



YOUR CAT and local Wildlife

Responsible Cat Ownership

- Under the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998, all cats in NSW must be micro-chipped and registered with your local council.
- Keep your cat indoors. Cats that are allowed to roam not only kill wildlife, they are also three times more likely to be killed by cars, dogs or fighting.
- De-sex your cat to avoid unwanted kittens.
- When going on holidays make suitable arrangements for your cat's care.
- Put a collar with two separated bells on your cat to alert wildlife.
- Never feed stray cats as it encourages them to linger and spreads disease to your own cat or other pets.

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If you're a cat owner, you're obviously already an animal lover. This guide suggests how to look after your cat responsibly and care for our local wildlife.

As a cat owner it is your responsibility to ensure your cat does not harm local wildlife. The easiest way to do this is to prevent your cat from venturing outside your property. *(Currently 92 per cent of Australian cat owners keep their cats indoors)**

Keeping your cat on your own property allows everyone the opportunity to enjoy local wildlife both in their properties, and in bushland.

Cats can spread disease to other animals (including other cats) through bites, scratches and their faeces. Wound infection is common in native animals after a cat attack and few survive. Young animals are particularly vulnerable.

Willoughby City Council has nine Wildlife Protection Areas. No cats, domestic or feral, are allowed inside these reserves. A cat trapping program for feral cats is ongoing in these reserves and fines apply to owners of cats incidentally caught.

Benefits of Cats

Australians have one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world. Pets provide their owners with companionship, fun and foster a sense of responsibility. Higher levels of self-esteem are reported in children who have pets, with improved social skills and more empathy for others. Pet-owners also enjoy better health, including lower blood pressure and stress levels.

*Around 24 per cent of households in NSW have a cat. **

Secrets to happy cats

The key to having a happy cat is to provide it with enough stimulation. Cats need at least 30 minutes of playtime each day. With this your cat can live happily and safely indoors. Wildlife inadvertently becomes their plaything when a cat is left outside.

* Pet Ownership in Australia 2013

- Play with your cat regularly and give them lots of cuddles.
- Make or buy toys for your cat to keep them entertained.
- Cats love to climb and explore. Provide ledges and boxes for them to climb, play and hide in. There are a wide range of purpose built structures available from pet suppliers.
- Shelves can double up for their other favourite activity, sleeping. Nooks or high ledges provide safe, secure places where cats can rest peacefully. Position them near a window for warmth and a view.
- Cats like to be clean and healthy. Provide at least one litter box and keep it very clean. Make a roughened post available for exercising their claws and to protect your furniture.
- Cats feel more content if you feed them small meals throughout the day rather than one big meal. There are special toys for pets that deliver food gradually during play, or you can hide snacks. Grass is also important in a cat's diet.
- Cats can be taught to walk on a harness and leash.



Native animals that cats like to hunt include:
possums, gliders, bandicoots, marsupial mice, bats, snakes, lizards, frogs & birds.



Clockwise: white-browed scrubwrens, water skink, sugar glider

Protecting wildlife

All cats are natural hunters and do not have to be hungry to hunt. Your cat can be well fed and very happy, but may still hunt native wildlife.

Research has shown that cats seek out particular areas for hunting and will make repeated visits to successful hunting grounds. A cat that is allowed to hunt freely can kill up to 30 native animals each year.

Willoughby's bushland and wildlife friendly backyards are home to a large range of native animals. Some of these animals are now so rare they are protected as 'threatened species' under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. Just one cat can quickly wipe out a population of some of these threatened species.