

Guide to Deterring Nuisance Cats

What is a nuisance cat?

A cat may be considered a 'nuisance cat' if they attack wildlife or create a disturbance in or around a property.

Some common nuisance cat behaviours include:

- A cat continually coming into your yard;
- A cat toileting in your yard;
- A cat outside yowling constantly;
- A cat killing wildlife in your garden;
- Another cat coming into your garden and frightening your cat or fighting with your cat;
- Another cat entering your house and eating your cat's food.

Suggested deterrents

The following information is provided to enable residents to deter unwanted attendance by cats on their property. However, please be mindful that any action taken that deliberately injures or harms a cat is not acceptable and such action is deemed to be an offence under the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act 2002.

Talk to Your Neighbours

- If you know who owns the cat, talk to the owner. Often they will be apologetic and make an effort to rectify the problem
- If you are not comfortable speaking directly with your neighbour, an anonymous Cat Card that provides information on the new cat laws can be dropped in their mailbox.

If speaking to your neighbour is not successful, or you don't know where the cat comes from, the following methods may be helpful:

Cats entering your yard

- Spray the cat with water. If the cat associates its visits with an unpleasant experience it is unlikely to return. It is important that you do not harm the cat in any way
- Use motion-activated sprinklers or ultrasonic devices. Motion sensors use infra-red to detect when an animal enters a defined territory. As soon as the cat enters the infra-red field, the sprinkler shoots out a burst of water. Ultrasonic devices emit a high frequency alarm that annoys the cat. Move the sprinklers around regularly so the cats can't learn to avoid them

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- Use a loud, sudden noise to startle the cat.
- Plant cat deterrent plants such as:
 - Scaredy cat plant - *Plectranthus caninus*
 - Curry plant - *Helichrysum augustifolium*
 - Geranium - *Pelargonium*
 - Rosemary - *Rosmarinus officinalis*
 - Lemon thyme - *Thymus citriodorus*
 - Lavender - *Lavandula augustifolia*
 - Pennyroyal - *Mentha pulegium*.

Cats toileting in your yard

- Clean the area thoroughly with a biological washing powder solution (i.e. a washing powder that contains enzymes such as Protease or Lipase). This needs to be a 10% solution mixed with warm water. Wash the area thoroughly, allow it to dry and then spray over the area very lightly with a surgical spirit spray (it is advisable to conduct a test patch on the furniture prior to spraying to ensure that it does not discolour it).
- If you find that the cat returns to the same spot, place a small piece of cardboard with some dried cat food glued to it at that location. Cats will not toilet where there is food.
- For protecting gardens or flower beds, common household items may be effective, such as:
 - Coffee grounds
 - Citrus fragrance (orange or lemon peels or citrus oil)
 - Lavender oil
 - Lemongrass oil
 - Citronella oil
 - Peppermint oil
 - Eucalyptus oil
 - Mustard oil
 - Rue (either planted or sprinkled in its dry form)
 - Garlic
 - Cinnamon
 - Vinegar
 - Cayenne pepper
 - Pine cones and heavy bark mulch (cats don't like the feeling on their feet)
 - Dried nut or bean shells, broken egg shells, holly leaves, or rock mulch.
 - Chicken wire (metal or plastic) or gutter guard pegged down over garden beds (cats hate treading on wire).
- There are also commercial products that may help:
 - You can purchase commercial cat repellent sprays and gels from plant nurseries, vets and pet stores. These methods will only work if the cat does not like the smell of the product. Do not use a disinfectant that contains ammonia, as this may attract cats to the area.

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- Cat Scat is a product which consists of plastic mats that are pressed into the soil. Each mat has flexible plastic spikes that are harmless to cats and other animals, but discourage digging.

Other cats coming indoors

- If you have a cat, purchase a cat flap that has an electronic release. It will come with a device that can be placed on your cat's collar therefore the cat flap will only open for your cat or;
- Purchase a microchip activated cat flap that operates from your cats existing microchip number.

Other tips

- Be patient: These things take time, so don't expect the problem to go away over night
- Be consistent: Don't give cats mixed-messages. Don't leave food out sometimes and then become upset cats come to eat. Cats, like all animals, will learn where they are welcome and where they are not.

Information for Cat Owners

The City of Melville encourages keeping your cat contained within your property boundaries, not only to reduce hunting but also to help protect your cat. Keeping your cat contained will help ensure harmony for everyone – you, your cat, neighbours and local wildlife.

Benefits of keeping cats contained:

By keeping your cat safe at home you:

- Reduce the risk of them becoming lost or injured (e.g., hit by a car or attacked by a dog)
- Reduce the risk of them getting into cat fights and having cat fight-related injuries (e.g., abscesses) and catching infectious diseases such as FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus)
- Give them a better chance to enjoy a longer and healthier life. This also saves you money on vet bills!
- Minimise the risk they will harm or kill other animals, including native wildlife
- Enjoy more quality time together
- Avoid problems with your neighbours

Check out the RSPCA's Safe Happy Cats webpage for more information on the benefits of keeping cats contained at home and tips on transitioning your cat to life indoors!