

Responsible pet ownership



Pets are great companions for many people and as pet owners we have a duty of care to look after their safety and wellbeing. Dogs and cats are by far the most common pets. If you wish to attract wildlife to your garden, you must protect them from being injured or killed by pets at night and during the day.

Many wildlife species are active at night and so are vulnerable to attack. Physical contact is not the only means by which wildlife can be injured or killed; being chased can cause severe stress on wildlife and may lead to their death.

Domestic cats can still be hunters even if kept well fed. Even though their human owners carefully meet their pet's requirements for food and shelter, instinctive hunting and chasing behaviour usually continues. Sadly, the prey may be left uneaten or brought home.



Recent research from the National Environmental Science Program's Threatened Species Recovery Hub compared the predation rates of domestic, stray and feral cats on native and introduced wildlife and sought to understand the toll that varying densities of cats in different landscapes were having.

Incredibly, the research estimated that the predation rates of pet cats per square kilometre in residential areas is 28–52 times greater than predation rates by feral cats in natural environments, and 1.3–2.3 times greater than predation rates per square kilometre by feral cats living in urban areas, since pet cats live at much higher densities.

Sadly, according to leading scientists, each day more than 3.1 million mammals, 1 million birds and 1.7 million reptiles are killed by cats across Australia. **Pet cats alone are estimated to kill 83 million native reptiles each year.**

You can play a vital role in the conservation of Australian wildlife by being a responsible cat owner and practicing cat containment. Responsible cat ownership also means safer cats by keeping our cats happy and safe indoors.

Learn more at www.safecat.org.au

Some other things you can do to protect wildlife from domestic pets are:

- Keep your dog/s inside at night from dawn to dusk to avoid any conflict with nocturnal wildlife. You will also be ensuring their safety from roaming, being hit by cars, or fighting.
- If you do not plan to breed from your cat, consider having it desexed to reduce the risk of unwanted kittens.
- Micro chipping and registering your pet with local council, allows it to be returned to you if it leaves your property.
- Train dogs from an early age not to chase wildlife.
- Keep pets safe when out during the day. For dogs, a secure backyard will ensure they can't escape.
- Outdoor enclosures, either as free standing or as attachments to the house (often with a trap door opening into the house) can be purchased or made, allowing your cat/s to spend time outside without threatening wildlife (especially birds, frogs and lizards) during the day. These enclosures can include climbing frames, scratch -posts and living plants to provide exercise, entertainment and nice surroundings for your pet.

