommend trapping during the winter for these reasons:*

- Cold weather will tend to suppress reproduction, so trapping for spay/neuter during most of the winter should be unnecessary.
- If you absolutely must trap during the winter, do not leave the trap unattended for any length of time, and bring the trapped cat indoors immediately. Cats should not be released immediately following surgery, since they need to be warm, dry, and sheltered to recover properly. If you have a feral cat spayed or neutered during the winter, you should plan to hold males for approximately two days, and females for up to one week (*indoors, in their traps*). If you cannot do this, wait until Spring to trap.

#### **Shelter**

- Feral cats, like other animals, grow longer coats in the winter. They do not require shelter, but it does provide more comfort in the cold. You can build an inexpensive shelter (top, bottom, three sides) or you can use a small doghouse. Since blankets and towels tend to hold moisture, you can line the shelter with hay. Placing the shelter under an overhang, evergreen tree, or a shrub adds further protection.

