

Raccoon-Proof Feeding Stations

Colony caretakers who provide food and water for their cats year-round may be providing a free meal (or two, or three . . .) for uninvited guests as well. Raccoons, skunks, foxes, opossums, and rats, just to name a few, may visit your feeding stations for an easy meal. A steady supply of free food can set the stage for a population increase among the wild creatures.

One solution is to, **feed in the mornings**. Not only will it reduce your "wild animal soup kitchen," it may help keep your cats safer from nocturnal predators.

Another great idea is to **build a raccoon-proof feeding station**. Most cats are great jumpers, but raccoons, opossums, and skunks are not. An "apron" around the bottom of the station will prevent raccoons from climbing to the station.

A suggested size for the station is roughly two feet square, with two covered sides and a top to protect the cats and food from the elements. The station may be mounted on a 4x4" treated post approximately 40" off the ground. Metal mounting brackets for 4x4" posts are available at most home improvement stores, to attach the station to the top of the post.

If your feeding station is on your property, you could mount your post in the ground with concrete. However, if you may need to move the station in the future try using a metal base with a two-foot spike welded to a metal bracket that clamps to the bottom of the 4x4" post for setting the post in the ground. (metal post, mounting bracket and green spike for the base may be found at Home Depot). This type of base would allow the station to be moved if needed, while maintaining stability. Metal flashing can be bought in rolls at home improvement stores and attached to bottom of the station to make the apron with nails.

A second platform can be placed nearby (approximately 2 feet away) to assist smaller or less-agile cats to gain access to the station - for example a feral cat house or covered water station.

If you feed a colony on your property, yet another option to deter wildlife from your colony's food, suggested by FFF volunteer Judy, is a motion-activated sprinkler. The sprinkler can be set up at different levels so it will only target certain size animals, aim it high enough to miss a cat. Watch this YouTube video of the sprinkler in action: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5D3GKlTkpY&feature=related>.



If you have ideas about how to deter wild animals from sharing your colony's food, please let us know!