



Caring for your cat

Why Have a Cat?

Cats are docile, intelligent and clean companion animals. They help teach children about responsibility and relationships. They give affection, comfort and companionship to their owners. The lonely and elderly often keep more alert and active when they have regular physical contact with cats. Cats though, like all pets, need responsible ownership and care.

Responsible Cat Ownership

Responsible cat owners care for their cat and keep it healthy. They prevent it from taking wildlife and from breeding freely. They don't let their cat disrupt their neighbours' lives. They don't feed or encourage strays but ask neighbours if they own any stray cat. If the answer is 'no', they catch the stray and take it to the RSPCA.

Responsible cat owners de-sex and confine their cats, and encourage others to do the same.

Responsible cat owners encourage others to see the consequences of a stray or dumped domestic cat. They offer to help others get their cats de-sexed and maybe even help them build an enclosure for their pet feline.

The Costs

- De-sexing costs approximately \$90 for males, \$110 for females; the younger the cat, the cheaper the operation.
- Vaccinations cost approximately \$60. A cat needs two in the first year and annual boosters.
- An enclosed area in the yard and cattery fees for when you are on holidays.
- Every new cat incurs initial de-sexing and vaccinations costs. Once a cat gets safely past its first two years it will probably live to a ripe old age and give many years of pleasure.
- De-sexed, confined cats have a much higher chance of surviving than fertile, free-ranging cats. They have fewer injuries from road accidents and from fights with other animals, and as a responsible cat owner you have fewer visits to and bills from the vet.

De-sexing

A de-sexed cat lives longer, wanders less and is easier to own and care for, and many say makes a better pet. It is less likely to

have the nasty habits of fertile animals: fighting, spray-marking territories and urinating on the carpet.

Cats are prolific breeders. In a population of cats, if as few as 2.5% are fertile the population can be perpetuated. More sterile cats means fewer unwanted litters of kittens. Fewer strays means humans, other companion animals and wildlife are better protected.

Female cats do not benefit from having a litter or coming into season before being de-sexed.

Confining Cats

Even well-fed cats may hunt by instinct. They hunt, often at night, and often over wide areas and long distances. This is when and why they can get run over. If your cat is confined at night you can be confident that your cat is safer and so is the wildlife.

You don't have to confine your cat indoors and make your nights a misery. Any enclosed space, a shed or an old aviary can be made comfortable for your cat. You can connect an enclosed area outside to the house through a cat flap quite cheaply. Kittens can easily be trained to sleep in the laundry.

To create a cat-proof boundary fence, attach either small gauge chicken wire or aluminium flashing to the top of an existing fence and angle it in to your property, or simply attach 'floppy' chicken wire to the top of your fence. Remember to secure any trees which may overhang the fence by enclosing them with wire or erecting a 'cat barrier' at a suitable height up the tree.

Confinement is not cruel as long as you provide food, water, shelter, a litter tray, a warm place to sleep, exercise and sunbathing areas, and scratching and climbing places. You wouldn't let your children roam the streets. Why let your cat be run over or just run away?

Irresponsible Ownership

- Your cat may breed prolifically, adding to the already large population of strays. If you dump the kittens they will become feral
- Although out of sight your cat/kittens is/are still your first place!)
- If your cat is confined it can't stray and won't get run over. It won't pick up diseases from other cats. You and

your children won't have to go through the trauma of the loss and the expense of starting with a new pet.

- Neighbourly relations often break down over the damage a roaming cat does — defecating, spraying, cat fighting. Controlling your cat will help you stay friends with your neighbours.
- An Australia-wide survey showed that an average domestic cat brings home 16 mammals, 8 birds and 8 reptiles a year: some cats more, some less, and most cats don't bring home everything they catch!

When Cats Invade Your Property

If you are sure the cat is owned by someone nearby, speak to the owner. If the owners confine it, hopefully it won't continue being a nuisance. Otherwise, the humane way to deter the cat from coming into your garden is to spray it with the hose, scare it away with noise, leave moth balls or camphor flakes around your property and/or spread alfoil at entry points. Before doing all this though the first thing to do is to talk to the owner about the problem.

Cat traps can assist in the capture of nuisance cats.

Council has cat traps for loan, but a security deposit is payable on each trap. If you know the owner of any cat captured

in a Council cat trap, then it would be a neighbourly gesture to return the cat to the owner. Owners can take civil action against any person who may trap and dispose of their cat without providing an avenue for the owner to claim the animal. Therefore it is advisable to take any captured cat to the RSPCA.

If an animal is to be disposed of, it must be in a humane manner in accordance with the NT Animal Welfare legislation.

The National Pet Register

Council encourages owners to register their cats with the National Pet Register. Lifetime registration helps lost cats find their owners. To register, simply phone 1800 334188. You will need to provide basic information on breed, age, sex, markings, name, your address and telephone number.

Lost your cat?

If your cat goes missing, walk around the neighbourhood and check if any neighbours have seen it. Contact the RSPCA and phone all vets in case it has been in an accident. You can also contact Wastemaster for information on road fatalities PH: 8935 1111.

For advice with cat problems, please contact our Petcare Helpline
PH: 8930 0606.