

It is in a cat's nature to hunt

I ask, "do we own the cat?"

Or does the cat own us?"

As much as we may dislike what cats do to wildlife, they merit much respect, they are remarkable animals, feral cats adapt successfully to both the freezing conditions of the alps to the excessive heat of deserts. They are expert hunters that can switch their diet opportunistically to take whatever is available. Our pet cats are the very same species and take on many of these traits.

Not my cat!

Cats, including pet cats, are very efficient hunters. Even well-fed pet cats will still hunt by instinct. Collectively, roaming pet cats kill 390 million animals per year in Australia. Roughly half of Australia's cats are pets. Supposedly, about 1.1 million (29%) of these are contained 24 hours a day. The remaining 71% are able to roam and hunt. In cities and towns there are 40-70 roaming cats per km². **Yes, my cat, but not their fault!**

Many owners believe their animals do not hunt because they rarely find evidence of killed animals, but studies have shown that on average, pet cats bring home only 15% of their prey.

Even individual pet cats have driven the decline and complete loss of populations of some native animal species in an area. In Perth, the decline in the local population of blue wrens was attributed to domestic cats, and a single pet cat may have exterminated a population (est.40-50 animals) of a species of lizard called Ctenopus fallens over a two-year period.



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So, How do we stop this from happening?

Simple, we keep our cats indoors or confined to a cat run. It just takes a little commitment and planning.

See overleaf for more information

Options for keeping cats safe at home

Contrary to popular belief, with enough stimulation and thoughtful cats can live happily in a contained situation. Entertaining your cat will differ by personality but is achievable in most cases.

People may be surprised at how many Australian's are keeping their feline friends happy indoors. As the threats outdoors increase to both wildlife and cats this option is fast becoming the best choice.

You could consider ...



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Totally indoors The easiest and cheapest option. With enough stimulation and access to sunlight and a bit of cat grass, this is possible for most Australian households.

Indoors with an outdoor cat enclosure A terrific option, the enclosure can be simple, an enclosed veranda or aviary will suffice. A purpose-built enclosure is an excellent option with access to and from the house at will.

Indoors with outdoor space and an escape proof yard Spinning paddles installed on top of your fence line. This option allows your cat to roam in your yard but still be relatively safe.

Note: This option does not protect wildlife that may venture into your yard.

Council approval can be required in some Shires.



© Catto Spaces

Protect your cat while protecting wildlife

An inside cat is a happy safe cat.

Cats are an important part of many Australian households. Many lovely cats can have an uncertain future if allowed to wander, the good news is that this uncertainty can improve by desexing and keeping cats safe at home.

With the increased threats our pets are facing, now is the time to consider keeping your cats contained to their home. Research shows that indoor cats can live up to 4 times longer than outdoor cats.

There are so many benefits to keeping your cat contained to their home.

How do we keep our cats happy at home?

Food - When feeding your cat remember – it's not only what you feed, but how you feed. Offer a variety of foods in different ways such as hidden treats and treat balls. Cat friendly vegetation is encouraged.

Water – Cats will have a water bowl preference. Have a few options available. Cats especially like running water.

Resting and hiding places - Cats don't always like to share or interact. A hidey hole is their own safe place. Many cats prefer to be able to look down on life's happenings.

Toileting areas – A common misconception is cats only need one litter box, cats prefer a clean area away from feeding and sleeping areas. The general rule is One tray per cat, plus one extra.

Places to scratch - As you will have probably noticed, cats love to stretch and scratch their claws, everywhere..... Have various scratching options available. Believe me, it may save your furniture.



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True and false questions

My cat stays put by choice

False - If your cat is not properly contained it most likely ventures out without you realising. In a South Australian study 40% of pet cats that were thought to be inside at night were actually wandering and had quite large ranges.

Cats and wildlife cannot live together.

True- Cats are skilled hunters and are a threat to survival of many mammals and birds. When combined with threats like habitat loss our native wildlife is facing a battle to survive.

It's cruel to contain my cat.

False- Cats that are contained live longer, healthier lives and live happily indoors 24/7 with the right things entertainment. We have no issues containing our dogs to our property, why should cats be any different?

I contain my cat at night, so it doesn't eat wildlife.

False - Great start! But cats also hunt wildlife during the day, including birds and reptiles, so it is safest for your cat to be contained at all times.

My neighbours get annoyed by my cat visiting.

True- Complaints and disputes regarding roaming pets, including cats defecating in gardens, killing wildlife, fighting and other disturbances, are some of the most frequent complaints local government receive.

My cat controls rodents on my property.

Possibly True- However, is there another way? Cats are non-selective hunters and will also kill native species of a variety of shapes and sizes. Some native species, such as Bandicoots and Mardo, are mistaken for rodents but are in fact important native species. In addition. Australia is home to many beneficial native rodent species that need protection.

Helpful information

Keeping cats healthy and happy contained

- International Cat Care
- Feline Behavior Solutions
- RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)

Feral cats and the environment

- CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation)
- DAWE (Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment)
- DPIRD (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development)

Humane feral cat control methods

- Pest Smart
- RSPCA

Reading material and books

- Cats in Australia: John Woinarski, Sarah Legge, Chris Dickman
- The Trainable Cat: John Bradshaw, Sarah Ellis
- Among the Pigeons: John Read
- Cat Wars: Peter P. Marra and Chris Santella

Acknowledgements-

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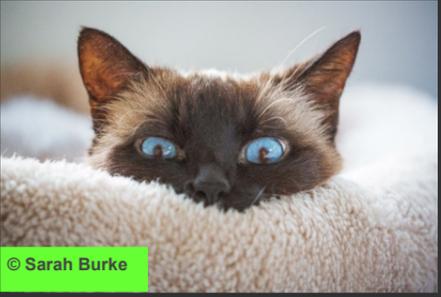
The ASFCWG are extremely grateful for the support from various government and non government organisations, both local and non local.

Our volunteers put in many hours of hard work to improve outcomes for native animals by better control of cats, this group could not get by without them.

Contact– Jenni.loveland@ohcg.org.au
Webpage links - ohcg.org.au/cats-feral-stray-and-domestic.html and nullakiconservation.org/feral-cat-links/



My Cat can't Roam it's Safe at Home



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THE ALBANY AND SURROUNDS FERAL CAT WORKING GROUPS MISSION STATEMENT

"A COLLABORATION OF ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS FOCUSING ON THE CONSERVATION OF NATIVE WILDLIFE THROUGH A COORDINATED APPROACH TO UNDERTAKING BEST-PRACTICE FERAL CAT CONTROL, ADDRESSING THE STRAY CAT POPULATION ISSUES AND PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP."

Albany and Surrounds Feral Cat Working Group (ASFCWG) was formed in 2019 to conserve our biodiversity, protect threatened species and increase public awareness about roaming cats.

We encourage responsible cat ownership.

Our group includes a variety of volunteers from catchment groups, wildlife organisations, animal rescue groups, vets, cat owners, and representatives from local and state government.



Sterilise those cats!

If you own, are considering owning or caring for a cat, before you consider anything else, first and foremost, you need to sterilise your cat. *As early as possible*. This will prevent not only unwanted pregnancy but will reduce behavioral issues such as indoor spraying, obsessively yowling to get out and fighting.

Cats that are sterilised do not run the risk of getting reproductive issues including cancer of the ovaries, uterus, prostate and testicles. Not to mention other associated diseases.

Keeping your cat entertained



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One of the most difficult tasks to achieve is keeping your cat entertained. Most cats love to stalk, chase, and pounce, however this can vary between breed, age, and personality. Uncover your cat's character to find the best form of entertainment that suits their individual needs.

Cats thrive on stimulation, improve your relationship with your cat by having a play time each day. 15 minutes twice a day is ideal but if you can offer more, all the better.

Brushing is also a good way to bond with your cat and it can be very relaxing for both you and the cat. Cats can easily be trained, and this will also stimulate your cats mind. It is quite remarkable what a cat can learn to do.

While we recommend containing cats at all times, we understand that it is not always easy. For tips on keeping your cat safe and happy at home please see: <https://icatcare.org/> or safeandhappycats.com.au

Local government requirements for Keeping Cats as Pets

The Cat Act 2011 is the state law which the local government are obligated to uphold. Within each jurisdiction further requirements for pet owners regarding fees and charges may be imposed.

Registration

- When registering your cat, local governments require a registration form, proof of sterilisation and microchipping
- The registration period runs from 1 November to 31 October. Registration fees may vary over time.
- Other fees may apply. If your cat is not registered and microchipped extra fees will also apply
- Recovering your cat from impoundment may cost up to \$5000 depending on the local government area

In some jurisdictions any unidentified/unregistered cat over 6 months of age picked up by the Ranger may be considered a feral cat under the Wandering Cat Management Policy.

Government Requirements	Albany	Cranbrook	Denmark	Plantagenet
Cats over six months must be sterilised	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cats over six months must be microchipped	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cats over six months must be registered with local government	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cats must wear a registration tag issued by the local government where cat is registered	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cats must wear an identification tag with owners contact				
Cats must remain on owner's property				
Cats must remain indoors at night				
Cats are not permitted at all in certain zones within shire	✓			✓
Only 2 cats per household over 3 months of age		✓	✓	✓
Only 3 cats per household over 3 months of age	✓			
Fee for reclaiming cats for release from the holding facility	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exemption document required if ANY breeding takes place	✓	✓	✓	✓

For roaming cats causing a nuisance, contact your local ranger.

For more information contact your local Shire

Definitions

Pet cats (Domestic, owned)

Live with and are generally dependent on humans for food and habitation; they are socially important and are legally permitted in Australia. There is legislation in most Australian states regarding ownership and variable requirements to register, sterilise and identify (i.e. microchips, collars) the animal.

Stray cats (unowned)

Are often found in and around urban areas, rural properties, industrial areas, refuse tips and wastelands. They are either in self-sustaining populations or become stray following neglect or irresponsible pet ownership: some depend on resources provided by humans, but they are generally not registered. Many strays are not desexed or vaccinated but some may have been a pet cat at some stage of their life

Feral cats

Live as wild animals in self-sustaining populations in natural habitats of all types, detached from humans and survive exclusively by hunting and scavenging.

Definitions from—WABSI Mitigating cat impacts— Increasing knowledge to mitigate cat impacts on biodiversity.



© David Barr

Tragedy in our country

Feral cats kill 272M birds per year, while pet cats kill about 61M birds per year. Overall, this amounts to more than **a million every day**, or an astonishing 3-4% of Australia's birds each year.

Stray cats

Stray cats can and do cause a great deal of damage to wildlife.

Just one de-sexed stray cat caused the total breeding failure of a colony of more than 100 pair of fairy terns.

Feral cats

Birds are especially hit hard by feral cats. Ground-nesting birds like the ground parrot, night parrot, and buttonquails are at particular risk. Cats have played a leading role in most of Australia's 34 mammal extinctions.

But wait there's more

Cats not only hunt, kill and spread disease to native wildlife, they also eat their food. In addition to direct predation, cats can also impact on native species through competition and indirect impacts. They compete with other native predators such as owls, Falcons, Quolls, possums and phascogales for prey, sleeping hollows and territory.

And they can carry diseases

Cats are hosts to a more than 100 pathogen disease-causing bacteria and viruses, with many also recorded in mammalian species, particularly wildlife. Many of these diseases can have detrimental impacts on human health and livestock production .

In Australia, there are five significant diseases of humans and livestock for which cats can be a vector.

- Toxoplasmosis,
- Cat roundworm,
- Cat scratch disease
- Sarcosporidiosis. and
- Hydatid disease

Cats and Australian wildlife by the numbers

Pet cats

There are 3.8 million pet cats in Australia, of which:

1.1 million (29%)

2.7 million (71%)

...are kept inside 24 hours a day.

...are allowed outside to roam and hunt.



- Roaming pet cats **kill 390 million animals** collectively per year in Australia
- An individual roaming pet cat **kills 186 reptiles, birds and mammals per year**, most of them (59%) native species
- A study found **39% of cats** brought in at night **snuck out** for nocturnal roaming and hunting
- Pet cats bring home only 15% of what they hunt.

Feral cats

- The average feral cat **kills 748 reptiles, birds and mammals** a year
- In the bush there is **one feral cat per 3 to 4km²**, versus **40 to 70 pet cats per km²** around towns
- **Pet cats kill 30-50 times more animals per km²** around towns than feral cats do in the bush.



Pet cat owners should note that WA recently added feral cats to the listing of declared species.

Exciting news:

The amount of Aussies keeping cats indoors is ever increasing.

Currently we are saving **158.88 MILLION** native animals safe by keeping 29% of pet cats indoors.

Imagine how many we could be saving by keeping many more indoors.

Lets all do our bit and give Australian native animals a chance. Re-train ourselves on best practice cat control in order to re-train our cats.