



Legislation for Cat Owners in Tasmania

In July 2012, cat management laws were introduced across Tasmania

If you own, acquire, breed, sell or give away a cat these laws affect you

From 1 July 2012, the *Cat Management Act 2009* and the *Cat Management Regulations 2012* were applied across Tasmania. Key objectives of the *Act* are to encourage responsible ownership of cats and to protect the welfare of pet cats and Tasmania's unique diversity of wildlife.

Who administers the Cat Management Act?

The *Cat Management Act 2009* is administered by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE), a state government agency. Local government does not have any direct obligations under the *Act* to control cats however, the opportunity exists for Local Government to participate. Kingborough Council is working to promote responsible cat ownership and to reduce the impact of cats on wildlife & neighbours. Council does not however provide traps or collect cats that have been trapped.

Tasmanian cat management laws – what do they mean for cat owners?

Do I have to have my cat desexed and microchipped?

As of 1 July 2012, any cat that is to be sold or given away (must be at least 8 weeks old) must first be desexed, microchipped, wormed and vaccinated. With regards microchipping and desexing the only exceptions are for cats owned by registered breeders and genuine show cats or if the owners have a certificate from a vet exempting the cat.

Can I be fined if I do not desex or identify my cat?

The *Cat Management Act* encourages owners of cats to microchip and desex their cats, but there are no penalties for not doing so. By desexing your cat you are helping solve our cat overpopulation problem and the ongoing destruction of native wildlife (through predation and disease). Desexing also benefits cats. A desexed cat has less risk of certain cancers, lives longer and is less territorial. It will wander, fight and mark its territory less, and generally make a better and happier pet. A cat that is microchipped is much more likely to be returned quickly to its owner if it goes missing.

Please refer to our *Desexing Your Cat* information sheet (on our website).



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Do I have to identify my cat with a collar?

If your cat spends time outside, it is recommended you identify your cat with a collar and a microchip. A metal disk attached to the collar with a contact phone number will aid in the faster return of your cat should it become lost. Collars also indicate your cat is not a stray.

Do I have to register my cat?

No, registration of cats is not yet required by Kingborough Council.

Is there a limit on the number of cats I may have?

No, Kingborough Council does not currently have a limit on the number of cats a person can have. However, the keeping of many cats on a property can create health and welfare problems for the occupants of the house, the local community and the cats. In addition, it can have a significant detrimental impact on local wildlife (through disease and predation).

Cat 'hoarding' is an identified mental health problem. It involves keeping a large number of cats and failing to care for them properly, while at the same time denying that the cats are not adequately cared for. Please contact Council if you have concerns about a property with a large number of cats.

What happens if I want to sell or give my cat away?

Any person can sell or give away a cat but the animal must be at least eight weeks of age, microchipped and desexed (unless a care agreement - as defined in the *Cat Management Act 2009* has been entered into), wormed and vaccinated. In addition, written evidence of the results of the health check (including vaccinations, external parasites, worm treatment) must be provided by a veterinary surgeon.

Cat sales between registered breeders and genuine show cats are exempt from the desexing requirement.

What is a Care Agreement?

A care agreement can be signed by a new owner who is purchasing or receiving a cat that has not been microchipped and/or desexed. The care agreement commits the new owner to desexing and/or microchipping the cat and it is an offence under the Act not to comply with the care agreement.

What if I want to breed from my cat?

To reduce the number of unwanted cats that are euthanased each year, it is an offence to breed cats unless you are a registered breeder. Big fines will apply. Registered breeders must be a member of a cat organisation or can apply to the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries Parks Water and Environment (DPIPWE) for registration as a breeder.

Am I bound by law to confine my cat?

At this stage you are not bound by law to confine your cat. However, Council strongly recommends for the benefit of your cat, your neighbours and local wildlife that you keep your cat confined to your house and yard. Cat owners have a responsibility to ensure their cat/s do not become a nuisance to their neighbours. If a neighbour's cat is becoming a regular nuisance, please consider discussing the problem with the cat's owner, often they are unaware that there is a problem.

In addition, under some circumstances cats found trespassing on private land and prohibited areas can be trapped, so it is in the best interests of your cat to keep it confined to your property.

Can my cat be trapped if it wanders from my property?

The *Cat Management Act 2009* allows for all cats (with or without identification) to be trapped by land managers (such as Council or Parks & Wildlife Service) if they are found wandering in certain areas. Prohibited areas for cats include land reserved in National Parks and public, timber or forest reserves. Councils can also declare council-controlled land as a cat prohibited or cat management area. Trapping and other control measures may be undertaken by managers of these prohibited areas (such as Councils, Parks & Wildlife Service, Forestry Tasmania, Crown Land Services).

In addition, cats trespassing on either private land that is more than 1 km from a place of residence or rural land where livestock are grazed can be trapped and returned to the owner, taken to a cat management facility or humanely destroyed.

What happens if my cat ends up at a shelter or cat management facility?

Cat management facilities (Hobart Cat Centre and RSPCA) will receive stray cats. Cats in their care will be scanned for a microchip to establish ownership. They are required to hold microchipped cats for at least five days and unmicrochipped cats for three days, to provide cat owners with time to look for lost pets. After this time, the cat management facility may rehome, sell or euthanase the animal. Cat management facilities have the discretion to charge you for boarding the cat while it was in care.

How am I supposed to keep my cat from wandering off my property?

There are a number of options for keeping your cat on your property whilst still allowing them access outside. Apart from keeping your cat totally indoors, other options include installing 'cat proof' fencing, buying or building a "cat enclosure" for your yard, or installing "cat netting" around an existing structure. For detailed information on how to build a cat proof fence, ideas for cat enclosures and how to keep an indoor cat content, please refer to our *Keeping Cats Contained FAQ*, *Keeping Them Indoors* and *Safe Enclosures* information sheets (on our website).

What should I do if I can't care for my cat?

Under the legislation it is an offence to abandon a cat. If you are unable to care for a cat it should be taken to a cat management facility.

Tasmanian cat management laws – what do they mean for stray or roaming cats?

Can I trap or catch a stray or roaming cat?

At present, the Cat Management Act 2009 permits the owner of rural land which is used for the purposes of livestock farming and whose land is more than one kilometre from any place genuinely used as a place of residence to trap, seize or humanely destroy a cat found on his or her private land.

While the Cat Management Act is silent on the issue of catching cats in suburban areas, under other state legislation people are entitled to trap a cat that enters their property. However, people attempting to catch stray cats in suburban areas leave themselves open to civil legal action if a cat is injured in the process of trapping. Any cat caught in a suburban area must not be harmed and must be taken to a cat management facility to be scanned for a microchip (if ownership is not known). Cat management facilities have the right to refuse to take a cat which they reasonably believe may be a pet.

You cannot under any circumstances enter another person's property or public land to trap a cat without permission. You must take any trapped cat to a cat management facility so it can be checked for a microchip. Please refer to our *Law and Cat Trapping* information sheet (on our website).

Can I kill stray or trespassing cats?

No. It is illegal for anyone except officers authorised under the *Cat Management Act 2009* to kill a cat, unless the cat is found on property used for the purpose of livestock farming or on property that is more than one kilometre from the nearest residence. Most people do not have the means or experience to humanely kill a cat. Strong penalties apply and legal action can be taken against you.

How can I keep stray cats from coming into my yard?

If the cats have owners, talk to them without being confrontational. Remember, cats will be cats and it is unfair for us to blame them for what their owners allow them to do.

The simplest and cheapest deterrent is water – cats hate it, so keep a water pistol (Super Soaker) handy and spray when you see them in your yard. A spray with the hose also works.

Many people claim cats can be repelled by scattering certain scented products around the garden although the results of doing so have not been proven. Commercial repellents such as spray and ultrasonic (sound emitting) devices may be helpful. Your local pet shop, garden shop or hardware store may stock some commercial repellents.

A variety of scent, visual, texture, sprinkler, fencing and ultrasonic deterrents are available to try, please refer to our *Nuisance Cats* information sheet (on our website).

How can I help stray cats?

Feeding stray cats is actually a huge problem. Surveys have shown that one in five households feed a roaming cat that is not the family pet. A large proportion of these stray or unowned cats are not desexed and are a major cause of the cat overpopulation problem.

People feed unowned cats because they genuinely care about them, and feel sorry for them. However many people don't realise that they are causing a bigger problem by feeding, but not owning (eg desexing and identifying) these cats.

Feeding unowned cats but not taking full ownership of them is not the answer. It only helps keep them strong enough to reproduce. They continue breeding more and more kittens into a life of disease and neglect.

Where possible take the cat to a vet or cat centre to have it checked for identification. If no owner is identified, either take ownership of the cat and have it desexed and microchipped or arrange to have it impounded. **Please do not feed a bigger problem.**



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What is a microchip and where do I get my cat 'chipped'?

A microchip is a small computer chip, about the size of a large grain of rice. Each chip has a unique identification number and contains information about the owner of the animal.

A **microchip** is implanted into an animal by a vet using a sterile implantation device in the soft scruff of the neck. It is an extremely common and **safe** procedure. The chips are based on a passive RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology and the information can be read by passing a scanner over the site of the chip. Microchips are particularly useful in the return of lost pets as they quickly allow identification of the owner, enabling rapid return of pets.



Size of a microchip

Desexing and microchipping – what are the costs?

In Tasmania, the cost to desex a male cat varies from around \$100 for a kitten to \$170 for an adult. The cost to desex females is around \$230. The difference in price is due to females requiring a more complicated operation.

The current cost of microchipping varies from \$25 (Hobart Cat Centre) to \$45 (various vets) per cat.

These costs are relatively minor when compared to the cost of a lifetime of food, care and vet bills for a cat. It is important to consider whether you can afford a cat before you get one.

If you do need assistance paying for desexing and microchipping, a number of organisations offer discounts please refer to our *Desexing Your Cat* information sheet (on our website).

Cat Contacts:

If you have any questions, suggestions or if you require further information please contact:

Kingborough Council

Cat Management Officer (Wed & Thurs)

15 Channel Highway Kingston TAS 7050 Phone:
(03) 6211 8255
www.kingborough.tas.gov.au/page.aspx?u=578

Hobart Cat Centre

12 Selfs Point Road New Town TAS 7008
Phone: (03) 6278 2111
www.hobartcatcentre.com.au

RSPCA Tasmania, Hobart

553 Pass Road Mornington TAS 7018 Phone:
(03) 6244 3033
www.rspcatas.org.au

Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE)

For information on cat ownership, breeding and selling cats, stray and feral cats: **Invasive Species Branch**
171 Westbury Road PROSPECT TAS 7250
Phone: (03) 67772200 email:
invasivespecies@dipwe.tas.gov.au
dipwe.tas.gov.au/invasive-species/cat-management-in-tasmania



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