

## Cats and Wildlife Fact Sheet

Cats are wonderful companions – they are affectionate, intelligent and they enjoy human company. However, owning a cat is not without its responsibilities. Responsible cat ownership will ensure the safety and well-being of your family pet. It will also help maintain good neighbourly relations and protect our wildlife.

Cats that are allowed to wander can face many dangers – on roads, in fights, by acts of cruelty and through disease. Domestic cats may become infected with Feline AIDS through contact with feral or stray cats. Wandering cats may also mate and produce unwanted litters. Cats are most active at night and especially so at dusk and dawn. This coincides with the activity periods of much of our wildlife thus placing native animals at risk, pet cats can and do kill wildlife.

### Protecting your cat

Providing a safe environment for your pet cat – and our native wildlife – is possible with minimal effort. Keeping your cat in a suitable enclosed area will protect it from environmental risks and will enhance its life expectancy. The average life span of a cat kept indoors is 12 years, while that of a cat left to roam is 3 years.

Cats don't have an 'innate' need to roam – they need to exercise and play as well as around 19 hours of sleep each day. Many city cats become better pets and live long, healthy lives inside a house or flat 24 hours a day.

### Enclosure Options

**Council requires that any cat be effectively contained in a dwelling or proper enclosure.**

There are several ways you can enclose your cat within your property. Firstly, you may wish to keep the cat indoors at all times.

Alternatively, you may wish to:

- Install an 'A frame' cattery which provides for climbing and sunbathing at height.
- Adapt an aviary (available commercially at a reasonable cost).
- Enclose a section of your home such as a verandah.

You can also build a cat proof boundary fence by attaching small gauge chicken wire or aluminium flashing to the top of an existing fence and angling it into your property. Neighbours' consent should be obtained before modifying the top of the adjoining fence line.

### Caring for your cat

If you decide to enclose your pet cat, it will need:-

#### Overnight:

Food, water, a litter tray and a warm dry and draught free sleeping area.

#### For long periods:

- Facilities for exercise, climbing, several resting places at various heights and shelter from sun, wind, rain, cold and hot weather.
- A scratching and climbing pole is a must – up to 2.5m tall with 2 or 3 perches.
- Provide cat toys and help your cat to exercise daily by encouraging it to play, run and jump.
- Install window perches for your cat to sunbathe on or a cat-door for access to an enclosed area.

### Suitable Indoor Breeds

Some cats breeds are better suited to the indoors. The good old moggie, and many other long and short-haired breeds, like the Russian Blue, are happy being indoors at all times.

### Desexing your cat

Desexing your cat – whether male or female – is desirable for the following reasons:

- Desexed animals are less stressed by reproductive or territorial demands and make better pets.
- Desexing is better for your cat's health.
- Cats won't wander or fight as much and are less noisy and less smelly if desexed.

- No more unwanted kittens.
- Females suffer physical and nutritional exhaustion if continually breeding.

Uncontrolled breeding results in large numbers of unwanted cats joining the stray and feral populations. Most suffer through disease and injury and prey on native wildlife.

### Cats & Wildlife

Given an opportunity, a cat can quickly prove why the feline family is one of the most effective hunters of the animal world. You can help reduce wildlife attacks by:

- Keeping your cat indoors.
- Providing cat-free environments. If your cat uses the backyard you could provide a cat-free environment by enclosing shrubs and trees with cat proof “floppy wire” fences. This provides a safe haven for native wildlife and you’ll find that lots of birds use the area, especially if you include nectar producing plants and water.
- Placing bells on your cats collar. One bell is not enough. Put three large bells on the collar, two under the cat’s chin and another opposite. Bells do not stop cats attacking wildlife, they only make a difference in one out of three attacks.

### First Aid for Wildlife

If the worst happens and your pet attacks a wildlife animal:

- Remove your pet from the animal as quickly as you can
- Be careful – injured animals will bite or claw you. Pick up injured animals with great caution. Use gloves and a thick towel. Handle it as little as possible. **Do not handle flying foxes / bats.**
- If the animal is injured contact National Parks and Wildlife.
- **For more information on wildlife care Please contact WILVOS on 5441 6200.**

### Contacting Council

If you require any further information about this issue, please call Council’s Community Response on 5475 8501.