

Responsible Cat Ownership

For more information contact
Council on 02 4677 1100



Cat owners have a responsibility to their cat to ensure it is housed, managed and kept responsibly.

Before buying or accepting a cat consider that you may have to provide a home for up to 18 years.

In accordance with the Companion Animals Act 1998 NSW, cat owners are required to:

- Microchip a cat before 12 weeks of age or before being rehomed
- Lifetime Register a cat by 6 months of age
- Ensure your cat does not enter food consumption areas or wildlife protection areas.

Desexing your cat will prevent unwanted kittens, minimise feral populations, excessive roaming and territorial behaviour. Lifetime Registration of a desexed cat is \$53 or \$22 for eligible pensioners.

Cat Behaviour

By nature cats are predators who enjoy hunting for food. Cats also like to roam for mental and physical exercise. When cats are roaming they often urinate and defecate on lawns and gardens and can cause damage to private property. Your neighbours may not like your cat coming onto their property so it is best to keep your cat indoors or contained to your own yard area, especially at night.

Cat owners are responsible if their cat roams onto private property and causes damage, or if its noise interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of another person.

What can you do to be a responsible cat owner:

- Keep your cat indoors, especially at night
- Desex your cat
- Have toys for your cat to keep it amused
- Provide a window seat for your cat to see outside
- Provide a clean litter tray
- Consider an outdoor enclosure
- Place physical limits on your yard such as cat proof fencing (this system uses rollers to cap fences to prevent cats scaling the boundary fencing – see www.oscillot.com.au)
- Attach 2 bells to your cats collar to prevent attacks on wildlife
- A study has found that putting a coloured scrunchie like collar on your cat has reduced the amount of native wildlife killed by more than half (these can be purchased online at www.cathaven.com.au and are called Birdsafe Cat Collars).

Cat owners are encouraged to keep their cat inside at night to reduce cat fights and cat noise, to protect native wildlife, to protect them from traffic and to prevent injuries to your cat and other cats.



Stray Cats

There is no legal notion of a stray cat, therefore there is no offence in a cat straying. Generally a cat should be left alone if it is not causing a nuisance. It is a known trait that cats cover a wide territory and will generally return to their home.

When to take a cat to the Animal Shelter:

- If the cat is causing damage to property; or
- If it is necessary to catch the cat to prevent injury or death of another domestic animal or person.

If you seize a cat it must be returned to its owner as soon as possible if the owner can be identified. If you cannot identify the owner you may deliver the cat to the Animal Shelter but you must have checked with a minimum of 4 neighbours that they do not own, or know who owns the cat. You must bring the names and addresses of the neighbours you checked with when delivering the cat.

You can trap a feral cat and deliver it to the Animal Shelter, however, you must be certain that it is feral otherwise you may be liable to prosecution. Cat traps are available for hire from the Animal Shelter.

Cat Troubles

If you are having trouble with cats in your neighbour Council suggests you follow these steps:

- Discuss the problem with the cat owner.
- Give the owner time to resolve the matter. It may not be an issue that can be resolved overnight.
- Contact Council to make a complaint about a nuisance cat. Council may take action under the Companion Animals Act by the issue of a Nuisance Cat Order on cat owner if Council are satisfied that sufficient evidence has been supplied by the complainant and other neighbours.
- Contact a Community Justice Centre to arrange a mediation session between you and your neighbours. Visit www.cjc.nsw.gov.au
- Take your own action under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 through the Local Court.

Wollondilly Animal Shelter is located on Wonga Road, Picton and is open on weekdays between 3pm and 4.30pm or on weekends between 10am and 1pm.

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I do if there is a noisy cat in my yard or neighbourhood?

Usually this will just be a phase associated with mating activity and should stop within a few days/nights. If the noise persists and you know who owns the cat, try and resolve through discussion with the cat owner. If there is no improvement and the noise continues to be a nuisance you should contact Council.

Nuisance Cat Process

In the first instance, a letter would be sent to the cat owner advising them a complaint has been made regarding their cat being a nuisance and requesting they take steps to alleviate the nuisance behaviour. You would also receive a letter acknowledging your complaint and providing a reference number for the matter. If this nuisance persists you can advise Council again and you will be required to complete a statement detailing what the nuisance is and the times/durations that it occurs. Having complaints from other residents in the neighbourhood will assist in demonstrating that the nuisance is present. Once it is clear that the nuisance exists and you have provided Council with the evidence required, a Nuisance Order can be issued on the owner of the cat. If the owner of the cat cannot be identified then no action can be taken by Council and you should try and discourage the cat without causing pain or injury to the cat.

What should I do if there is a cat that repeatedly defecates in my yard?

Discourage the cat by gentle means such as deterrents and hosing. If the situation persists and you know who owns the cat, try and resolve through discussion with the cat owner. If there is no resolution and the nuisance persists, contact Council as the cat could be defined as a 'nuisance' cat if the behaviour is repeatedly damaging your property. The next step will be for Council to follow the Nuisance Cat Process as listed above.

What should I do if a cat repeatedly attacks my cat causing injuries?

If you can identify the cat's owner, contact them and try to agree on a solution to stop the attacks. Keeping the cats indoors and only allowing once out at a time to avoid clashes is a possibility. Desexing cats will reduce the risk of fights. You may only seize a cat if it is reasonable and necessary for the protection of any person or animal (other than vermin) from injury or death.

If you seize the cat it must be returned to its owner, or delivered to Wollondilly Animal Shelter as soon as possible. Failure to do so is an offence.

Cat trap hire is available from Wollondilly Animal Shelter.

What can I do if a cat is killing wildlife in my area?

If the area is a Wildlife Protection Area any cat found in that area can be seized for the cat's own protection and if the owner is not present.

If the area is not a Wildlife Protection Area the cat can be seized if it is reasonable and necessary for the protection of any person or animal (other than vermin) from injury or death.

If you seize the cat it must be returned to its owner, or delivered to Wollondilly Animal Shelter as soon as possible. Failure to do so is an offence.

Cat trap hire is available from Wollondilly Animal Shelter.

What can I do if a cat is harassing my caged birds?

Try and ensure that the cage is placed in a safe and secure location. The cat can only be seized if it is reasonable and necessary for the protection of any person or animal (other than vermin) from injury or death.

If you seize the cat it must be returned to its owner, or delivered to Wollondilly Animal Shelter as soon as possible. Failure to do so is an offence.

Cat trap hire is available from Wollondilly Animal Shelter.

What should I do if someone has moved out of a property and left their cat(s) behind?

Make enquiries to ensure the cat(s) have been left behind and the owners are not just away and have someone feeding their animals for them. If you are satisfied that the cat(s) have been abandoned then contact the RSPCA or Animal Welfare League as it is an offence under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act to abandon an animal.

Council will not go onto private property to animals without having first issued orders under the Local Government Act.

What should I do if I find a healthy stray cat?

As there is no legal notion of a stray cat, there is no offence in a cat straying. Generally you should leave the cat alone if it is not causing a nuisance. Cats cover a wide territory and will usually return home. You can encourage a cat to leave your property but this should not involve any cruelty.

What should I do if I find an injured cat?

If you can identify the owner return the cat to its owner immediately otherwise take the cat to a vet or an animal welfare organisation such as RSPCA or Animal Welfare League.

What should I do if I find a mother cat and kittens?

Try and determine if the cat and kittens are owned. If you cannot locate an owner contact an animal welfare organisation such as RSPCA or Animal Welfare League.

Can I keep the animal I found?

There are very limited circumstances under which anyone can pick up a 'straying' cat. If the owner can be identified, then you must return the cat to the owner, if not, you can bring the cat to the animal shelter along with the names and addresses of 4 neighbours within close proximity to where the cat was found that you have checked don't own or know who owns the cat. Once these details are collected Council can impound the cat and attempt to locate an owner. If the cat is not claimed, you can adopt the cat from Council and become the legal owner. All cats that are adopted are microchipped, lifetime registered, desexed and vaccinated.

What can I do about feral cats in my area?

Cat traps are available for hire from our Animal Shelter. You can hire a trap to catch the feral cat/s and then deliver the cat back to the Shelter in the trap. Council will require you to complete a statement advising why you believe the cat is feral and officers will also assess the cats behaviour to confirm if it is feral. All feral cats that are impounded are euthanased by a qualified vet.

What should I do if my cat has gone missing?

Contact Council to advise. If your cat is microchipped Council can update the Companion Animal Register. If it is not chipped, Council can add the details to our Lost & Found Register and contact you if we receive any reports about your cat. Once your cat is found ensure you advise Council.

What should I do if my cat dies?

If your cat is microchipped advise Council in writing so the Companion Animal Register can be updated.

What do I do if I move house?

Advise Council in writing so the address details can be updated on the Companion Animal Register. Never leave your cat behind if you move house – it is an offence to abandon an animal.