

# Un-invited Cats

## What can I do?

### Natural deterrent suggestions

There are many herbal, chemical and visual deterrents which have been used with varying degrees of success. A few of these include:

- Sprinkling Cayenne Pepper, mustard, vinegar, eucalyptus or citronella oil around the problem areas.
- Smearing Vaseline Petroleum jelly on the top of fences and posts to hamper cats getting a grip on the greasy surface.
- Making a simple herbal spray using a handful of Rue, (*Ruta graveolens*) boiled in a litre of water for ten minutes and allowed to stand for 8 hours. Strain the mixture through a piece of muslin or stocking into a spray bottle and spray around the areas where the cat frequents your garden. This may need to be repeated twice daily for up to a week to ensure cats do not return. The smell of Rue is offensive to cats and it may give them the message that there is already a dominant cat on the premises.
- If you find that an uninvited cat digs in a certain area of your garden at night, water this section just before dark. Cats do not like to have wet, muddy feet.
- Children's sandpits should be covered at night.
- An effective natural solution for cleaning up cat urine. Dissolve bicarbonate of soda in water and scrub the affected area, following with a white vinegar rinse. This method is environmentally safe and an effective disinfectant, deodorant and cleaning agent. Do not use ammonia-based cleaners as they have an old urine type smell that will only encourage cats to urinate in that area even more.
- If an uninvited cat is sleeping on the roof or bonnet of your car, hang ping-pong balls on fishing line from the roof of the garage at a height where they just miss the car but would knock the cat. The balls will annoy the cat so much that it will find another place to sleep.

### Suggestions you could make to the owner of the uninvited cat

- Discuss the problem in a friendly and constructive manner. Many people are not even aware that their cat is causing a nuisance.
- Approach the issue as a shared problem and work together with the cat owner to find a solution. In the long run you will get a far better result.
- It may be that uninvited visits by the cat are only a nuisance at certain times. You could suggest that the cat could stay inside at these times.
- Keeping a cat inside at night is important for its safety. A study found that 94% of accidents involving cats occur at night!
- If a male cat is "spraying" perhaps it could be de-sexed. The average lifespan of an entire (non de-sexed) male cat is 18 months. Sterilised cats live longer and are less aggressive. Some sterilised cats can continue to spray. In these situations seek advice from a veterinarian.
- If the problem relates to the cat fighting with others in the neighbourhood, a time sharing arrangement could be negotiated between the owners of the respective cats, i.e. Cat 1 is allowed out between 4pm and 6pm and Cat 2 is allowed out between 7am and 9am.
- Fences can also be modified to help keep a cat inside its own property. A wide, inward facing, tilted, ledge added to the top of an existing fence will block cats trying to climb or jump the fence, especially if it is made with soft netting e.g. chicken wire. Ensure there are no overhanging trees. Alternatively you could cover your fence with a prickly climbing rose bush, allowing the branches to loop loosely along the top of the fence.

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## **Persistent uninvited cat problems.**

- Contact your local Council. Council Officers may be able to provide you with further options on how to deter cats from entering your property. Some Councils offer a cat management service and some have by-laws relating to the keeping of cats.
- Speak to your Ward Councillor (your Council office can tell you who that is) about encouraging Council to consider developing by-laws on responsible cat ownership.
- You can set traps for cats or arrange for a Council approved contractor to do so.
  - o If an unidentified (no collar with owner contact details or no M in the ear) cat is caught in the trap take it to the Animal Welfare League, the RSPCA, a cat management officer or veterinarian. Those organisations will scan the cat for a microchip and if possible make contact with the owner. If no owner can be located, they may lawfully keep, rehome or euthanase the cat.
  - o If the cat is identified (wearing collar with owner contact details attached or has the letter M tattooed in its ear) it must be released from the trap immediately. If you do not release the cat you are breaking the law.
- If you have a feral cat problem in your area, contact your local Council to report the location of the colony. You may also consider contacting an organisation known as C.A.T.S. Inc. (Cats Assistance To Sterilise Incorporated) who may collect the cats, sterilise them and return them to the area where they live.

## **Stray, Community or Feral?**

- Stray cats are normally owned by someone but allowed to wander.
- Community cats are generally un-owned but are fed by several people in the neighbourhood.
- Feral cats will not come near people and are wild. They have exceptional hunting skills and generally kill their own food.

## **Visit our website [www.GoodCatSA.com](http://www.GoodCatSA.com) for more information.**

We acknowledge the assistance of Tea Tree Gully Council in the provision of some of this information.