

Does your garden have a cat problem?

Talk to your neighbours – If you know who owns the cat, council recommends you firstly approach the cat's owner. Often they will be apologetic and make an effort to rectify the problem by keeping their cat contained. If you are not comfortable speaking directly with your neighbour, included in this pack is an anonymous letter and information sheet titled '*Cats and fences*' that can be dropped in their mailbox.

Cats are creatures of habit and will often return to the same area regularly for sunning, defecating or urinating. If this is a problem in your garden, then it is important to break this habit. There are a number of deterrents that you can try which may or may not prove successful.

Using a hose to squirt the cat with water is a good deterrent, and a cat that has been 'caught' several times may be reluctant to return. This does not harm the cat and the best results are achieved from squirts to the flank, not the face.

Making a loud noise to startle the cat is also a useful deterrent – for a limited time. Cats will associate the unpleasantness with your presence and may return later when you are not around.

Natural cat deterrents and repellents (should be placed around your garden every few days):

- Citrus fragrances – scatter orange or lemon peels or spray with citrus-scented fragrances
- Coffee grounds
- Oil of lavender
- Garlic
- Cinnamon
- Lemongrass
- Citronella
- Eucalyptus
- Vinegar sprayed on areas where they roam.

Pine cones and heavy bark mulch also act as a deterrent as cats don't like the feel of them on their feet. Also try sprinkling dried nut or bean shells, broken egg shells, holly leaves, crumpled aluminium cans, crumpled aluminium foil or rock mulch. Another suggestion is to fill 2 litre soft-drink bottles full of water (this magnifies movement on other side and deters cats).

Commercial cat repellent sprays and gels are also available from plant nurseries or vets.

These methods will only work if the cat does not like the smell of the product.

Plants that are natural cat deterrents:

- Rue – *Ruta graveolens*
- Curry plant – *Helichrysum augustifolium*
- Scaredy cat plant – *Plectranthus caninus*
- Lavender – *Lavandula augustifolia*
- Rosemary – *Rosmarinus officinalis*
- Geranium – *Pelargonium*
- Lemon thyme – *Thymus citriodorus*
- Pennyroyal – *Mentha pulegium*

Another deterrent that can be used for a particular place in your garden is placing cacti or other prickly plants around the area where the cat visits.

Do not use a disinfectant that contains ammonia, as this may attract cats to the area.

If none of the above deterrents have worked the final option is to trap the cat. Council offers a cat trap loan service. Contact council for further information.

Cat traps guide:

If it becomes necessary to trap a cat then the following procedures should be carefully followed to ensure the cat is treated humanely.

Any ill-treatment of cats may be an offence under the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* and may be subject to prosecution.

- Use only approved cage traps. Do not use leg-hold or body-grip traps or snares.
- Ensure the cage is suitably covered to provide any contained cats with protection from the elements.
- Ensure the cage is regularly checked (at least twice per day) so that caught cats are not caged for extended periods.
- Ensure that any caught cats are provided with sufficient food and water. If the cat is sick or injured, seek veterinary treatment.
- Any lactating cat caught in a trap should be released, unless the kittens can also be located and removed as well.
- Do not relocate the cat and release in the bush or elsewhere. Abandonment is an offence under the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*.
- Do not destroy the cat yourself – as techniques such as striking, gassing, poisoning and drowning are unacceptable and may constitute an offence under the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*.
- Any cats captured must be taken to an animal refuge, such as Dakabin RSPCA, Goodwin Rd, Dakabin, within 24 hours of being trapped.
- Traps cannot be used for the intentional trapping of any other animal.

Traps may catch an animal you did not expect (including bandicoots, birds, and native animals). If the native animal is unharmed, it must be released immediately. Declared animals such as rabbits and foxes cannot be released if caught and should be taken immediately to the Dakabin RSPCA, Goodwin Rd, Dakabin. Please contact council for more information.

Dear Neighbour,

You may not be aware, but your cat is causing a nuisance in the neighbourhood by wandering.

Moreton Bay Regional Council's Local Law requires that all domestic animals, including cats, be kept on their own property and prevented from wandering or escaping.

Cats that are contained to their property are less likely to be hit by cars, get injured in fights, become lost or catch fatal diseases such as feline AIDS. Containing cats to the property also helps protect wildlife from predation.

A cat proof enclosure is a suitably fenced or enclosed area and may include buildings or structures (other than fences) which effectively contain your cat. Confining your cat indoors will also meet this requirement.

Ways to cat proof your yard may include:

- cat proof fencing (i.e. modifying existing fencing to make it 'cat proof');
- a cat enclosure attached to another structure like the house or shed or a free standing cat enclosure.

Please find attached a fact sheet from the Moreton Bay Regional Council regarding cats and fences.

Your assistance in rectifying this neighbourhood issue is greatly appreciated.

Regards,

Your Neighbour



fact sheet



Cats and fences

The *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008* and *Moreton Bay Regional Council Local Law No. 2 (Animal Management) 2011*, requires all dogs and cats over the age of 3 months to be registered within the relevant local government area.

Council imposes an obligation on all cat owners to provide an enclosure to confine their cat on their property.

Contrary to popular belief, cats don't have to roam. Providing their basic needs are met, cats can enjoy longer and healthier lives when safely contained to the property. They won't be hit by cars, injured in fights, become lost or catch fatal diseases such as feline AIDS. Containing cats to the property helps protect wildlife from predation and prevents neighbourhood disputes about cat nuisance issues.

Cat confinement is also a legal requirement. Moreton Bay Regional Council's Local Law requires that all domestic animals, including cats, be kept on their own property and prevented from wandering or escaping.

A cat proof enclosure is a suitably fenced or enclosed area and may include buildings or structures (other than fences) which effectively contain your cat. Confining your cat indoors will also meet this requirement.

Ways to cat proof your yard may include cat proof fencing (i.e. modifying existing fencing to make it 'cat proof'); giving your cat free access to parts of, or your entire yard; a cat enclosure attached to another structure like the house or shed; or a free standing cat enclosure.

Some basic points to consider:

- Cat enclosures must have shelter from the weather - must not be too cold or too hot.
- The first step in cat proofing your yard is to seal off all gaps in and underneath the existing fences and gates. Cats do not usually dig underneath fences. However if your cat shares the yard (or is next to a yard) with a dog that digs, then you may need to put a concrete or wooden plinth in the soil under the fence to prevent the dog opening up an escape route. In addition to 'cat proofing' your gates, lock any gates that are used infrequently and fit self-closing springs and latches to all other gates around the yard. Cat fencing is available to add onto the top of existing fencing that prevents cats from climbing over and escaping from the property.
- Trees and shrubs can be trimmed back or alternatively a net barrier can be erected to block your cat accessing a launching place. Larger tree trunks can have a barrier placed around them – for example a 600mm wide piece of sheeting (ensure this is at least 2 metres off the ground). Colourbond, steel or clear polycarbonate is ideal.

Cat toys

Cats enjoy toys that move, make noise and remind them of prey such as mice, birds, and insects. Examples of simple, safe and cheap toys are crumpled paper balls; paper bags to explore; cardboard boxes; toilet paper tubes; or sticks with toys dangling from the end of a string. Try stuffing old cotton socks with cotton balls and tying a knot in the end.

Community rights

People in the community have a right to live without interference from other people's pets. Unaccompanied animals roaming the streets are at risk.

Impounded cats

Members of the community have a right to set humane cat traps within their property.

If your cat is missing or has escaped its enclosure, please contact the RSPCA on 1300 363 736.

Liability

Many cat owners don't realise they are legally responsible for everything their cat does, especially when it is outside their property.