

KEEPING YOUR CAT HAPPY AND HEALTHY AT HOME



This project has been assisted by the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust.

Did you know...

- 🐾 **A cat kept safe at home will live on average 10 years longer** than a cat allowed to roam.
- 🐾 **Trauma is the leading cause of death for pet cats**; 2 in 3 cat owners have lost a cat to a roaming related accident.
- 🐾 **The average outdoor cat roams an area of 2 hectares.** One domestic cat tracked over 24 hours travelled almost 4 km, visited 16 different backyards, crossed three roads, and explored a bushland reserve at night.
- 🐾 **Cats are very adaptable!** With patience and the right enrichment, many pet cats can enjoy a safe and happy life at home.
- 🐾 **More than 50% of cats in NSW already enjoy the safe-at-home lifestyle.**
- 🐾 **A single roaming pet cat in Australia is estimated to kill 115 native mammals, birds and reptiles each year.** But don't be fooled by what your cat brings home – on average that's less than one fifth of what they catch.
- 🐾 **Cats with bells still kill native wildlife.** They learn to stalk prey silently. Also, animals don't always associate the sound of a bell with danger.
- 🐾 **Cats don't only hunt at night.** A cat kept in overnight will shift their hunting behaviour to daytime hours when they will hunt lizards and birds.
- 🐾 **Well-fed cats still hunt wildlife** due to their hunting instinct.



Keeping your cat healthy and happy at home

Many cats adjust well to living safely at home if their needs are met, though some may take longer. Watch for changes in behaviour to see how they're coping, and seek advice from your vet or a behaviour consultant.

For cats used to roaming, a gradual transition will make the change easier.

Cats at home are safe from:



Cars. Cats can be injured or killed. Less than 1 in 3 cats will survive a car accident.



Cat fights with other roaming cats. Fights can lead to injuries, infections and diseases such as feline immunodeficiency virus.



Dogs. Cats can be killed or seriously injured in dog attacks.



Wildlife. Reduce the risk to your cat from snakes and paralysis ticks and prevent your cat from hunting wildlife.



Getting lost. Less than 10% of lost cats in NSW are reunited with their owners.

Essentials for a happy, healthy cat



- Provide a safe space:** Give your cat their own secret hideout — a box, a covered carrier, or a high perch. It's their special place to relax, recharge, and watch the world go by. Cats love to hide.
- Offer lots of separate resources:** Cats love choices! Give them multiple spots to eat, drink, toilet, scratch, play and snooze — and keep each one in its own place. More options = less stress and happier cats.
- Bring out their inner tiger:** Whether it's chasing toys, catching feathers or working for treats, cats love pretend hunting. Give them fun games and food puzzles to stalk, pounce and play to their heart's content.
- Keep interactions positive and predictable:** Cats love gentle, low-key affection — on their terms! Let them choose when to say hello, offer soft strokes on the head and cheeks, and keep your interactions calm and consistent to build trust.
- Keep their world smelling “Just Right”:** Cats rely on familiar smells to feel secure. Avoid strong scents, don't wipe away their favourite rubbing spots, and let them spread their scent to feel calm and confident.

Learn more about your cats fundamental needs:
journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1098612X13477537

⚠ WARNING: Avoid an expensive vet bill and DO NOT leave string, ribbon, or plastic bags out for your cat to play with while unsupervised.



How to give your cat time outdoors

- 🐾 **Create a safe outdoor space.** The best option is to enclose a balcony or patio so your cat can enjoy the outdoors safely. You can also install cat-proof fencing around your yard to stop your cat from climbing out — a great solution for smaller spaces.
- 🐾 **Install an outdoor enclosure.** An enclosure is a great way for your cat to enjoy fresh air safely — just make sure it's connected to your home so your cat can choose when to go outside or come back in. There are lots of ready-to-install options and accessories available, or you can build your own! Visit catnets.com.au for inspiration
- 🐾 **Take your cat for a walk.** Some cats can learn to enjoy short walks on a harness and lead — but keep it close to home! Cats aren't like dogs; they like to explore at their own pace and need the freedom to return to safe spots or climb to higher places when they choose.

“The more time a cat spends safe at home, the less risk of injury or death from road accidents, fighting, and disease. A cat kept safe at home can live up to four times longer than a cat left to roam.”

– Australian Veterinary Association

Desexing facts

- 🐾 Stops unwanted litters.
- 🐾 Reduces unwanted behaviour such as spraying, marking, fighting, yowling and roaming.
- 🐾 Increases your cat's life expectancy.
- 🐾 Undesexed females spray and seek males when 'in season'.
- 🐾 Undesexed female cats often yowl, roll on the floor, and are agitated until let outside when 'in season'.
- 🐾 Undesexed male cats fight over females which may lead to injury, infection and disease.



Microchipping

A microchip is a small, permanent electronic ID tag inserted by needle under the skin between your cat's shoulder blades. The procedure is quick, safe, easy, and side effects are very uncommon.

Microchipping your cat will make it easier to quickly reunite you with your pet in the event your cat becomes lost.

⚠️ In NSW all cats over the age of four months must be microchipped, desexed and registered.

Visit our website for more information, encouragement, inspiration, and to sign up to our community of cat lovers keeping their cats safe at home.

rspcansw.org.au/keeping-cats-safe