



This guide is for employers who hire working cats, as well as for rescue organizations seeking placement for feral and non-feral cats. The instructions are applicable wherever non-toxic pest control is required, e.g., offices, storage facilities, breweries, distilleries, shops, workshops, museums, gardens, barns, parks, etc.

Logo designed by Lester Barnett

Hard Hat Cats® - Operating Instructions

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Hard Hat Cats® is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, which places working cats with property owners seeking non-toxic pest-control. We recruit feral cats from the NYC Animal Care Center (city shelter) to increase their adoption opportunities.

Hard Hat Cats® - Operating Instructions

I. Working Cats

Working cats are not ordinary lap cats. They are independent cats who prefer to patrol your property and hunt for prey rather than sit on your sofa.

Working cats are often referred to as “ferals”, because they are not chummy with people. They generally avoid human contact and prefer to work at night after the humans have gone home.



Photo by Torch & Crown Brewing

Health: Cats are vaccinated, spayed / neutered, treated for parasites, and checked by a veterinarian for good health, temperament, and reliable litter box use.

Complete health records are provided.

Job Description: Non-toxic pest control. There may be the occasional carnage, but the cats’ mere presence is the key deterrent.

Namely, female rodents do not nest where their predator lives.

Workplace: Indoors and outdoors. Breweries, warehouses, garden centers, fine arts storage, woodworking shops, barns..... wherever pest-control is needed.

Compensation and employee benefits: In exchange for their toil, you (the employer) provide food, shelter, healthcare, and the occasional “Atta Cat!”.

Ownership: The cats are microchipped and will be registered in your name. Cats are ear-tipped (left ear slightly squared off) as an extra measure of protection. “Eartip Alerts” are sent to rescuers when lost cats are found.

Feral Cat Etiquette (for you, not them) is covered below. The general rule for handling feral cats is DON’T!

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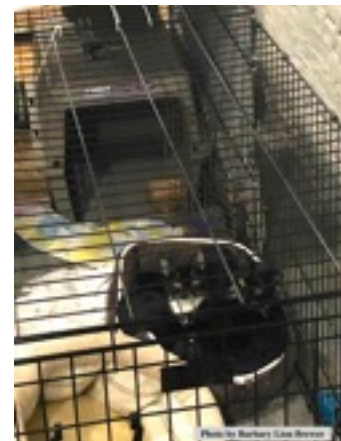
II. Location Set-up

Cats survive by knowing their turf. Your turf is new. Cats need time to acclimate, so they are placed initially in a large crate with a sheet over it. This creates a “safe space” where they get accustomed to new people, smells, and sounds.

Crates are large rectangular metal boxes approximately 42” L x 30” W x 36” H. One crate can hold two cats. Place the crate out of high-traffic areas.

If your property is large (e.g., over 5000 square feet) and you require three or more cats, crates may be cable-tied together.

See the Two-crate set-up below, covered (early stage), and uncovered (later).



Crates contain bedding, a food bowl, litter box, and a cat carrier at the back (as an extra hiding place).

Water bowl: provide a bowl if there is only one cat in a crate. For a multiple-cat set-up, add water to canned food, as water bowls tend to get kicked over.

Pad the metal floor with foam, a mat, thick newspaper, etc.

Timing: Cats stay approximately 2-3 weeks in the crates. During this period, the cat rescue organization can help you to gauge how quickly the cats are adjusting.

After one week, pull back the sheet about 18” so the cats can see out, yet still have a hiding place. Repeat. Pull the sheet further back each week.

See picture below.

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III. Handling Cats During the Acclimation Phase

Daily: Provide food and fresh water. Scoop the litter box daily to remove feces and urine clumps. Cats are fastidious and will not use a dirty box.

As mentioned above, cats kick over water bowls in crowded crates. Add about 1/4 cup (4 tablespoons) water to a 5.5 oz. can of food, making a thin stew, to ensure the cats get adequate water. See “**Nutrition**” section for food guide.



Feral Cat Etiquette - TIPS:

Do *not* seek contact with the cats while they are in the crates.

When feeding or scooping litter, body-block the crate door. Keep the crate doors locked when not in use.

Develop a “dinner call” or whistle when you feed them, so they associate this noise with food. This will be useful when you need to call them.

Do not make direct eye contact.

Do not lower your hand over cat’s head.

Do not bare your teeth.

These are all signs of aggression.

Pretend to ignore them. Glance sideways to observe them.

Close your eyes slowly. It is a sign of trust, an “eye kiss”.

You’re on their clock now. 🕒 They will observe you and decide how close they want to get. Some will get friendly; others may never warm up.

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IV. Released from the Crate — Their Work Begins

Two to three weeks have passed. Cats have adjusted to the daily routine. Some stay at the back of the crate, some come forward. But none are freaking out.

One evening, after the staff has left, give the cats a light (or no) dinner, then:

- Open the crate door. Cable-tie or prop it open so the cats can go in and out freely.
- Turn off the main lights. Cats are nocturnal and prefer to hunt in the dark.
- Place small amounts of food (1 tablespoon) in various places to encourage exploration of your property. They are hungry and will seek out the food.
- The next workday, enter slowly, blocking the outside door (e.g., a large towel hanging down) in case a cat is there, ready to bolt.
- Ideally, one person comes early to “herd” the cats before staff arrives, as follows:
 - Case 1: Chances are they will not bolt outside, but will run back into the crate when they hear people arrive. Close the crate door. Bring breakfast.
 - Case 2: If they do not automatically run into the crate, use the “dinner call” and place food inside. They should run in to eat. Close the crate door.
- Repeat above procedures for a few nights. Then proceed to the final step.
- **Final Step**: Keep the crate door open day and night, so the cats can use it freely as a “home base”, sleeping, avoiding you and your staff, or coming out and patrolling at will. This is the goal. They accept their new home.



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IV. Released from the Crate – Their Work Begins (cont'd)

- **Case 3:** If they do *not* appear the next day, *ignore them*. This is not atypical behavior. They're hiding, watching from a safe place.
 - **Do NOT try to find them!** They will feel cornered, find a different hiding place, and become more wary of you.
 - Leave the crate door open. Continue to ignore them and leave food at night in various places to encourage patrolling.
 - If they are eating and using the litter box at night, they are adjusting at their own pace and will come out of hiding when they are good and ready.
 - At which point, progress to the **Final Step** above.

Risk: In all 3 cases, the main risks during the trial-release phase are your open delivery and customer doors. The cats could bolt. 🐈

If this occurs, the cat will panic and run due to traffic, noise, and unknown turf. Retrieving a lost cat is discussed in **Troubleshooting**.

Solution: Stretch movable pet gates across open doors. See an example in **Safety and Security**.

These cases describe typical cat behavior. But cats are individuals and do not follow rules. Observe your cats and adapt accordingly.

Tip: If the cats balk at *any* point and do not progress to the next step, *backtrack to a previous step*.

This is a good strategy in general when working with cats.



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V. Ongoing Daily Care - Shelter

The temporary crates are replaced by permanent shelters which provide a necessary escape hatch where the cats can sleep and avoid your regular work flow.



A styrofoam fish or steak box shelter is recommended. You can purchase or make them yourselves. E.g., the black fish box (left) can hold 3 adult cats.

It's unobtrusive, especially when covered with a sheet of plywood. This is useful for properties subject to agency inspections.

Shelter Resources: <https://www.neighborhoodcats.org/tnr-in-nyc/nyc-winter-shelters>.

Litter Box and Litter

Enclosed boxes, such as the blue box (left), reduce odor and keep the surrounding area cleaner. One large box can suffice for multiple cats, depending on:

- The cats (cats differ in frequency, cleanliness, and privacy needs).
- How clean you keep the litter box. Cats will **not** use a dirty box. This requires:
 - **daily** scooping of feces and urine clumps.
 - **weekly** litter box cleaning, i.e., throwing out old litter, rinsing the box with soap and water, adding fresh litter.

“Clumping litter” is recommended It provides the best odor control. Urine clumps and feces are easily scooped and disposed of daily. Any brand is acceptable. Avoid strong-smelling litter, e.g., evergreen-based. Some cats will avoid it.

“Non-clumping” is not recommended. It retains the urine and odor until you change out the litter entirely and clean the box.

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V. Ongoing Daily Care - Nutrition

Your goal is to keep them out of the veterinarian's office.

Good nutrition is the key to good health. They came healthy. Keep them healthy.

Food: Cats are obligate flesh-eaters. They eat meat in the wild, not grains.



Type: Canned (wet) food is closest in protein and moisture content to the prey cats hunt and eat.

Quantity: A minimum of one 5.5 oz can / cat / day. This can be supplemented with quality dry food.

Food Brands: Ingredients are more important than name-brand or cost. Some grocery brands have ingredients on par with more expensive brands.

Read Food Labels. Look for animal proteins such as beef, turkey, fish (1st rung) or animal by-products or animal meal (2nd rung), followed by grains (3rd rung) and supplements.

Most Dry food is grain-based and sprayed with flavor. Cats get addicted to the taste, but cannot convert grains (as dogs can) into protein. They overeat to fill the nutrient-deficit. This can result in obesity and diabetes.

Dry food also dehydrates and is a primary cause of urinary tract and kidney disease. Give sparingly as a supplementary, not primary, food source.

The following are examples of canned and dry foods with quality ingredients at reasonable prices. These are not brand endorsements.

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V. Ongoing Daily Care - Nutrition (cont'd)

Canned (Wet) Food Examples:

- <https://www.chewy.com/authority-catfish-entree-adult-pate/dp/177608>
- <https://www.chewy.com/authority-turkey-giblets-entree-adult/dp/177600>
- <https://www.chewy.com/friskies-savory-shreds-beef-in-gravy/dp/104237>
- <https://www.chewy.com/tiny-tiger-pate-beef-recipe-grain/dp/168772>
- <https://www.chewy.com/fancy-feast-flaked-fish-shrimp-feast/dp/103932>

Dry Food Examples: Choose high-protein over high-carbs.

- <https://www.chewy.com/american-journey-all-life-stages/dp/158630>
- <https://www.chewy.com/earthborn-holistic-primitive-feline/dp/36427>
- <https://www.chewy.com/taste-wild-rocky-mountain-grain-free/dp/181327>



DO NOT leave food out all day for grazing. This attracts flies and other insects which may carry parasite eggs. (More on **Parasites** below).

Water: Provide fresh water daily. Cats need water but drink very little unless they are dehydrated.

Adding water to wet food prolongs kidney health. (For daily feedings add 2 tablespoons per can).

As instructed in “**Handling Cats During the Acclimation Phase**”, it

is wise to add 1/4 cup of water to canned food when multiple cats are confined together in a crate. This replaces the water bowl which can get overturned.

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VI. Ongoing Health Care

Feral cats are hard to get into a carrier and veterinarians are expensive.

These instructions lean towards common sense and simple ways to handle non-emergencies in-house. The ruling principle is: would you rush to the doctor if you had a bout of vomiting or scratched yourself?

Veterinary Visits:

- Regular Checkups - No need if the cats are healthy.
- Booster vaccines - Not recommended. Your working cats already have been vaccinated and are not exposed to transmittable diseases if they live indoors.
- Medical Emergency - Before problems arise, locate a veterinarian experienced in handling feral cats. Not all can. Cat rescuers can make recommendations.

Common Health Questions:

Is my Cat Ill?

- Does it have a fever? Yes, if temperature is $> 102^{\circ}\text{F}$ and / or the ears are hot.
- Is the cat lethargic, hiding, or exhibiting a noticeable change in behavior?
- Is its gait uneven and there are no injuries to its paws or legs?
- These require medical care if persisting over 24 hours.

Sudden Vomiting and/ or Diarrhea?

This may be the body's healthy response to ingesting bad food or prey. Before rushing to a vet, rule out:

- Food supply gone bad (damaged cans, maggots, incorrect storage).
- Diseased prey. Your cat is a hunter and prey can carry disease.
- Manufacturers' Food Recalls: check this FDA website which lists contaminated and off-standard foods and treats: <https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/safety-health/recalls-withdrawals>

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VI. Ongoing Health Care (cont'd)

Remedy for Occasional Vomiting or Diarrhea:

If the cat is energetic and acting normally and there is no evidence of fever, lethargy, hiding, etc, the cat's body may be simply purging a bad substance.

- Withhold food for 24-48 hours to give the digestive tract a rest.
- Resume feeding small portions of bland food for a few days.
- Avoid rich, heavy meals.
- For diarrhea, add 2 tablespoons of Asian sticky white rice to meals.
- Dehydration is a risky side effect of both vomiting and diarrhea.
- Re-hydration techniques are described below.

Dehydration is a health risk - To determine whether your cat is dehydrated:

- Pull up the loose skin on the back of the cat's neck. If the skin snaps back, feels plump, the cat is hydrated. If not, it is dehydrated.
- If the gums inside the mouth are sticky to the touch, the cat is dehydrated.
- Dehydration Remedies:
 - In-House - for acute, temporary dehydration:
 - Provide fresh, preferably cold, water. Add ice cubes to water.
 - Add water to food. Make it soupy.
 - Provide chicken broth (reduced or no salt).
 - For prolonged dehydration, the cat may need subcutaneous (SQ) electrolyte fluids from a veterinarian or knowledgeable cat rescuer.
 - For example, if a cat hangs over the water bowl, drinking copious amounts of water on a daily (chronic) basis, this can be a sign of kidney disease.

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VI. Ongoing Health Care (cont'd)

Parasites - Worms and Fleas

It is common for cats to get fleas or worms. Causes are various: open doors, flies on leftover food, or eating prey with parasites. This is easily managed.



Fleas - does my cat have fleas?

Comb the cat with a flea comb to detect fleas. Alternatively, brush your cat over white paper. Moisten “black pepper” specks with water. Flea feces (“flea dirt”) containing your cat’s blood will turn red.

Flea Treatments: Most are applied topically on the skin between the shoulder blades (upper part), so the cat cannot lick it off. E.g.:

- Advantage II (Bayer) - Provides one month protection. <https://www.chewy.com/advantage-ii-flea-spot-treatment-cats/dp/101840>
- Sentry Natural Defense - Holistic remedy made of plant oils. Provides one month protection. <https://www.entirelypets.com/sentry-natural-defense-flea-and-tick-squeeze-on-for-cats-4-pack.html#tabs-2>
- Store-bought flea collars are toxic and not advisable.
- Capstar - A pill given orally, it kills all fleas within hours, but provides **NO** further protection. If the cat remains in the same area, which is already infested (woodwork, soft furnishings), the fleas will jump back on-board.
- <https://www.chewy.com/capstar-flea-oral-treatment-cats-2-25/dp/181622>

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VI. Ongoing Health Care (cont'd)

Worms:

Tapeworms - Look like bits of rice around the anus or on feces. Contracted if a cat eats fleas while grooming itself. Tapeworms are easily treated with one oral dose of 23 mg of Praziquantel. There are many brands, e.g.:

- <https://www.chewy.com/bayer-tapeworm-cat-de-wormer/dp/139677>
- <https://www.entirelypets.com/2mth-advantageii-orange-smallcat.html> - a combination pack to treat both fleas and tapeworms.

Roundworms - Look like spaghetti. Contracted by eating prey infected with parasites or food on which flies or other insects had laid parasite eggs (a good reason not to leave uneaten food out).

For cats, roundworms are generally treated with Ivermectin (requires a prescription) or Pyrantel Pamoate (can be purchased over-the-counter), e.g.:



- Drontal All-Wormer - Eliminates tapeworms, roundworms, & hookworms. <https://www.chewy.com/drontal-tablets-cats-kittens-2-16-lbs/dp/173181>

Drontal is a large pill with a bad taste.

Recommendation: Split Drontal pill into 4 parts and slip each into a “Greenies Pill Pocket” to disguise it.

<https://www.chewy.com/greenies-pill-pockets-feline-salmon/dp/33780>

- Homeopet - Holistic, drug-free dewormer

<https://www.chewy.com/homeopet-feline-wrm-clear-cat/dp/138096>

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VI. Ongoing Health Care (cont'd) -

Parasites - Worms and Fleas (cont'd):

- **Diatomaceous Earth (DE)** is a natural substance, made of dried phytoplankton, and is an effective remedy for all parasites. It is a drying agent, destroying parasites through dehydration. **Mandatory: use only food-grade DE for human consumption**, not the pool-filter grade, which is toxic.
- **For Worms:** Add 1 teaspoon of DE powder to wet food daily for four weeks minimum. DE kills adult worms. Extended treatment is required to kill larvae.
- **For Fleas:** A light dusting of DE on the cat's body kills fleas. Also, dust your premises with DE powder. (See **Resources**).



Other Health Questions:

Constipation - add 1/2 teaspoon olive oil to wet food. Put more water in food.

Scrapes and Scratches -

- For minor surface wounds, disinfect by applying a weak iodine solution with a cotton ball.
- If you cannot handle the cat, use a spray bottle.
- Solution: Add iodine to plain water until it is the color of weak tea.
- After disinfecting, aloe vera gel helps to heal skin wounds.
- You can add a few drops of arnica tincture (well-shaken!) to the gel.

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VII. Safety and Security

Some work places require open doors for extended periods. Pet (child) gates, stretched across the doorway, act as a deterrent.

- It is crucial to block exits during the early acclimation period. Longer-term, gates can discourage cocky, über-curious cats from wandering off-site.



• These movable, lightweight gates can be found second-hand:

• <https://www.petmate.com/precision-pet-ultimate-exercise-pen/product/PP49>. This model 48” high.

• The example (left) opens out into a fence (16’L x 3’H) and acts as a visual deterrent to the cat.

- Wide delivery doors may require 2 gates hooked together.

Home Again Microchips (www.homeagain.com) are used currently in the New York City animal shelters. Your cat's microchip ID number will be permanently registered in the HomeAgain National Pet Recovery Database under your contact information, which needs to be up to date if your cat is ever lost.

This recovery service is free. The chip lasts for the cat’s lifetime and is activated by chip readers. It is not battery-powered.

If the cats are confined indoors, the free service should be sufficient.

Home Again has additional paid “membership” services, but you are not required to enroll in order to keep your cat registered on the national data base.

Eartip - working cats from the NYC animal shelter have their left ear “tipped”, squared off, as an additional identifier to help bring it back home. This is not painful to the cats. It is used internationally for feral cats.

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VIII. Troubleshooting

A. Agency Inspections:

If you manufacture food or drink, you are required to have sanitary inspections by government agencies, e.g., the FDA (the U.S. Food and Drug Administration).



Brewers in New York State are also inspected by the Agriculture & Markets Department to identify “Critical and General Deficiencies”.

See: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/food-safety/food-safety-inspections>.

In our experience, the inspectors have noted brewery cats as a “*General Deficiency 14 C: Evidence of pets or other domestic animals in establishment*”. But the brewery passed the inspection and was not fined.

Brewers had the same experience with the FDA, which noted pets on the property but passed the brewery and did not levy a fine.

If you prepare or sell food on your premises, however, the local Department of Health may fail your premises and levy a fine if cats are present. Solution:

- The black fishbox shelter is unobtrusive when covered with a flat board to hold potted plants, equipment, etc., on top. See “**Ongoing Care - Shelter**”.
- Herd the cats into the shelter or a hiding place.
- Keep an empty box on-hand to remove litter box, food and water bowls, etc.

Many health departments know from experience that cats deter rodents, which are a severe health threat to people and food. However, outdated departmental guidelines do not allow them latitude in recognising that healthy, vaccinated cats in a clean facility provide a health service, not a risk.

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VIII. Troubleshooting (cont'd)

B. You Need Pest-Control Now but the Cats are in Crates for 2-3 Weeks:

When you scoop their litter box daily, put used litter in small covered containers and place around facility perimeter wherever pests roam. Drive nail-holes into the container covers so the cat-odor can drift out. Humans cannot smell it.

C. Lost Cat:

Scenario: Your doors are open for a delivery or clients. Your working cat gets curious, strolls outside, and is suddenly missing.

If the cat was happy, it *definitely will attempt to come home*. Typically, when a cat gets out:

- It suddenly realizes it is on strange turf, panics, runs, and hides nearby.
- Nearby = a one block radius.
- The cat stays hidden during the day to avoid traffic and people.
- The cat tries to come back after dark (usually 10pm - 6am).
- ***Someone needs to be there to let the cat in! This is key to success.***
- Feral cats will not let people pick them up, so do not assume they are OK in a new home. *The cats are NOT OK! They are terrified.*



Have You Seen Felix?



Felix, a tuxedo cat, was last seen on 18th St. (betw. 2nd-3rd Ave.), Manhattan, NY 10003.

Felix is very shy, about 2 years old, ear-tipped, and microchipped. If you have seen him, please contact:

Sheila: (212) 123-4567; sheila@hardhatcats.com

Thank you for sharing!



Hard Hat Cats® - Operating Instructions

Plan of Action to Recover Your Cat:

- Post flyers with a clear picture of the cat and your contact information, as per the flyer example above.
- Laminate flyers for outdoor postings.
- Report your cat ASAP on Lost Pet websites. (e.g., Pawboost or Next Door).
- Key Information: If someone responds, pin down the time and location where the cat was seen. Cats generally stick to a routine.
- Your cat's microchip only helps if someone brings the cat to a vet for scanning. This is unlikely since a feral cat cannot be picked up.
- Contact cat rescue organisations, which will attempt to re-trap the cat.
- Trapping only works when the time and place of recent sightings is known.

D. Cat Urinates outside of the Box - Possible Causes:

- (1) The cat is ill, has a blocked or infected urinary tract (UTI), and needs to see a vet **ASAP**. The cat associates the box with painful urination and avoids it. Test the cat's urine for blood. Put paper towel strips where the cat may urinate. If the strips turn pink, blood is in the urine, a serious health issue!
- (2) Something has stressed the cat, such as a change in environment, lack of privacy (the box is in a high-traffic area), or a stray cat strolling in. When stressed, cats mark turf to assure themselves it is *their* home.

Once the cause has been identified and fixed:

- Clean the places where the cat urinated, else the cat will return to this spot.
- Find the urine spots with a UV flashlight.
- Use only an **enzymatic cleaner** to eliminate urine spots.
- Try "Cat Attract" brand cat litter to re-instill good litter-box habits.
 - <https://roccoandroxie.com/products/stain-and-odor-flashlight>
 - <https://www.chewy.com/biokleen-bac-out-stainodor-remover/dp/140810>
 - <https://www.chewy.com/dr-elseys-precious-cat-attract/dp/32365>

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IX References and Resources

“The Natural Cat - Comprehensive Guide to Optimum Care”

By Anitra Frazier. An excellent guide for cat caregivers, with many insights about cat behavior and natural home remedies.

“Dr. Pitcairn’s Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs & Cats”

By Richard H. Pitcairn, DVM, PhD. Includes homeopathic remedies.

Feline Nutrition: Website by Dr. Lisa Pierson, DVM - <https://catinfo.org/> . See the 4-page summary (pdf) called “Feeding your Cat” on Page 1 of the website.

More about Diatomaceous Earth:

http://wolfcreekranch.net/diatomaceous_earth.html

<https://wolfcreekranchorganics.com/library/defaq.html>

https://wolfcreekranchorganics.com/diatomaceous_earth_dusters.html

Lost Cat: <https://www.pawboost.com/> - Good tips on finding lost pets.

Booster Vaccines: an article discussing the “Con’s” such as findings that initial vaccines are effective for a lifetime and that boosters can even do damage:

<http://doctordym.com/vaccination-in-2020-and-beyond>

Disclaimer: The health guidelines in this document were not written or reviewed by a veterinarian. They are based solely on practical experience.

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