



Kingborough

Preventing pet cats from roaming - frequently asked questions

I keep my cat inside at night. Why should I keep my cat from roaming both day and night?

- Keeping cats confined only at night will reduce their impact on nocturnal wildlife, but not on wildlife such as lizards and birds that are active during the day. Keeping your cat confined both day and night is especially important if you live near bushland and nature reserves.
- Pet cats that are prevented from roaming live longer. They are protected from being hit by a car, injured in fights, attack by dogs, snake bite, getting lost/stolen, catching diseases from other cats.
- Contrary to popular belief, domestic cats don't need to roam. You will enjoy their company more and have less vet bills.
- Council gets many complaints from the community about the nuisance that roaming cats cause (including fights, spraying, digging & defecating in yard/vegetable garden (& spreading disease), disturbing pets, entering houses, preying on wildlife). Your cat's activities may be impacting on neighbours, their animals and neighbourly relations.

My cat doesn't roam!

Most cats will roam and may do so when their owners are out. How far they roam varies - cats living in rural areas roam further than city cats. One domestic cat we tracked over 24hrs - travelled almost 4km, visited 16 different backyards, crossed 3 roads & explored a nearby bushland reserve at night.

It's natural for cats to roam and cruel for them to be inside all of the time.

There are no wild cats in Australia. All of the cats that currently exist in Australia, came (about 200 years ago) as domestic animals. Cats are adaptable and they don't need to be outside to be content. Indoor cats can get the required pleasure and stimulation if you plan for their needs. They will need separate places to sleep, eat and toilet; something for them to sharpen their claws on and lots of play to keep them fit. If you want your cat to experience the outdoors you can train your cat to go outside on a harness and leash or build a cat enclosure.

My cat has enjoyed being outside for many years. How can I bring him/her in now?

You can help your cat make the adjustment gradually by keeping it inside for longer and longer periods of time. It is vital to give your cat lots of attention and play time and provide places to look out the window, lounge, play, and scratch. Ask your veterinarian or local animal shelter for tips.

I put a bell on my cat so she doesn't kill birds or wildlife. Why should I keep her inside?

Cats with bells on their collars still kill wildlife as they can learn to silently stalk their prey. And birds or small mammals don't necessarily associate the sound of a bell with danger.

My cat is well-fed so doesn't hunt when he goes out.

Scientific studies have shown that even well-fed cats do kill wildlife because of their hunting instinct. Prey that is not killed immediately is very likely to die later from shock or infection.

But my cat doesn't bring home dead animals

The impact of an individual cat on wildlife is hard to estimate - an American study found that free-roaming domestic cats bring less than 30% of their prey home.



Don't cats just kill diseased or old animals?

No. Cats kill all animals smaller than a kangaroo, including pademelons, potoroos, bandicoots, birds, bats, snakes, lizards, frogs, centipedes, scorpions.... It is estimated that a domestic cat will directly kill, on average, 32 native animals a year (16 mammals, 8 birds and 8 reptiles), and a feral cat many hundred a year. This does not account for impacts due to competition, disturbance and disease. In Kingborough it is estimated that there are 5440 pet cats, resulting in more than 170 000 native animals directly preyed upon each year by cats.

But isn't Australian wildlife used to cats?

Our unique wildlife evolved in an environment that didn't include cats. Cats are very efficient, intelligent and skilled hunters. There is evidence that the arrival of cats to Australia caused the extinction and decline of a number of small mammal species. Wildlife that feeds or nests on or near the ground are easy prey for cats e.g. shearwaters, little penguins, hooded & red-capped plovers, blue wren, robins.... Small native mammals e.g. Tasmanian bettongs, little pygmy possums, Antechinus, eastern barred bandicoots are also at high risk of predation.

Cats, especially those that roam, are the host for a blood disease called Toxoplasmosis (transmitted in their faeces). Many birds and mammals are very susceptible to toxoplasmosis (for example the eastern barred bandicoot) and it can be very harmful to humans and livestock. A recent study found that 84% of feral and stray cats tested in Tasmania were infected with Toxoplasmosis.

There are so many stray and feral cats - what can I do?

While it is not possible to eradicate feral and stray cats, importantly you can (a) reduce the source of stray and feral cats by desexing your cat/s & (b) reduce the spread of toxoplasmosis and protect native animals by preventing your cats from roaming (especially if you live near bushland & reserves).

Where can I get further information?

Products to keep cats in your yard:

<http://www.g2z.org.au/cat-containment.html> links to a range of products (cat enclosure and cat-run netting) available in Australia

<http://www.kittyklips.com/secret.htm> DIY cheap fence options

<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets/cats/cat-confinement-enclosures-and-fencing> DIY enclosures & fencing

<http://www.catnets.com.au/> cat enclosure and cat run netting products

<http://www.catsafe.com.au/> cat enclosure and cat run products

<http://www.catnip.com.au/> cat enclosure products and accessories

<http://www.secureakat.com.au/> cat runs and enclosures

<http://oscillot.com.au/> cat containment fence top system

<http://catenclosures.com.au/> cat enclosures and information

<http://www.animaltrainingsystems.com.au/welcome/page19.php> radio fence containment system

http://www.sureguard.com.au/cat_electric_fence_enclosures.html electronic ping string attached to fence tops to stop cats escaping

<http://www.hiddenfence.com.au> digital radio signal transmitted through invisible fence boundary

<http://www.catsofaustralia.com/cat-enclosures.htm> has lots of photos of different cat run styles

Training outdoor cats to become indoor cats:

<http://www.catbehaviorassociates.com/making-an-outdoor-cat-into-an-indoor-cat/>

http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/cats/tips/bringing_outside_cat_indoors.html

<http://www.catbegood.com/cat-behavior/training-outside/> check this out more first

<http://www.cat-world.com.au/indoor-vs-outdoor-cats> benefits of indoor and contained cats