



RSPCA Bristol Animal Clinic



HEALTHY STRAY CATS

Bristol and District Branch
Registered charity number 205858

Why do the RSPCA and other rescue organisations have to be so careful about taking in healthy stray cats for re-homing?

The RSPCA will always take in any animal that appears to be ill or injured, if no owner is available to take responsibility, in order to prevent suffering. However, we have to be much more careful with healthy cats.

Most people who keep cats allow them to roam free, and some cats will wander quite some distance from home. It is therefore very difficult to say whether a cat is a "stray". There is always a possibility that a healthy cat that *appears* to be straying is in fact owned by somebody. If we just "cat nap" a healthy cat from the street, we might cause great distress to a loving owner or family when their pet suddenly goes missing.

Also, as cats are treated as property by law, removing a healthy cat without justification could be regarded as stealing.

For welfare reasons too, we always try to avoid admitting a cat into our rescue catteries unnecessarily. However well-run a rescue cattery is, admitted cats are always at risk from diseases such as cat flu, and the experience of being removed from their own territory and placed in unfamiliar accommodation can be stressful. We really want to do everything we can to avoid putting owned cats through this ordeal needlessly.

So, to prevent inadvertent "cat-napping", we do ask people who find a "stray" cat to do everything they can to determine whether it is owned, before asking us to take it in for rehoming.

Reasonable steps to take are as follows:

- Check with your neighbours to ensure that the cat does not belong to them - they may recently have moved into the area.
- Put up "found" cat posters in your area, for instance, in local shops and veterinary surgeries.
- If the cat is friendly, put a paper collar on the cat with your details, asking any owner to call you. If you get no response after a few days it is likely the cat is genuinely homeless.
- Call the RSPCA's National Helpline on 0300 1234 999, so they can check their lost and found register.
- The cat may have had a microchip implanted, holding details of the owner. The RSPCA Bristol Animal Clinic, or any local veterinary surgeon, can scan animals for microchips.