

KITTENS

Socializing Feral Kittens: The Window and How to Use It

Feral kittens can become friendly companions if socialized young. Ages, what to expect, and when TNR is the better choice.

By Catt County Cat Nippers • Reviewed October 15, 2026 • 1 min read • 3 cited sources

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Age is everything

The most receptive period for socialization is about 2 to 7 weeks of age. Kittens eight weeks or younger can usually be socialized by almost anyone; older kittens take more time and skill, and every week makes it harder.

Alley Cat Allies generally does not recommend trying to socialize feral cats over about four months old. For them, TNR and return to their colony is the humane choice.

How to socialize

1. Confine kittens to a small, quiet room or a large crate with a hiding box, litter box, food and water.
2. Spend time with them several times a day. Sit quietly at their level and let them come to you.
3. Use food: offer wet food on a spoon, then from your hand, then stroke them while they eat.
4. Handle them gently and briefly, increasing time as they relax. Introduce household sounds and new people gradually.
5. Expect progress within about a week; full socialization can take several weeks depending on age and temperament.

Before adoption

Kittens should be vaccinated and spayed or neutered before going to a new home. Ask us about surgery support for kittens you have socialized.

Sources

1. Alley Cat Allies — Socializing Feral Kittens (PDF)

https://www.alleycat.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Socializing-Kittens_update.pdf

2. Alley Cat Allies — The Cat Socialization Continuum

<https://www.alleycat.org/resources/cat-socialization-continuum-guide/>

3. Fear Free — From Hiss to Kiss: Feral Kitten Socialization

<https://www.fearfree.com/2021/06/from-hiss-to-kiss-feral-kitten-socialization/>