



Caring for your Cat

Cats are a popular pet for Wellingtonians and Wellington City Council supports responsible pet ownership. Ownership means any cat you own or any that are in your care. Part of responsible ownership is providing your cat with nutritious food, a safe and healthy home, and activities and play. This factsheet aims to provide advice on how these elements can be provided for your cat.

Your cat

Cats aren't usually confined to their owners' property, which creates potential for conflict with people, other domestic animals and wildlife. As a cat owner you have specific responsibilities to keep your cat and others safe. These include:

- caring for your pet's welfare needs
- desexing
- microchipping and registering the microchip with the New Zealand Companion Animal Register (NZCAR)

Wellington City has special requirements and standards for keeping a cat that must be adhered to. These are:

- Wellington City Consolidated Bylaw 2008, Part 2: Animals (Animals Bylaw)
- Wellington City Council, Animal Policy, 2017

Safe home

Keeping your cat as an indoor cat improves your cat's welfare. Keeping a cat inside can reduce their risk of being involved in traffic accidents or getting into fights, which can result in painful injury and the possibility of contracting feline aids or other diseases. However, to have a happy and healthy indoor cat you'll need environmental enrichment.

If your cat is staying inside or in an enclosed area, it's important they have entertainment and mental stimulation. This may include providing places to hide,

scratch and climb, puzzle feeders and playtime with people. Outdoor time in a contained environment can be done in an enclosed deck or garden area, or a screened window or patio.

Desexing

As a responsible cat owner, you should desex your cat. Cat overpopulation results in thousands of unwanted cats and kittens being abandoned, killed inhumanely or presented to welfare organisations each year. Desexing your cat is an effective way to help lessen this problem. To prevent unwanted kittens, early age desexing can be undertaken. Cats usually reach puberty between six and nine months old, but some can reproduce as early as four months old. To undergo early desexing a kitten must be in good health and have reached a certain weight, usually around 1 kilogram. For further guidance you should discuss desexing with a veterinarian.

Microchipping

Council's Animal Bylaw requires cats to be microchipped by 12 weeks of age. The microchip must be registered with the New Zealand Companion Animal Register, which records the owners contact details. If your cat is separated from you, its microchip can be scanned to find your contact details and get it returned safely. Owners must remember to update the register when contact details change. You can do this yourself through the NZCAR website www.animalregister.co.nz

Microchips can help you and your cat stay together

In the Canterbury earthquakes thousands of pets went missing. More than 80 percent of animals that were microchipped were quickly reunited with their owners. Microchipping and registering with the NZCAR also means if your cat is involved in an accident and injured or killed, it can be scanned for a microchip and you can be contacted.

Love your cat and our wildlife

Wellingtonians care about our native wildlife, and we live in a city rich with it. Cats hunt and unfortunately their prey sometimes includes native wildlife.

As a cat owner there are some things you can do to help protect our native birds and lizards:

- Keeping your cat inside or in a safe enclosed area away from wildlife on your property.
- Keeping your cat indoors at night means great cuddles and reducing its chances of hunting.
- Monitoring outdoor time.
- Getting a Birdsbesafe collar, or at the least attaching a bell to their collar.
- Avoiding feeding birds in your backyard.

If you live close to an ecologically sensitive area we encourage you to take greater steps to protect native wildlife from predation.

If your cat does catch and injure any native wildlife please contact the Department of Conservation hotline on 0800 362 468 immediately. If they advise the animal needs care, you can take it to The Nest Te Kōhanga at Wellington Zoo for free veterinary care. This simple action could save the animal's life.

Emergency preparedness

A plan for your cat should be included in your wider household emergency plan and kit.

This should include:

- at least 7 days' worth of food and water per animal and any medications
- a cat carrier to transport a cat to a safe a location in case of a need to evacuate
- a litter tray
- a plan in case primary caregivers are unable to take care of the cat
- regularly updating microchip details with the NZCAR

If an emergency event occurs cats should be kept inside in case there is a need to locate them quickly for an evacuation.

End of life

As a responsible pet owner it's your responsibility to make suitable arrangements for your cat's body at the end of its life. This can be arranged through a veterinarian. If you choose to have a home burial for your cat, beware that animals euthanised by a veterinarian will contain drugs that are toxic to other wildlife. Deep burying away from waterways will prevent secondary poisonings. Alternatively, you can take your pet to the landfill. It's an offence under the Animal Bylaw to bury a carcass in a manner that is or is likely to become a nuisance, injurious or hazardous to health or safety.

Minimising nuisance

Providing a suitable area for your cat to go to the toilet reduces the likelihood of your cat creating health issues by using neighbouring gardens and vegetable patches. You can do this by providing a litter tray in a quiet area away from main thoroughfares, noise and where the cat eats, or creating an area of soft soil or sand in the garden.

Resolving disputes

If your neighbour's cat has become a source of nuisance, it's recommended you speak with your neighbour about the situation first. This often results in the matter being resolved quickly. If problems persist, please call Council on 499 4444.

If you suspect there are animal welfare issues, please call the SPCA on 389 8044.

Further information

- wellington.govt.nz/animalpolicy
- Animal Bylaw (2016)
- Animal Policy (2017)
- Animal Welfare Act 1999
- New Zealand Companion Animal Register (NZCAR) www.animalregister.co.nz
- www.newzealandnow.govt.nz/resources/owning-a-cat
- MPI Animal Welfare (Companion Cats) Code of Welfare 2007
- Draft NZ Cat Management Strategy (2016)

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