



FACTSHEET

Stray cats

There are a few options available for you if you have a stray cat in your yard.

First and most importantly, you should check the neighbourhood for an owner. Ask around and put up posters; check lost & found notices (for example Lost Pet Finders <https://lostpetfinders.com.au> or Lost & Found Pets Inner West Sydney <https://www.facebook.com/groups/LostPetInnerWestSydney>). Even if the cat doesn't seem friendly, they may still have an owner. Has anyone new moved into your neighbourhood recently? Cats are particularly vulnerable when they've moved house. Please be sure to check as thoroughly as possible for the cat's owner before assuming the cat is unowned. You can't see or feel a microchip, so the cat needs to be scanned to check for this identification.

Is the cat friendly?

If the cat is friendly and will let you pick them up, you should try to contain them. Put the cat in the bathroom or laundry and give them a bowl of food and water. Call your local pound, shelter, or vet to see whether you can take the cat to them to be scanned for a microchip as the cat might be lost. If you're not sure where to take the cat, ring your local council and ask for the companion animal officer who should be able to advise you.

Remember that when you transport the cat, you will need to have the cat in a secure carrier or box. Never transport a cat in the boot of your car or leave a cat alone in the car. If you have no transport, ask the council whether they have a pick up service for the pound. If your council doesn't have a pick up service, you may need to call an animal welfare agency to see whether they can pick up the cat for you. This should be your last option, as these organisations are charities with limited resources and they might not have the staff to assist you. You will need to pay a fee for this service.

If the cat is friendly and you would like to keep them, you still need to make certain that the cat is not lost so ask your local vet to scan the cat for a microchip before having the cat desexed, vaccinated, and microchipped. If you need assistance with discount desexing, please contact Cat Protection. You will need to register your new cat and you will also need to start regular parasite treatments. For more information refer to our [cat care factsheets](#). Feeding the cat but not desexing them will contribute to feline overpopulation and the one stray cat in your backyard this year will quickly multiply. Be sure to desex your new cat as soon as possible.

If the cat is not friendly

If the cat is wild or scared and will not let you go near them, you have a few options. First, you should call the companion animal officer at your local council and ask whether they can assist (for example, some councils hire out humane cat traps to residents. These traps do not harm the cat and are food activated. Food is placed at one end and a trap door is at the other; when the cat goes in to eat the food, the door closes behind them).

Remember, cats are allowed to wander so you need to be as sure as possible that the cat is not owned. You are only allowed to trap a cat on your own private property. Cruelty to animals is illegal, so you can't set traps and leave them. You will need advice if you plan to trap a cat on your property; talk to the companion animal staff at your local council. Some animal welfare agencies have trapping and pick up services but these are small charities with few resources, so you will need to pay a fee and might have to go on a waiting list.

If the cat is not friendly but you like having the cat around, try gaining their trust by feeding them. Then you can take the cat to your local vet to be scanned for a microchip to make sure the cat is not lost. While at the vet, you should have the cat desexed, microchipped, and vaccinated. All cats need a responsible owner and if you decide to take care of the cat, you need to think about what will happen to the cat if you can no longer care for them.

Deterring stray cats

If you have a stray cat, or many stray cats, in your area and don't want them to come into your garden there are a few things you can do.

- If you have a pet cat already, make sure they are desexed – many stray cats are attracted to the scent of undesexed cats
- Don't leave any food outside. If you have a cat, feed them inside or only leave food out for a very short time (an hour or less). This will not only stop stray cats eating your cat's food, but also stop your cat's food from spoiling
- Plant cat deterrent plants (listed below) as a border in your garden. These are generally herbs that have a scent or texture cats don't like. If you have a cat, these plants will also form boundaries to your garden that will help to keep your cat in
- Use a spray or pellet form of pet deterrent. These are available from most pet stores or vet clinics and are not harmful to cats. As with the herbs, the scent of the spray or pellets is unpleasant to the cat
- Remove all faeces from your yard. The smell of faeces and urine attracts cats back to your garden so it is important to remove it
- Most effective of all, install cat-proof fencing – for more information refer to our factsheet on [Cat-proof fencing and enclosures](#)

Having a cat deterrent garden

- Use mulch or pebbles around your garden beds and plants, as many cats do not like the feel of this on their paws
- Use plants in your garden with citrus smelling foliage, as cats don't like the smell of citrus as they brush past the plant
- Plant 'cat deterrent' plants in your flower beds such as mint, lemon thyme, and geranium, all have a scent most cats don't like or lavender, cats don't like the texture
- Always remove any faeces from your garden as this can attract cats
- NEVER leave uneaten food in the garden as this will attract any hungry cats
- Install a sensor light. Stray cats are more likely to enter your garden at night. By installing a sensor light that is activated by movement, the cat will think they're being watched when the light comes on and may be wary to enter the garden again. There are also garden ornaments such as ceramic frogs that 'croak' in response to movement that may have a deterrent effect.

While all care has been taken in preparing this document, it is intended to provide general information only and should not be taken as constituting professional advice. Mention of a product or business does not mean endorsement by Cat Protection.

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