



Submission

# Draft Code of Welfare (Companion Cats & Managed Stray Cats) 2023



# Contents

Introduction.....	4
Purpose .....	4
Background .....	4
Who should read this Code of Welfare? .....	5
Why is this important?.....	5
Legislative background.....	5
Other information .....	6
Part 1: General Requirements .....	7
1.1 Application .....	7
1.2 Interpretation and Definitions .....	7
Part 2: Cat Ownership .....	8
2.1 Handling .....	8
2.2 Purchasing or Adopting a Cat or Kitten .....	10
2.3 Identification.....	12
2.4 Introducing a New Cat to Companion Animals in the Home.....	14
2.5 Relinquishing (Changing) Ownership.....	15
Part 3: Food and Water.....	16
3.1 Food and Feeding.....	16
3.2 Disease and Illness Related to Diet.....	17
3.3 Body Condition .....	19
3.4 Water.....	20
Part 4: Containment and Housing .....	21
Part 5: Hygiene and Sanitation.....	26
Part 6: Breeding Cats.....	29
6.1 Breeding.....	29
6.2 Need for Desexing.....	31
6.3 Pregnancy and Birthing.....	32
6.4 Lactation and Weaning.....	34
6.5 Removal of Kittens from the Queen and Supply of Kittens and Cats.....	35



Part 7: Health .....	37
7.1 Ill Health and Injury.....	37
7.2 Prevention and Management of Infectious Diseases .....	39
7.3 Prevention and Management of Parasitic Diseases.....	41
7.4 Care of Claws and Coat .....	43
7.5 Toxic and Harmful Substances .....	45
7.6 Care of Older Cats.....	46
7.7 Significant Surgical Procedures .....	47
Part 8: Behaviour, Enrichment, and Training.....	48
8.1 Behaviour .....	48
8.2 Enrichment .....	50
8.3 Training Cats.....	52
Part 9: Transporting Cats.....	53
Part 10: Humane Killing* .....	55
Part 11: Contingency Planning .....	57
Part 12: Stray Cats in Managed Colonies .....	59
Part 13: Welfare Assurance System .....	62
Appendix I: Interpretation and Definitions .....	64
Appendix II: Principles of Low-stress Handling.....	68
Appendix III: Assessment of Body Condition of Cats.....	69
Appendix IV: Signs of Ill Health in cats.....	70
Appendix V: Pain Assessment.....	71



# Introduction

**Please note: This is a draft Code of Welfare submitted to NAWAC for consideration. This document has not been issued by the Minister for Agriculture and does not replace the current Code of Welfare (Cats) 2018 or any other related legislation.**

Codes of welfare are developed by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC). Under section 70 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 (the Act), the Minister, NAWAC, or any other person may prepare a draft code of welfare. If a specific industry or organisation believes a new code, or an updated code, is needed, they can invest their own resources to develop a draft code before sending it to NAWAC for consideration.

Please note that as such, this draft code released by SPCA in its current form has yet to be reviewed by NAWAC.

**This introduction is not part of the Code of Welfare but is intended to indicate its general effect.**

## Purpose

Owners and persons in charge of cats have a responsibility to understand and meet the welfare needs of their cats. The purpose of this Code is to provide guidance to owners and persons in charge of cats about the standards they must achieve to meet their obligations under the [Animal Welfare Act 1999](#).

This Code of Welfare encourages all persons responsible for cats to adopt the highest standards of husbandry, care, and handling, and to equal or exceed the minimum standards.

## Background

The [Animal Welfare Act 1999](#) (“the Act”) provides for the welfare of animals in New Zealand. The Act establishes the fundamental obligations relating to the care of animals and provides for the development and issue of codes of welfare. It obliges people who own or are in charge of animals to provide for their welfare.

Codes of welfare expand on the basic obligations of the Act by setting minimum standards and recommending best practice for the care and management of animals. This Code of Welfare also references regulations issued under the Animal Welfare Act 1999. Regulations are prescribed under the Animal Welfare Act and impose enforceable requirements on owners and persons in charge of animals. For ease of reference, regulations relevant to this Code are set out in Appendix VI to this Code.

Penalties for failure to comply with the regulations are specified in the relevant regulations. The inclusion of regulations in this Code is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of all obligations under the Act or



regulatory requirements. Owners and persons in charge of animals are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of and understand all Act and regulatory requirements that are relevant to them including all applicable Codes of Welfare.

Under the [Animal Welfare Act 1999](#), a “significant surgical procedure” may only be carried out by a veterinarian or their supervised student, unless there are regulations that say otherwise. The regulations clarify who can carry out certain procedures and how they should be done.

## Who should read this Code of Welfare?

This Code of Welfare is intended for all persons responsible for the welfare of domesticated cats (referred to as ‘cats’ from this point on), including those kept as companions, for breeding, showing, kept in temporary housing, used in research, testing, or teaching or for any other purpose. For the purposes of this Code, breeders are defined in the glossary.

Domestic cats also include stray cats. Stray cats are unowned, of varying sociability, and have varying interactions with and dependence on humans. Stray cats may live in a group which are referred to as colonies. Stray cats living in a colony and receiving regular care are considered managed.

Feral cats are unowned, unsocialised with humans, and have no relationship with or dependence on humans.

Under the Act the “owner” and every “person in charge” of an animal is responsible for meeting the legal obligations for the welfare of animals under their care.

For cats, the owner of the animals may place them in the care of others who become the person in charge, but this does not derogate from their responsibility to ensure that the requirements of the Act are met.

Responsibility for meeting minimum standards relating to the provision, design and maintenance of the facilities and equipment, the allocation of operational responsibilities and the competence and supervision of performance of employees will lie with the owner and person in charge of the animals.

Responsibility for meeting minimum standards during the operation of tasks will lie with the person responsible for carrying out that task. That person is “in charge” of the animals at that point in time. The identification of the person in charge will depend on the minimum standard in question.

## Why is this important?

Failure to meet a minimum standard in this Code may be used as evidence to support a prosecution for an offence under the Act. A person who is charged with an offence against the Act can defend themselves by showing that they have equalled or exceeded the minimum standards in this Code.

This Code includes information and example indicators for each minimum standard. The list of indicators is not exhaustive but is given to provide guidance on how a minimum standard may be met.

Owners and persons in charge of animals are not required to comply with the recommendations for best practice in this Code but are encouraged to do so to provide higher standards of welfare.





## Legislative background

This Code does not provide an exhaustive list of the Act's requirements, and owners and those in charge of animals should note that they must comply with the minimum standards in this Code, the general provisions of the Act, and any regulations issued under the Act. A copy of the Act and animal welfare regulations are accessible at: [www.legislation.govt.nz](http://www.legislation.govt.nz).

*Legislative background amended on 9 May 2021 by Notice in the Gazette 2021-go1589*

## Other information

Other codes of welfare in existence provide minimum standards and recommendations for best practice in particular circumstances, such as temporary housing and transport. These should be consulted where appropriate (see [www.mpi.govt.nz](http://www.mpi.govt.nz)).

[Part 6 of the Act](#) provides further requirements for cats used in research, testing, and teaching.

Codes of welfare must be accompanied by a report that sets out the deliberations that the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) undertook when developing the codes of welfare including the standards and recommendations for best practice, the nature of any significant differences of opinion during drafting and consultation, and any matters that should be dealt with by regulation. Code reports can be accessed online (see [www.mpi.govt.nz](http://www.mpi.govt.nz)).

Although efforts to include relevant regulations within this Code have been made, there may be other regulations which are relevant to you. The full list of all animal welfare regulations should be consulted where appropriate (see [www.legislation.govt.nz](http://www.legislation.govt.nz)).



# PART 1: General Requirements



## 1.1 Application

This Code applies to all persons responsible for cats, including cat breeders, those who show cats, those who keep cats as companions (pets) or manage them (provide care) in the community, those who are in charge of cats in temporary housing, and use cats for research, testing, and teaching or any other purpose.

This Code applies to domestic cats, which include companion and stray cats:

- Companion cats are considered owned by a person. They are sociable with humans and directly dependent on humans.
- Stray cats are considered unowned by a person, of varying sociability, and have varying interactions with, and dependence on humans. Stray cats may or may not be provided care by humans. Stray cats may live as a single cat or in groups referred to as colonies.

Feral cats are considered unowned, unsocialised with humans, and have no relationship with or dependence on humans.

Feral cats are not included under the provisions of this Code; however, they are considered sentient animals and afforded protections under the Animal Welfare Act. Any person who captures an animal in a wild state, such as a feral cat, must comply with section 30D(1) and 30D(2) of the Act.

Persons responsible for cats should be aware that feral, stray, and companion cats may be designated a status under the [Biosecurity Act 1993](#) and therefore may be subject to control under a national or regional pest management plan.

## 1.2 Interpretation and Definitions

Refer to [Appendix I – Interpretation and Definitions](#) for additional information.



# PART 2: Cat Ownership



## Introduction

Cats are sentient animals, meaning they have emotions, feelings, perceptions, and experiences that matter to them. The care of cats requires expertise, a good understanding of the relationship between people and cats, and the observance of high standards as outlined in this Code.

A cat's welfare can be adversely affected if they are not well managed and provided proper care. The day-to-day care and handling of a cat requires knowledge of what a cat needs, an ability to provide appropriate care, an ability to observe and interpret behaviours and respond appropriately, and an understanding of the practical aspects of handling cats.

This Code establishes minimum standards of care for cats and is intended to encourage all owners and persons in charge of cats to adopt the highest standards of day-to-day care and handling, based on the recommended best practices.

This Code is based on current knowledge and technology available at the time of issue. It does not replace the need for owners and persons in charge of cats to have experience in handling cats, to keep up to date with developments in the day-to-day care and review their practices regularly to improve their cat's welfare.

## 2.1 Handling

### Introduction

Cats and handlers benefit from gentle and respectful handling. Gentle handling allows a cat to retain some sense of control, which is important for their welfare. Gentle handling techniques are less stressful for the cat than more forceful handling or restraint. Gentle handling techniques can also help reduce the risk of injury to the handler.

### 1. Minimum Standard – Handling Cats

- a. Techniques that minimise stress must be used when handling cats.*
- b. Cats must be lifted securely and not in a way that causes injury.*
- c. Cats must be held with their full body weight supported.*
- d. Cats must not be “scruffed” whilst lifted.*
- e. Cats must not be restrained through use of “scruffing”, use of a skin clip secured to the back of the cat’s neck, or through full body restraint during a veterinary exam and procedures.*
- f. An owner or person in charge of a cat must not allow another person to mishandle the cat.*





## Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 1 – Handling Cats

- Cats do not incur injuries associated with improper handling.
- Equipment to safely handle cats (e.g., suitable carrier, towels) is present.
- A person in charge of a cat uses proper handling.
- Cat enclosures are designed based on cat behaviour and allow for easy and safe placement and removal of cats from an enclosure.

## Recommended Best Practice

- a) A person handling a cat in stressful settings (e.g., veterinary clinics, animal shelters, and catteries) should receive training on gentle handling and passive restraint.
- b) Cats and kittens should not be “scruffed” or grabbed and held tightly by the nape of their neck if handled in situations outside of a veterinary setting
- c) Positive associations with the cat carrier should be encouraged using reward-based training and making the carrier a safe and familiar place for where a cat can rest and hide in their environment.
- d) Before picking up a cat, a person should approach them calmly and make their presence known to avoid startling the cat.
- e) Cats should be held gently but securely against a person’s chest with their back legs supported.
- f) Cats should not be squeezed when being handled.
- g) When returned to the ground, cats should be carefully lowered and gently placed down.
- h) Parents/guardians/teachers should teach young children in their care how to properly handle and interact with a cat.
- i) Children handling a cat should always be supervised by an adult.
- j) A cat should be handled gently (e.g., stroking, grooming) from a young age to encourage cat and owner bonding.

## General Information

Human and cat interactions should be on the cat’s terms. Cats will vary with how much interaction they want with people including if they want to be picked up, where they want to be touched, and how much time they spend with people. A cat may be more affectionate with adults than with children. A cat should not be disturbed from resting, hiding, or eating unless it is absolutely necessary.

A person should calmly approach a cat before interacting with them. A calm approach can include a person reaching out their hand to let the cat inspect, speaking to the cat, or moving into an area where a cat can see them.

Gentle and calm interactions help reduce fear and stress a cat may experience during handling and the chance they will respond with aggression. Gentle handling can help minimise pain in a senior cat or a cat that has a painful condition. See [Appendix II for Principles of Low Stress Handling](#) for more information.

Passive restraint can be achieved by holding a cat secure but with the least amount of restraint. Whilst being handled, a cat should be allowed to choose the position they hold their head or body including their limbs, and to also change these positions. When compared with more forceful restraint, passive restraint can reduce how much a cat struggles and reduce fear, pain, and anxiety a cat may experience.

Cats can be trained to participate in handling for examinations, walking on a scale, or entering a travel crate. See [Part 8.3: Training Cats](#) for more information on training cats.



“Scruffing” describes when a person firmly grips an animal by the loose skin at the back of the neck. “Scruffing” can cause a cat to be fearful and cause pain and anxiety, which can provoke or escalate defensive cat aggression. “Scruffing” is both counterproductive and compromises the welfare of a cat. Examining a cat in a full-body restraint or whilst using a skin clip (which is a device that is attached to a cat’s neck to simulate “scruffing”) can be more stressful than “scruffing”.

Unsocialised stray cats should not be physically handled for veterinary exams unless they are sedated or anaesthetised. Unsocialised stray cats can be handled with traps, cat dens, or multi-compartment enclosures to help ensure handler safety.

## 2.2 Purchasing or Adopting a Cat or Kitten

### Introduction

People acquire cats from different sources including family, friends, and neighbours; animal welfare and rescue organisations; from websites, including social media, and community notice boards; and from breeders and pet shops/online retailers. Some people adopt social stray cats or kittens in their communities.

Before acquiring a cat, a person should consider if they can provide for their physical, health, behavioural, psychological, mental, and emotional needs. A person should also consider if they have the time and financial resources to be a responsible cat owner for the life of the cat.

Transfer of ownership includes selling or purchasing, adopting, rehoming, or gifting a cat or kitten. A new owner needs to be provided with printed or digital information about the cat’s relevant medical history included but not limited to vaccinations, and flea and worming treatments. Breeder requirements are further covered in [Part 6 of this Code](#). A new owner should be provided with printed or digital information about recommended procedures for introducing the cat to their new environment and for their ongoing care.

### 2. Minimum Standard – Purchasing or Adopting a Cat or Kitten

**a. A person transferring ownership of a cat to another party must provide the following information about the cat:**

- > *medical history, including known vaccinations, dental health, and parasite treatments;*
- > *desexing certificate;*
- > *microchip number and where to register or update owner information on a recognised database within New Zealand;*
- > *behavioural history, including socialisation with people and other animals; and*
- > *current feeding regime (with one or two-day supply of food), and importance of making only gradual changes to the diet.*

**b. An owner or person in charge of a cat must be able to adequately care for the cat or kitten.**

**c. A cat owner or person in charge of a cat must take all reasonable precautions to keep their cat or kitten indoors after adoption/purchase until:**

- > *their course of vaccinations is complete;*
- > *the cat is desexed and microchipped and the microchip is registered; and*
- > *it is clear they are comfortable with their surroundings*

**d. A cat who is blind, deaf, or otherwise compromised which places them at increased welfare risk, must be provided a safe physical environment that accounts for their health condition.**



## Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 2 – Purchasing or Adopting a Cat or Kitten

- Medical records including vaccination, parasite treatment, microchipping, and desexing records are given to the new owner.
- Owners have access to records on the following:
  - > vaccinations, dental health, and parasite treatments;
  - > desexing certificate;
  - > microchip number and information on the New Zealand Companion Animal register; and
  - > current feeding regime and one-to-two-day supply of food if transfer of ownership was recent.
- An owner or person in charge of a cat can demonstrate they can adequately provide for and attend to the needs of the cat.
- A cat or kitten is kept indoors if they have not finished their vaccinations or are not desexed and microchipped.
- A cat or kitten is kept indoors for at least three to four weeks for adult cats and six to eight weeks for kittens after purchase or adoption.
- Allowing access to the outdoors is done gradually and is supervised in the beginning.
- A cat or kitten that is allowed outdoors is trained to come indoors for their meals.
- A cat who is blind, deaf, or otherwise compromised is primarily restricted to a safe environment.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) Before acquiring a cat, a person should be familiar with the responsibilities of ownership and the welfare needs of the cat and be prepared to undertake those responsibilities for the life of the cat (around twelve to sixteen years and up to twenty plus years depending on breed).
- (b) Before acquiring a cat, a person should be aware of potential known inheritable welfare problems. See [Part 6: Breeding Cats](#) for more information.
- (c) Breeders, animal welfare and rescue organisations, pet stores, and other organisations or businesses transferring ownership should provide the new owner with the following information:
  - > settling a cat into a new environment;
  - > feeding requirements from kitten to adulthood (if applicable);
  - > ongoing care requirements: each cat will need their own water bowl, food dish and litter tray (which is kept away from food and water sources) plus one more of each;
  - > housing, which provides a cat their own space and opportunities for a cat to express important behaviours including play, exploration, scratching, marking, jumping, climbing, perching, hiding, sleeping, eating, and drinking;
  - > appropriate handling;
  - > body condition assessment; and
  - > legal requirements and a copy or link to this Code of Welfare, and where to find information related to owning a cat.
- (d) A person who intends to purchase a cat or kitten from a breeder should only source them from a registered breeder.



## General Information

A cat will want to investigate new surroundings but may be fearful of new sights and smells. A cat will also be stressed when moving house. A cat brought into a new environment should be placed in a quiet room with windows and doors closed. The cat will need a bed, place to hide, food, water, and a litter tray. Feline pheromone diffusers and sprays can be helpful to alleviate anxiety for the cat.

A cat should be gradually introduced to their new surroundings and allowed to emerge from their carry crate and room in their own time. A cat will need time to become accustomed to where they eat, drink, and toilet. This may take days to weeks depending on the cat and the environment.

Each cat in a home will need their own food dish, water bowl, and litter tray which is kept separate from the food and water. It is good practice to provide one additional feeding dish, water bowl, and litter tray per cat. Cats should be provided with spaces to engage in play, exploration, scratching, marking, hiding, and sleeping. Enrichment should be provided daily. See [Part 8: Behaviour, Enrichment, and Training](#) for more information.

A cat's physical, health, behavioural, emotional, and mental needs can be met whilst always keeping them at home as either indoor only cats, with access to a secure outdoor enclosure, or with access to a garden with an escape proof fence. If an owner chooses to permit their cat outdoors, this should be done gradually, under supervision, and not at night. Ensure that when a cat is first allowed outside it is before, not after, a mealtime. Be mindful of hazards such as neighbourhood dogs, traffic on busy roads, and fighting with other cats.

A cat allowed unrestricted outdoor access is more likely to become lost or stray from home, is at higher risk of exposure to disease from other cats and can be exposed to toxins or traps.

An owner or person in charge of a cat should be aware of local bylaws that limit the number of cats permitted on a property.

## 2.3 Identification

### Introduction

It is important that a cat is identifiable with a reliable and accurate method in case the cat becomes lost or stolen or is held in a boarding accommodation.

A permanent primary method of identification such as an implanted and registered microchip and a secondary method such as a collar with owner information on a tag can help ensure a companion cat is identifiable.

See also the regulation listed below:

- [Regulation 47 – Collars and Tethers](#). a) Only collars that are elasticised or provide a quick-release mechanism should be used.



### 3. Minimum Standard – Identification

- a. A companion cat eight weeks of age or older must be microchipped.*
- b. A companion cat's microchip information must be registered on a recognised database within New Zealand.*
- c. An owner or person in charge of a cat must ensure their information is updated on the national database if there is a change of address or other owner information.*
- d. Collars, where used, must comfortably fit the cat, and be made of materials that reduce the risk of injury to the cat should their collar become entangled on an object or the cat's body part.*

#### Examples of indicators for Minimum Standard No. 3 – Identification

- A cat has a readable microchip when scanned.
- An owner can provide verification that a cat is registered on a database in New Zealand.
- A cat's collar is a breakaway or quick release type or elasticated.
- A collar is tight enough to not fall in front of a cat's ears or permit their leg from being caught under the collar, but loose enough to allow two fingers to slip between the collar and the cat's neck.

#### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A companion cat's microchip should be registered on the New Zealand Companion Animal Register.
- (b) An owner should ensure their information is updated on the New Zealand Companion Animal Register when there is a change of address or other owner information.
- (c) A microchip should be checked regularly to ensure it has not migrated or failed.
- (d) A companion cat should wear a collar with their owner's information attached to the collar as a secondary method of identification.
- (e) A cat's collar should be of a high quality and commercially made specifically for cats.

#### General Information

Using a registered microchip for a cat as a primary identification method is reliable because the chip cannot be removed, dislodged, or lost without surgical intervention. A cat's 15-digit microchip number and the animal and owner's information need to be registered with a recognised database. The New Zealand Companion Animal Register is a national, private database which can be accessed by veterinarians and animal welfare organisations.

An owner or person in charge of a cat should be aware of local bylaws or regional pest management plan related to their cat being microchipped.

Implanting a cat with a registered microchip helps ensure the owner can be found if a cat is lost, stolen, or becomes a stray. In areas where cats are targets of pest control, a registered microchip or other forms of identification may be used to determine the cat's legal status.



Microchip operated feeders can help manage cat feeding behaviour. A microchip operated cat door can control a cat's access into and out of a home.

A collar and tag showing the owner's name and contact details can help identify a cat. Collars that are not designed to break away from the cat should they become tangled on an object, or the body part of the cat can result in injuries. A collar should be sufficiently snug around the cat's neck to reduce the possibility of it catching on objects such as vegetation. Collars that are too loose around the neck can be a hazard, as the cat may be injured if their front leg or lower jaw is caught in the collar. As a guide, two fingers should be able to fit snugly between the collar and the cat's neck.

Collars that are designed as anti-predation devices (e.g., clown collars or collars with a bell) can also help reduce the impact cats have on wildlife.

## 2.4 Introducing a New Cat to Companion Animals in the Home

### Introduction

It is important for a new cat to be gradually introduced to other companion animals in the family. Gradual introductions may take several days to weeks to months. Introductions should be short and supervised to ensure the comfort and safety of all animals.

A new cat may prefer to interact with one existing companion animal over another. A cat and existing companion animals showing mutual friendly behaviours can be introduced more quickly than those who are not. Companion animals showing neutral or aggressive behaviours will need more time before they can be housed together.

### 4. Minimum Standard – Introducing a New Cat to Companion Animals in the Home

- a. *An owner or person in charge of a cat must ensure the safety of their cat with other companion animals.*

### Examples of indicators for Minimum Standard No. 4 – Introducing a New Cat to Companion Animals in the Home

- A new cat has a separate space from other companion animals in the home.
- A cat does not have injuries from fighting with other companion animals in the home.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A cat should be gradually introduced to other animals in a family and provided with a separate space for resting, eating, and drinking, and toileting during the introduction period.

### General Information

A cat may be territorial. Bringing a new cat into a home that already has a cat or a dog can result in fighting, with senior cats, kittens, and puppies particularly at risk of injury. If early problems with





confrontation occur, it is best to keep the new cat separated from the existing animal(s) until they become more compatible.

On the rare occasions when a cat fails to settle into a new environment, veterinary advice should be sought to rule out medical issues, and behavioural advice sought on options such as pheromone sprays or diffusers, or medication that may help the introduction succeed. There may also be the need to decide if this is the right environment for the cat and whether rehoming to a family without other companion animals is more appropriate.

## 2.5 Relinquishing (Changing) Ownership

### Introduction

Whilst ownership of a companion cat should be undertaken as a commitment for the entire life of the cat, sometimes it becomes necessary to relinquish ownership, such as changes in financial or family circumstances or relocation. Barriers to accessing resources to meet the needs of a cat or kitten such as food or veterinary care may be short-term and resolvable with supportive services.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) Prior to rehoming, an owner or person in charge of a cat should explore supportive services that may enable them to keep their cat or kitten.
- (b) An owner or person in charge of a cat should be aware of responsible rehoming in the event there are changes in circumstances that may require a change in ownership.
- (c) An owner or person in charge of a cat should take steps to ensure a new owner can provide an environment to meet the cat's physical, health, behavioural, emotional, and mental needs.
- (d) An owner or person in charge of a cat should have their cat undergo a veterinary health check and ensure vaccinations and other treatments are up to date prior to rehoming.

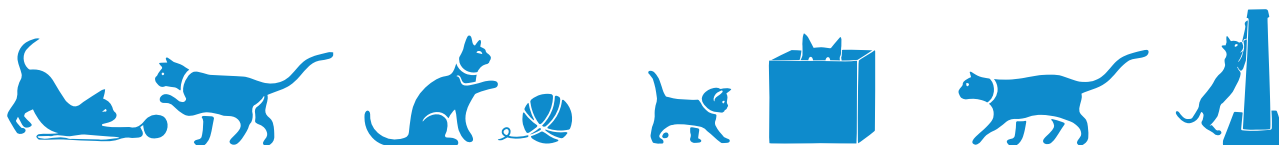
### General Information

Where it is in the best interest of the animal, an owner or person in charge of a cat should explore supportive services prior to taking steps to relinquishing their cat. Supportive services can help with the cost of veterinary procedures such as desexing and microchipping, or cost of food.

Owners considering relinquishing ownership of their cat should make efforts to rehome the cat themselves. Potential ways to find a new owner include rehoming with a family member or friend; placing advertisements on websites, including social media, or community notice boards, or in newspapers; and contacting animal welfare and rescue organisations, or the original breeder.

Care should be taken to ensure that the new owner is able to undertake the commitment of ownership for the life of the animal. Any change of ownership needs to be followed by updating microchip information on the database where the cat is registered. An owner should ensure their cat's recommended preventive health care (e.g., vaccinations, parasite control) is up to date prior to rehoming and provide this information to the new owner.

It is an offence under the [Animal Welfare Act 1999 Section 14\(2\)](#) to desert an animal in circumstances in which no provision is made to meet the animal's physical, health, and behavioural needs.



# PART 3: Food and Water



## 3.1 Food and Feeding

### Introduction

Cats are obligate carnivores and need a daily diet in adequate quantities and containing adequate nutrients to meet their requirements for good health and welfare. Given the considerable variation that occurs between individual cats, food and nutrient requirements also vary. Therefore, it is not appropriate to specify as minimum standards a complete range of the quantities of food and nutrients required.

A number of factors need consideration for the amount of food and nutrients a cat requires including characteristics of the animal (e.g., pregnancy, lactation, age, sex, size, breed, state of general health and development, level of activity and exercise needed) and the food (e.g., nutritional composition, quality, and feeding frequency). Careful consideration is also needed of the animal's normal diet, previous foods and feeding levels, and any potential periods of food deprivation (e.g., during transportation).

### 5. Minimum Standard – Food and Feeding

*a. A cat must be fed adequate quantities of food and nutrients to enable each cat to:*

- > maintain good health; and*
- > meet their physiological demands, including those resulting from pregnancy, lactation, growth, exercise, and exposure to cold; and*
- > avoid metabolic and nutritional disorders.*

*b. A kitten must be provided with ready access to moist kitten food from the age of three to four weeks.*

*c. A cat must be fed at a frequency that meets their life stage and individual needs.*

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 5 – Food and Feeding

- A nutritionally balanced diet appropriate for the age, physiological status, and health needs of the cat is present in the home or facility.
- A kitten that has been weaned is fed small quantities of food at regular intervals throughout the day.
- A cat is given sufficient daily feed to maintain appropriate body condition.
- A cat can access their food.
- A cat's faeces appearance is "normal" (i.e., no evidence of diarrhoea, constipation, blood).
- Food is stored appropriately as per label instructions.
- There is no evidence of rodent contamination in or around the cat food.
- Food is free of mould or dust.
- Food is free from harmful objects that could cause health problems (e.g., plastic, metal, wool).



## Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A cat's diet should be tailored to their individual needs and a veterinarian or other suitably qualified person should be consulted regarding cat nutrition (e.g., an animal nutritionist).
- (b) A cat over the age of six months should be fed multiple times per day.
- (c) A cat should be fed a complete and balanced cat food diet.
- (d) A diet appropriate to a cat's particular life stage should be fed.
- (e) Where disease is present in a cat, special attention to diet may be required. Advice should be sought from a veterinarian or other suitably qualified person who is experienced in the care and feeding of cats.
- (f) Prescription diets for certain medical conditions should be fed as instructed by a veterinarian or other experienced and competent person.

## General Information

Most commercially prepared foods will recommend feeding quantity and frequency for the age or the physiological state (e.g., pregnancy) of the cat on their packaging. Food provided should be either a high-quality, complete, and balanced commercial product or a mixture of food sources that together provide all the nutrients required for a healthy cat. Some low-cost brands of cat food, including pet rolls, may not contain all the elements required to maintain good health. Labels should be checked for wording such as "fully balanced" or "complete". An owner or person in charge of a cat can check that the food is labelled for cats and has the label of the Association of the American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) on the container.

Home-made diets may not contain all the nutrients a cat needs. Dog food should not be fed to a cat as a sole maintenance diet because it does not contain all the essential requirements to fulfil a cat's nutritional needs. A cat should not be fed raw fish, meat, or offal as these products can have high amounts of harmful bacteria which can cause illness in a cat. A cat should not be fed dairy products as they may have difficulty digesting them, resulting in diarrhoea or vomiting.

Uneaten moist food will quickly spoil and attract flies, rodents, and other animals, and should be disposed of or refrigerated, as soon as the cat has eaten what they require. Dry food made available for a cat throughout the day may not spoil, but owners should be aware that left-over food may attract other animals. Dry food and unopened moist food should be stored in a rodent-proof container and opened moist food (i.e., meat and opened cans) stored in a refrigerator.

Cats are solitary eaters. An owner or person in charge of a cat should provide separate eating areas if multiple cats are present.

If there is any doubt concerning an appropriate feeding regime for a cat, advice should be sought from a person experienced in the care and feeding of cats, such as a veterinarian.

## 3.2 Disease and Illness Related to Diet

### Introduction

Feeding an unbalanced or inadequate diet to a cat can cause significant health and welfare problems, including obesity, urinary tract problems, blindness, heart disease, diabetes, and poor oral health. Cats benefit from routine dental examinations to maintain oral health and detect problems early on.



## 6. Minimum Standard – Disease and Illness Related to Diet

- a. An owner or person in charge of a cat, who observes a cat to be showing significant or unexpected changes in appetite for more than forty-eight hours must seek advice from a veterinarian.
- b. A cat's mouth must be regularly checked by their owner for signs of potential oral health problems including the condition of their teeth, presence of foul breath, or changes in chewing patterns.
- c. Where a cat has a diagnosed disease related to diet, they must be routinely checked by their veterinarian and appropriate action taken where health deteriorates.
- d. Veterinary attention must be sought if a cat has diarrhoea that does not resolve.

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 6 – Disease and Illness Related to Diet

- A cat does not have challenges with eating.
- A cat's teeth and gums are not in a poor state of health.
- An owner or person in charge of a cat has documented evidence that a veterinarian has been consulted if significant or unexpected changes in appetite arise.
- For cats kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching facilities, staff understand signs of disease and illness related to diet, and ensure that they quickly identify, seek advice on, and manage nutritional deficiencies and metabolic diseases.

### Recommended Best Practices

- (a) A cat should be trained to have their teeth brushed.
- (b) A cat should have their teeth regularly brushed with cat specific toothpaste to maintain oral health.
- (c) A cat should be provided cat dental treats to help prevent oral hygiene problems.

### General Information

Disease and illness in a cat may be a result of a poorly balanced diet.

If a cat has not eaten for an extended period, it can lead to an inadequate supply of essential nutrients. A cat that has stopped eating may also indicate other health problems. Veterinary care should be sought if cat does not eat for more than forty-eight hours or if a kitten has stopped eating for twelve hours.

Even when an owner feeds a nutritionally balanced diet, food sensitivity diseases can occur that result in skin disease (especially scratching or dermatitis) or in vomiting and diarrhoea.

Dental problems may arise where soft food is the predominant diet. Feeding larger-sized cat biscuits or meat requiring chewing can help maintain healthy teeth. Regular tooth brushing and use of toothpaste can help maintain oral health in between veterinary visits.

Cats should be regularly monitored for signs of mouth infections, such as bad breath, sudden weight loss, and increase in thirst.

Veterinary advice and investigation are usually needed to diagnose and treat a cat that has signs of disease related to diet. Where disease is present in a cat, special attention to diet may be required.



## 3.3 Body Condition

### Introduction

An adult cat should be well proportioned and have an observable waist behind the ribs when viewed from above and from the side. A cat's ribs should be able to be touched or felt, but with a light fat covering. The abdominal fat pad should be minimal; excessive abdominal fat indicates obesity, which can contribute to disease.

A body condition score chart is provided in [Appendix III – Assessment of Body Condition of Cats](#).

### 7. Minimum Standard – Body Condition

- e. If a cat has a body condition indicative of emaciation (as indicated by a score of 1 or 2 in [Appendix III: Assessment of Body Condition for Cats in this Code](#)), immediate veterinary attention must be sought.*
- f. If a cat has a body condition indicative of gross obesity (as indicated by a score of 8 or 9 in [Appendix III: Assessment of Body Condition for Cats in this Code](#)), immediate veterinary attention must be sought.*
- g. If a cat has a body condition indicative of thin (as indicated by a score of 3 in [Appendix III: Assessment of Body Condition for Cats in this Code](#)) appropriate remedial action through veterinary attention (or other suitably qualified person) must be taken to increase the cat's body weight.*
- h. If a cat has a body condition indicative of heavy (as indicated by a score of 7 in [Appendix III: Assessment of Body Condition for Cats in this Code](#)), appropriate remedial action through veterinary attention (or other suitably qualified person) must be taken to decrease the cat's body weight.*

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 7 – Body Condition

- A cat is given sufficient daily feed to maintain appropriate body condition.
- A cat not at an ideal body condition score is receiving remedial action through improved nutrition, day to day care, and veterinary or other suitably qualified person's attention.
- Dietary modification and environmental improvements are in use to allow for increased energy expenditure if a cat is heavy (score of 7) or grossly obese (score of 8 or 9).
- For a cat kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching facilities, records of regular monitoring of body weights or body condition scores are documented.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A cat's body condition score should be maintained at "ideal" as defined in [Appendix III – Assessment of Body Condition of Cats](#) in this Code. A score of 4 or 6 may be appropriate depending on breed or age of the cat.



## General Information

Some cats will regulate their food intake to meet their energy needs. For a cat with a body condition score of 7 or above indicative of being too heavy, a calorie-restricted diet should be considered.

The energy requirements for growth reduce as a kitten ages, but during the period of rapid growth (their first three months of age) a kitten will have 1.5 - 2.5 times the energy needs of a normally active adult cat.

A lactating queen will have two to three times the energy needs of a normally active adult cat.

Body condition scoring should be performed using both visual and hands-on assessments. The body condition of a cat cannot be assessed by simple visual observation. The extent of fat deposits can only be accurately assessed by feeling the tissues over the cat's ribs, backbone, pelvis, and abdomen.

## 3.4 Water

### Introduction

Water is an essential daily requirement for the proper functioning of the whole body. Therefore, good quality water needs to always be available for all cats.

### 8. Minimum Standard – Water

- a. A cat must have continuous access to water that is palatable, not harmful to health, and available in quantities sufficient to maintain normal bodily functions.*

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 8 – Water

- Palatable water is always available to a cat.
- Water provided to a cat is not frozen.
- A cat does not show signs of dehydration such as skin tenting.
- Water bowls/troughs are clean.
- For a cat kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching, water has been tested and is free from contaminants.
- Water is offered in a place separate from a cat's food bowl and litter tray.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) Water should be provided in heavy bowls (e.g., ceramic, glass, or metal), which do not easily tip over.
- (b) Multiple sources of water should be provided in case of one source failing (e.g., water containers are tipped over or the water is dirtied).
- (c) The quantity, quality, and availability of water should be checked twice daily.
- (d) There should be enough water sources for each cat to have free access to palatable water at all times.





## General Information

The water intake of cats will vary among individuals. While a cat needs access to water daily, requirements will be modified by the water content of the food provided. A cat fed a diet of dry food will require more water than if fed a diet of canned food or pet rolls.

A cat needs to drink adequate amounts of water each day. Multiple sources of water should be available and offered in quiet places separate from food and litter trays. A cat may have preferences for how water is offered including:

- A water source to be a bowl of ceramic, glass, or metal compared to plastic.
- A bowl wide enough to prevent their whiskers touching the sides of the bowl.
- Running water such as from a fountain designed as a water bowl.
- A cat may also prefer to drink water from other locations in the home, including from a sink or faucet, tub, shower, or toilet, or from a person's cup.
- Milk of any kind should not be a source of fluid.

A cat that does not drink adequate amounts of water may be more susceptible to developing feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD) or inflammation of the bladder and urethra. In a male cat, this may progress to urethral blockage, which will rapidly lead to death if not treated. Other factors associated with FLUTD include obesity, stress, and lack of exercise. FLUTD represents a group of diseases, and veterinary investigation is required to determine the cause in an individual cat.

Dehydration can become a serious problem for a cat (especially a kitten) when diarrhoea or other conditions occur that cause excessive fluid loss from the body. Equally, if an increase in thirst occurs, this may indicate that kidney damage or a disease such as diabetes has occurred, in which case veterinary attention should be sought.

## PART 4: Containment and Housing



### Introduction

A cat needs access to adequate shelter to meet their physical, health, behavioural, emotional, and mental needs. Housing needs to provide warmth, cooling, and fresh air as needed, be free from draughts, and excessive temperature fluctuations. Housing needs to address the need for a cat to experience positive welfare through exercising and the expression of behaviours such as hiding, climbing, perching, scratching, and resting.

A cat needs an area for sleeping, eating, and drinking that is separate from their toileting area. The sleeping area should be comfortable and have suitable washable bedding.

Housing for a queen with an unweaned litter should be in a quiet location.



Cats living in multi-cat settings will need additional provisions to meet their physical, health, behavioural, emotional, and mental needs. See [Part 8.1: Behaviour](#) in this Code for more information.

A cat may be housed in a cage temporarily such as in boarding establishments, animal welfare and rescue organisations, pounds, quarantine /isolation facilities, and pet shops/online retailers (See Code of Welfare Temporary Housing of Companion Animals).

Minimum Standard No. 8 does not apply to transport or animals under veterinary care. Housing for transport is covered in [Part 9: Transporting Cats](#) in this Code.

## 9. Minimum Standard – Containment and Housing (other than for transport or under veterinary care)

- a. A cat must not be housed or kept within an environment that results in injury or distress.
- b. A cat must have sufficient room, in width and height, that allows them to stretch and move around freely.
- c. A cat must be provided with separate and appropriate areas for feeding, sleeping, resting, and toileting.
- d. A cat must not be housed permanently in a cage where they cannot display normal behaviour such as climbing, perching, hiding, scratching, and stretching.
- e. A cat must be kept in or have access to areas that allow them to engage in play and exercise sufficient to maintain their physical and mental health.
- f. A cat must be provided with permanent access to a clean, dry bed with suitable and sufficient bedding material.
- g. Additional space that allows cats to retreat from each other and have their own space to eat, drink, and toilet must be provided where multiple cats are housed together.
- h. A cat must have access to places where they can hide.
- i. A cat's environment must be well-ventilated, and of a suitable humidity and temperature which will not result in heat or cold stress.
- j. Outdoor enclosures must have sufficient shelter and shade to protect a cat from weather, including:
  - > sufficient shade from the sun in warm and hot temperatures; and,
  - > weatherproof shelter during cold, wet, windy, or otherwise unpleasant conditions.
- k. A cat must be provided natural or artificial light of an appropriate light/dark cycle that supports circadian rhythms.
- l. Enclosures must be constructed to protect cats from being harmed from other animals such as dogs or other cats.
- m. Wire bottom cages must have solid surfaces on which cats can rest, move, stretch, feed, and hide.

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 9 – Cat Containment and Housing (other than for transport or under veterinary care)

- A cat's normal free movement is not impeded by the size of the housing, including items such as food and water bowls, a bed/hide, and litter tray.



- A cat's access to food, water, a bed/hide, and litter box is not impeded by competition from other cats in the same space.
- For multiple cats housed together permanently indoors or in cages, there is at least one litter box, water bowl, and food bowl per cat, plus one more of each item.
- An area for exercise is available in a cat's cage or they are provided access to a suitable area.
- Housing and exercise areas allow a cat to climb, perch, hide, and stretch.
- Breeding studs do not show signs of stress related to housing or management.
- A scratch pad, post, or other items such as a tree branch is available for scratching.
- Housing is free from materials that are toxic to a cat, including lead-based paint, toxic plants, and pesticides.
- If caged, solid surfaces are available on which the cat can rest, eat, sleep, hide, and move around the cage.
- A cat has access to an appropriate sleeping area for the time they require sleep.
- A draught-free sleeping area for resting and sleeping is provided.
- An environmentally controlled housing area is consistently maintained between 16- 27 degrees Celsius with 30-70% humidity.
- Enclosures are protected from excessive light at night, even if it is generated from outside the premises.
- There are no hazards or equipment in the housing area that can injure a cat.
- There is sufficient access and lighting to inspect or examine a cat with ease.
- There are provisions in place to control disease where cats are housed.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) To reduce risk of injury from traffic, dog attacks, cat fights, becoming lost, stolen, trapped, or exposed to toxins, owners should take reasonable effort to keep their cats on their property such as keeping them indoors, with access to a secure outdoor area such as screened area, or in an area with an escape-proof fence at all times.
- (b) A cat should be kept indoors and provide places to hide when fireworks are in use.
- (c) There should be at least one litter box, water bowl, and food bowl for each cat in an area, plus one more of each item.
- (d) A caged cat should have the choice of moving to a separate enclosure or compartment (including through use of a portal) for urination and defaecation.
- (e) A cat should be provided with a raised, waterproof sleeping area with appropriate bedding material for warmth.
- (f) A cat should be provided with multiple furnishings (e.g., hides or cardboard boxes) that enable them to hide, climb, and perch.
- (g) A caged cat should have access to climbing ramps, platforms, and perching and sleeping shelves.
- (h) A cat should not be permanently housed in a cage where they do not have access to an outdoor area.



## General Information

Cats (especially kittens) are curious about their surroundings and tend to seek out warm places. An owner or person in charge should protect a cat from potentially dangerous household appliances (such as heaters, clothes dryers, and washing machines), warm car engines, and resting on roads that warm up in the sun. A cat should also be protected from potentially poisonous substances (such as rodent bait). See [Part 7.5: Toxic and Harmful Substances](#) for more information. A cat owner or person in charge of cat should be aware that a cat may investigate cupboards, sheds, and garages and become inadvertently shut in.

An owner or person in charge of a cat can keep them at home whilst still meeting their welfare needs. See [Part 8: Behaviour, Enrichment, and Training](#) for more information. A cat allowed to leave their owner's property is at increased risk of injury from traffic, dog attacks, cat fights, becoming lost, stolen, trapped, or exposed to toxins or traps.

An enriched environment with opportunities for exploration, play, and social behaviours (e.g., grooming with another cat) is important for cat welfare. See [Part 8.2: Enrichment](#) for more information.

Exercise is important for the physical and mental health of a cat. A cat's environment should promote exercise. Cats like to climb and perch. Therefore, it is recommended to provide a cat with climbing furniture, boxes, climbing and perching structures. Exercise requirements vary with age, breed, and individual circumstances. An older cat may exercise less than a younger cat, however, physical activity will remain important for both health and mental stimulation.

Insufficient exercise can contribute to the development of behaviour problems. Cats confined long-term in an unsuitable environment with minimal provision for adequate exercise are at risk of suffering from ill health, depression, and behaviour problems.

Any cat, including breeding studs kept alone or in caged housing is at risk of poor welfare when their physical and social needs are not met, and they are not provided opportunities to exercise and engage in normal behaviour.

A cat needs places to hide and perch to reduce fear, anxiety, and stress. Providing items such as cardboard boxes, pipes and tunnels, or untreated wicker baskets and places that allow them to climb and perch can help them to feel safe.

Many cats find the sound and sight of fireworks frightening. Lightning, thunder, and gunshots may also have a similar effect. A cat needs to have somewhere to hide at times when fireworks may be let off and should be given enrichment to distract them. A cat should be brought indoors to reduce exposure to noise and lights and reduce risk of them running away and becoming lost.

A cat can benefit from access to sunlight for resting and sleeping. A cat should be exposed to a balance of light and dark conditions to maintain circadian rhythms. A cat's sleeping area should contain appropriate warm bedding and be sectioned off to provide a darkened environment.

Outdoor housing needs to be well-ventilated and provide sufficient protection from warm or cold weather. A cat in outdoor housing needs access to shade during sunny and hot weather and sufficient shelter including a dry sleeping area during cold or wet conditions. Additional insulation covers can be used to keep an area dry and warm.



A cat's body will start responding to warming ambient temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius. A cat that has medical problems or is brachycephalic, very old or young, sick, obese, or pregnant is more susceptible to warmer temperatures.

Early signs that a cat is attempting to cool down from warming temperatures include:

- Reluctance to move/lethargic
- Drooling/salivating
- Increased grooming/ licking fur
- Open mouth breathing/panting
- Fast, shallow breathing

A cat showing these signs should have access to water and be placed in a cool, shaded area. Blocks of iced water and cold tiles placed in the cat's resting area can help them to cool down when temperatures rise. However, care should be taken to prevent bedding from becoming wet.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency and requires immediate veterinary care. Signs of heat stroke include:

- Cat appears confused
- Uncoordinated/wobbly on their feet
- Bright red tongue or dark gums
- Panting
- Difficulty breathing
- Tremors, seizures
- Diarrhoea/ vomiting

In situations where a cat is housed in a cage, (other than for transport – see [Part 9: Transporting Cats](#)), attention needs to be paid to the placement of other cages as this can influence disease transmission and the welfare of a cat. Cages should be secure, and constructed of solid, non-absorbable materials, and allow for adequate ventilation and heating.

Information on appropriate design of cages may be obtained from breed societies, veterinarians, animal welfare and rescue organisations, and international cat advisory groups specialising in the care of companion animals, and other codes of welfare such as the [Code of Welfare: Temporary Housing of Companion Animals](#).



# PART 5:

## Hygiene and Sanitation



### Introduction

Good hygiene and sanitation are important to maintain the health and welfare of a cat and to minimise disease and distress.

Food and water bowls should be kept clean through regular washing. When a cat has limited or no access to the outdoors, a litter tray is required. Regular renewal of litter improves hygiene and comfort.

### 10. Minimum Standard – Hygiene and Sanitation

- a. *Faeces and urine must not be permitted to accumulate in the area in which the cat is kept.*
- b. *Adequate ventilation must be provided to prevent the build-up of harmful levels of moisture, dust, and gases such as ammonia.*
- c. *Immediate and appropriate action must be taken to reduce ammonia levels if they are detectable to a human.*
- d. *Food and water containers must be kept clean and free of contamination that may pose a threat to the health and welfare of the cat.*
- e. *Cat cages must be sanitised in between different occupants.*
- f. *Methods used to clean housing areas must not cause pain, injury, or distress.*
- g. *Food and water bowls must be sanitised regularly to prevent contamination that may pose a threat to the health and welfare of the cat.*
- h. *A cat with limited or no access to the outdoors must have access to a litter tray containing absorbent material.*
- i. *Litter trays must be attended to and sanitised regularly, with faeces and urine-laden litter removed to prevent contamination that may pose a threat to the health and welfare of the cat.*

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 10 – Hygiene and Sanitation

- Areas in which a cat is housed and exercised are clean.
- A cat is clean, with fur free of waste material, and show no signs of skin disorders from unsanitary living conditions.
- Food and water bowls are clean.
- A cat's bedding is clean.
- A litter box that is not full of urine and faeces is available and is in a well-ventilated space away from the cat's sleeping area and food and water area.





- A cat can access food, water, lying and toileting areas without needing to walk through faeces.
- Cleaning and sanitising agents used to clean a cat's area are fully rinsed before a cat is allowed in the area.
- Relative humidity is maintained between 30-70 % in indoor environments and the dust level is not unpleasant to a cat or human.
- Ammonia cannot be detected by smell.
- A cat does not show signs of discomfort or distress associated with cleaning products and processes.
- Indoor caging areas in rooms with no open windows have ten to twenty room air exchanges per hour.
- For a cat kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching, the following are available:
  - > hygiene protocols detailing daily cleaning routines including removal of contaminated bedding and waste.
  - > protocols for regular changing of litter and washing and sanitising of litter trays.
  - > protocols for regular washing and sanitising of bowls and utensils.
  - > regular records of ammonia monitoring.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) Food and water bowls should be washed daily.
- (b) Food and water containers should be ceramic, metal, or glass.
- (c) All cat housing should be checked for cleanliness daily and the area kept appropriately clean.
- (d) Soiled litter material should be discarded multiple times a day.
- (e) In multi-cat settings such as catteries and animal welfare and rescue organisations, litter trays should be sanitised weekly, unless they needed more frequently.
- (f) Soiled bedding should be removed and replaced.
- (g) Where larger and/or changing populations of cats are kept, hygiene measures should be of a standard that minimises the risk of cross-infection.
- (h) Ventilation should be controlled to manage dampness and noxious odours.
- (i) Atmospheric ammonia should be maintained at less than 2 ppm at cat level.
- (j) Temperature and humidity should be monitored and recorded on a weekly basis where cats are kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching.

### General Information

Where multiple cats are confined together, care needs to be taken to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. The incidence of disease can be kept to a minimum if sanitation is complete and thorough. Fighting between cats should be minimised to reduce the spread of disease through biting.

Food and water bowls should be thoroughly washed daily. They should be rinsed and dried in a manner that will not spread infectious diseases, (e.g., air-drying or with a disposable paper towel). Care should be taken to clean around food bowls daily to remove small pieces of discarded food that may harbour saliva and infectious agents.



Litter trays should be checked daily, and washed and dried as above if required.

Toxoplasmosis poses a potential risk to pregnant or immunocompromised people and other animals. Toxoplasmosis may be contracted through contact with an infected cat's faeces or soil or sand that has come into contact with cat faeces. Younger cats and kittens pose a higher risk of transmitting toxoplasmosis. Wearing gloves and thorough hand washing should be practised when attending to litter. Toxoplasmosis can contaminate the marine environment through run-off contaminated with cat faeces and is one of the leading causes of mortality of endangered Māui and Hector's dolphins. Used litter should be bagged and sealed for rubbish disposal, in accordance with local by-laws. Used litter should not be flushed down a toilet.

On a weekly basis (daily, if for veterinary clinics where a cat is under treatment or supervision, temporary housing, or research, testing, or teaching locations), food and water bowls and litter trays should be washed in hot water with soap or detergent, disinfected for five to ten minutes, and thoroughly rinsed and dried. Cats are sensitive to many chemicals, and great care needs to be exercised in achieving sanitisation without introducing toxic substances (e.g., Dettol) or noxious odours into the cat's environment.

All hard surfaces with which a caged cat comes into contact should be scrubbed with hot water with soap or detergent and disinfected in between changes of occupants or as needed if soiled. Soap or detergent is required to remove organic matter that adheres to surfaces. Heavily used areas can then be disinfected and allowed to dry.

Bedding should be removed and washed if soiled. Soft blankets and beds that can be laundered are encouraged for use. Soft furniture and carpets should be avoided or kept to a minimum in cages as these are difficult to keep clean and they may harbour infectious agents.

The environment should be well-ventilated to minimise the irritation of a cat's respiratory system by preventing dampness and the build-up of noxious odours.

Cats are sensitive to ammonia at very low levels. A cat's housing should not smell of ammonia as this indicates a build-up of urine. Ammonia is produced as urine and faeces degrade. If allowed to accumulate, concentrations of ammonia in the air will increase. This is exacerbated in enclosed housing especially during cold or windy weather when airflow may be restricted to reduce draughts and chilling. High ammonia concentrations for prolonged periods can cause eye and respiratory irritation in cats, resulting in discomfort and respiratory disease.

Human sensitivity to ammonia varies, but some can detect ammonia gas at levels starting at 5ppm. It should be noted that exposure to ammonia overtime can reduce the ability of a person to detect it. Ammonia levels that are detectable to a human are too high for cat housing and remedial action needs to be taken. Meters for detecting ammonia gas are available from retailers, however, they can be expensive. If an ammonia metre is available, then this should be used to monitor levels in a cat's housing.



# PART 6: Breeding Cats



## 6.1 Breeding

### Introduction

An owner or person in charge of a cat needs to carefully consider whether to deliberately breed their cat. The availability of new homes for kittens needs to be considered before breeding is allowed.

For breeders of cats, consideration needs to be given to the frequency at which a cat is used for breeding and the age at which breeding commences and ends. Age of maturity varies with the breed and the individual cat. Breeders should ensure that a cat is an adult and physically mature before they are used for breeding. At all times, the health and welfare of the cat used for breeding needs to remain paramount.

National cat breeding organisations and local affiliated clubs exist in New Zealand. Both pedigree and non-pedigree cats can be registered in clubs and with a national body for cat clubs. Breeding organisations should have standards and codes of ethics to which members are required to adhere.

### 11. Minimum Standard – Breeding

- a. *A person who plans to breed a cat must be registered as a member of a national cat registration body.*
- b. *Where a breeding cat has not been desexed, males and females must be securely separated to prevent accidental breeding.*
- c. *An owner or person in charge must first determine there are suitable homes available for the kittens before breeding a cat.*
- d. *A cat used for planned breeding must be of adult age, physically mature, in good health and physical condition, and not have heritable behavioural problems.*
- e. *When breeding a cat, the owner or person in charge of the cat must ensure that the genetic make-up of both parents will not result in an increase in the frequency or severity of known inheritable welfare problems.*
- f. *An owner or person in charge of a cat must take steps to ensure a female cat is not bred before twelve months old.*
- g. *A female cat must not have more than two litters per year.*
- h. *A female cat must not be bred after seven years of age unless certified healthy to continue breeding by a veterinarian.*
- i. *A person transferring ownership or selling a cat must disclose if the cat has or is at risk of having inheritable welfare problems.*
- j. *An owner or person in charge of a cat must not deliberately breed a cat with litter mates, parents, or offspring.*



## Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 11 – Breeding

- Inheritable welfare problems, including extreme physical features (e.g., brachycephaly) do not occur.
- Breeding decisions are made based on test results when tests are available for inheritable welfare problems.
- Breeding decisions are made to select for more moderate conformation when tests are not available for inheritable welfare problems related to extreme conformation (physical features).
- A cat with heritable behavioural problems which negatively impact their welfare (e.g., generalised anxiety) is not bred.
- Accidental mating is rare.
- Pregnancies between siblings, parents, or offspring are not allowed to progress.
- Cats put together for breeding are separated if fighting occurs.
- Breeders keep adequate medical records of cats bred including lineage, age at breeding, and numbers of litters.
- An undesexed male cat is kept separate from a queen (unless intended for breeding) and kept separate from all kittens.

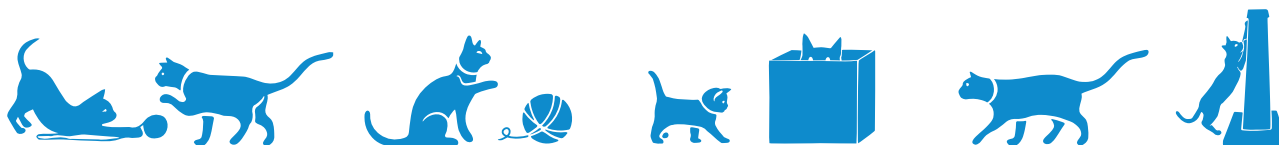
## Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A cat used for breeding should receive appropriate preventive healthcare.
- (b) A queen who has a history of health issues with any stage of breeding should not be bred again.
- (c) A cat used for breeding should have a planned vaccination two to three weeks prior to breeding and not during pregnancy.
- (d) A female cat should have no more than three litters over two years.
- (e) Breeding studs should not be used for breeding after the age of six years.
- (f) A breeding club or organisation should have standards and codes of ethics to which members must adhere.
- (g) A member of a breeding club or organisation should have competency requirements to which they must adhere to maintain membership with the organisation.
- (h) A member of a breeding club or organisation should be independently audited, and appropriate referrals made to the registration body for non-compliance (including non-compliance with the Act).
- (i) There should be sufficient number of competent persons in charge of providing care to cats that are purposely bred.

## General Information

Ensuring there are homes for the offspring of a cat purposely bred will reduce the risk of unwanted litters.

A cat typically reaches sexual maturity from four to six months of age and may be able to breed as early as three and a half months (fourteen weeks) of age. Undesexed kittens that are three months of age should be separated to ensure that unintended breeding does not take place. If an unintended breeding has taken place, an owner or person in charge of a cat should immediately access veterinary care for advice, including terminating an unwanted pregnancy.



At all times, the health and welfare of a cat used for breeding (including their kittens) needs to remain paramount. National cat breeder clubs and organisations in New Zealand can promote best practice to ensure the health and welfare of breeding animals and those that are bred for sale and transfer of ownership. Ensuring members adhere to ethical standards and meet competency requirements for providing care for cats used for breeding is important for cat welfare.

The registration of a cat for breeding provides a more accurate estimate of the number of companion cats in New Zealand, which can lead to improved emergency management planning. See [Part 11: Contingency Planning for more information](#).

## 6.2 Need for Desexing

Indiscriminate and irresponsible cat breeding can lead to unwanted litters, community nuisance, welfare concerns for cats, and financial costs and emotional impacts on staff wellbeing for animal welfare organisations and individuals that deal with the outcomes of irresponsible breeding of cats.

The reproductive potential of a single female cat is estimated at nearly one hundred kittens in her reproductive lifetime. The potential for a male cat is far beyond that. Responsible cat ownership includes having cats desexed before they sexually mature. There is no health or welfare advantage for female cats to have a litter before being desexed.

### 12. Minimum Standard – Need for Desexing

- a. A cat, other than one kept by a registered breeder for breeding purposes, must be desexed by four months of age, unless a veterinarian has determined this will negatively impact the cat's health.*
- b. All cats must be desexed before sale/adoption/transfer of ownership unless they are a registered breeding cat, or a veterinarian has determined this will negatively impact the cat's health.*
- c. A person transferring ownership of a cat must provide a certificate of desexing when the animal's ownership is transferred.*

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 12 – Need for Desexing

- A cat or kitten is desexed prior to sale or transfer of ownership unless they are registered for breeding.
- There is a written veterinarian reason for not desexing a kitten or cat.
- There is a certificate signed by a veterinarian confirming the cat is desexed.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A kitten should be desexed by three months of age (before they can enter puberty).
- (b) A stray cat should be desexed to ensure they cannot reproduce and ear-tipped to identify they have been desexed.
- (c) Local councils, animal welfare and rescue organisations, and veterinarians should promote early age desexing for kittens by the age of three months.



## General Information

Desexing typically happens by four to six months of age. However, a kitten may reach puberty as early as three and a half months (fourteen weeks) of age. Therefore, desexing at three months (twelve weeks) of age will ensure a kitten is desexed before puberty. Desexing can safely be carried out as early as six to eight weeks of age. Early desexing does not adversely affect the physiological or behavioural development in cats. Desexing at a younger age is a faster procedure and with a quicker recovery time for the kitten.

Desexing a cat is a significant surgical procedure under the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and must only be carried out by a veterinarian, or a person who is acting under the direct supervision of a veterinarian and who is a student undergoing veterinarian training. See [Part 7.7: Significant Surgical Procedures](#) for more information.

An increase in the rate of cat desexing will enable better control of the companion cat population, reduce the surplus of unwanted companion cats and kittens, protect the cat's health and well-being, and reduce the flow of unplanned kittens into the stray cat population. Veterinarians, pet shops/online retailers, cat breeders, local councils, and animal welfare and rescue organisations can facilitate this process by encouraging and educating cat owners to desex their cats, and desexing all cats before adoption, sale, or other transfer of ownership.

An owner or person in charge of a cat should be aware of local bylaws and regional pest management plans that require their cat is desexed.

A desexed cat is likely to live longer than an undesexed cat. Desexing a female cat lowers the risk of mammary cancers and uterine infections. Desexing a male cat reduces vocalising, urine spraying, hormonal aggression and fighting, and roaming or straying, which further reduces the risk of being hit by a car or spreading or contracting diseases (e.g., FIV, FeLV).

## 6.3 Pregnancy and Birthing

### Introduction

The length of gestation for a cat varies between sixty-one to seventy days.

A queen may become restless and reclusive and seek out places that are quiet and private prior to giving birth. Information about the stages of pregnancy, birthing, and lactation can be obtained from veterinarians with expertise in cats and other competent people. A queen needs to be monitored to ensure she is not having trouble giving birth.

A queen needs a high-quality diet with increased fibre and nutrients during pregnancy and lactation. A pregnant queen always needs access to clean and fresh water. See [Part 3.4: Water](#) for more information.





### 13. Minimum Standard – Pregnancy and Birthing

- a. A queen must be provided with a suitable birthing box or cage which is lined with clean, dry bedding, located in a quiet, safe, warm, adequately enclosed space prior to giving birth.
- b. A queen due to give birth must be observed frequently to ensure she is not experiencing birthing difficulties.
- c. A queen must receive urgent veterinary attention if she exhibits signs, she is experiencing difficulties during pregnancy or birthing.
- d. A queen must be provided with the choice to spend time away from her kittens.
- e. The birthing area must be safe for kittens (e.g., free from risk of harm, of appropriate temperature).

#### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 13 – Pregnancy and Birthing

- A separate area that is suitable for birthing is provided to the queen and kittens.
- Clean, dry, and comfortable bedding material is provided to the queen and kittens.
- A queen is monitored for signs of difficult birth including prolonged contractions and straining that do not progress, and green vaginal discharge. The queen is panting, crying, or appears exhausted, restless, or has stopped trying to give birth.
- A queen that requires birthing assistance is attended to with urgency.
- A queen can separate herself from her kittens.
- The birthing area is free from hazards for kittens.

#### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) Kittens should not be touched for their first few days after birth unless necessary.
- (b) A person assisting a queen during birthing should practice good hygiene including thorough hand washing.
- (c) A veterinarian should be on call in the event there is an emergency during birthing.

#### General Information

A queen should be provided access to a birthing area one to two weeks prior to giving birth so she can become familiar with the area. A nesting box should be provided for the queen before birthing, and the bedding material should be replaced after the birth has taken place. The birthing area or queening box will need to have ongoing provision of fresh bedding to maintain hygiene. Given the opportunity, a queen may move her kittens to a new place after they are born. It should be ensured that the chosen place is warm, dry, and safe.

Where birthing occurs within a house, kittens should be restricted to a pen enclosure for the first several weeks of their life to ensure their safety, whilst still allowing the queen to jump out to eat, drink, or toilet.

Unless there are concerns with the welfare of newborn kittens, they should not be touched for a few days after birth. Touching kittens during this time may stress the queen, especially if she is nervous of humans or new to her environment.



In multi-cat settings, people providing care to the cats need to practice good hygiene such as frequent hand washing to minimise the spread of pathogens between queens and kittens.

In the later stages of pregnancy and during lactation, a queen should be fed a complete and balanced diet that meets the nutritional demands of pregnancy/lactation. Veterinary advice can be sought to ensure an appropriate diet for a pregnant queen.

Studs should be excluded from access to the kittens to prevent the kittens from being harmed or killed and reduce spread of disease and maternal stress.

Monitoring the pregnancy and birthing of kittens requires expertise and close supervision. Where cats are bred, there needs to be sufficient numbers of competent persons in charge to meet the physical, health, and behavioural needs of all cats in their care. A competent person should be available on-site care for the birth of the kittens and to undertake emergency assistance. Dystocia, or difficult birth, is a medical emergency for cats. A veterinarian should be available on call if needed in an emergency.

## 6.4 Lactation and Weaning

A queen needs access to clean, fresh water at all times whilst she is feeding her kittens. Kittens will begin weaning around four weeks of age and can be introduced to appropriate solid food around this time. Weaning should be gradual to reduce the stress on the kittens and the queen.

### 14. Minimum Standard – Lactation and Weaning

- a. *A kitten must remain with the queen to suckle for at least the first six weeks of life, unless removed earlier for the health and safety of the kitten.*
- b. *A kitten must be completely weaned onto solid food for at least two weeks before being sold or re-homed.*

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 14 – Lactation and Weaning

- A kitten under six weeks of life has access to their mother for nursing.
- There is a documented health and safety reason for why a kitten under six weeks of life does not have access to their mother for nursing.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A kitten should be introduced to appropriate solid food as early as four weeks.
- (b) A kitten should be allowed to progressively wean from their mother.
- (c) A kitten should not be permanently removed from their mother until at least eight weeks of age.
- (d) Kittens should be regularly weighed to ensure they are gaining weight.

### General Information

A kitten's eyes will normally open between seven to twelve days after birth. A kitten's ears will normally be open by fourteen days. A kitten will remain completely dependent on their mother for feeding, toileting, and keeping warm for the first four weeks of age. By four weeks, kittens will become more active, start eating solid food, and begin the weaning process.



A queen will usually begin restricting access to herself at four to five weeks and weaning is usually completed by six to seven weeks (i.e., the kitten is able to feed entirely on solid food). To ensure adequate socialisation to other cats, kittens ideally should not be removed from their mothers before at least eight weeks of age. See [Part 6.5](#) below for the need to socialise kittens with humans from an early age.

Weaning time should balance the welfare needs of both the queen and the kittens. Early weaning is a stressful time for the kittens. Weaning should be gradual and needs to be complete at least two weeks prior to rehoming. Diets should be formulated to optimise nutrition for weaning kittens to reduce nutritional stressors during this time.

## 6.5 Removal of Kittens from the Queen and Supply of Kittens and Cats

### Introduction

A person transferring ownership of a kitten should provide paper or digital-based information concerning proper care to meet the kitten's physical, health, behavioural, emotional, and mental needs, socialisation, routine veterinary care, and the benefits of having a desexed kitten. See [Part 2.2: Purchasing or Adopting a Cat](#) for more information including Minimum Standards for persons transferring ownership of a kitten or cat.

### 15. Minimum Standard – Removal of Kittens from the Queen and Supply of Kittens and Cats

- a. *Except where orphaned or based on veterinary advice that fostering and/or hand raising is necessary, a kitten must be at least eight weeks old, able to feed independently, and be in good health when made available for sale, rehoming, or adoption.*
- b. *A person supplying a kitten for sale, rehoming, fostering, or adoption under the age of eight weeks must ensure the new owner is competent to provide care for underage kittens.*
- c. *A person supplying a kitten for sale, rehoming, or adoption must provide information if the kitten is predisposed to inheritable and heritable problems that may cause health and/or welfare problems during the cat's lifetime.*
- d. *A person breeding a cat must have a socialisation plan in place for all kittens to ensure they are well suited for new homes.*

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 15 – Removal of Kittens from the Queen and Supply of Kittens

- A kitten under the age of eight weeks remains with the mother unless there is a suitable reason for separation.
- Except under exceptional circumstances, a kitten offered for sale or rehoming is no less than eight weeks of age.
- Breeders, and animal welfare and rescue organisations, and pet shops/online retailers have policy documents that specify the following:
  - > Criteria to be considered when selecting a new owner, including a minimum age of the owner.



- > Breed-specific potential inheritable welfare problems are disclosed to new owners.
- > Records of disclosure documents, signed by the new owner with the illness, injury, or inheritable welfare problems of a kitten sold or rehomed, are given to the new owner.
- > Records of a behavioural history assessments of a kitten sold or rehomed are given to the new owner.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A kitten should be reared with their littermates until they are at least ten weeks of age.
- (b) An orphaned kitten should be reared with other kittens until at least the age of eight ten weeks.
- (c) A kitten should begin socialisation with humans as early as two to three weeks of age.
- (d) A kitten should be socialised in a home environment prior to rehoming.
- (e) A kitten should be gently exposed to toys to encourage play, litter, different surfaces in a home such as flooring, and household noises starting at two to three weeks of age.
- (f) A person selling or transferring ownership of a kitten should allow the intending new owner to meet and interact with the kitten before purchase.

### General Information

Sufficient, but not excessive, handling of a young kitten starting from the age of two to three weeks will help them to socialise to people and later adjust to a new home. Handling a kitten when they are two to nine weeks of age helps ensure good sociability towards humans when they are an adult cat. By the age of three weeks, a kitten should begin gradual exposure to new items such as cat toys, litter, different flooring, and household noises.

Rehoming can be a stressful time for a young kitten. A person rehoming a kitten needs to ensure the kitten is capable of independent life before moving to a new home. The kitten needs to be desexed and be implanted with a registered microchip before rehoming. A vaccination/worming programme should be implemented before rehoming. See [Part 7.1: Ill Health and Injury](#) for more information.

When a kitten is relocated, a new owner should review the educational material they are provided concerning care, welfare, vaccination and parasite control, the importance of maintaining up to date microchip information, and keeping a kitten safe at home. If they have any questions, they should seek out advice from people with expertise with kitten health and welfare.



# PART 7: Health



## 7.1 Ill Health and Injury

### Introduction

Health and welfare are closely related, and owners and persons in charge have a responsibility to maintain their cat in good health and to treat injury and disease when it occurs. The health and welfare of a cat should be checked regularly, including observing whether the cat is eating, cleaning, and behaving normally.

The signs of ill health are included in [Appendix IV](#). The signs of pain and pain assessments in cats are included in [Appendix V](#).

It should be noted that the presence of purring is not necessarily an indicator of good health.

### 16. Minimum Standard – Ill Health, Injury, and Distress

- a. *A cat must be checked daily for signs of ill health, neglect, or injury and must provide proper and timely veterinary care.*
- b. *An owner or persons in charge of a cat who observes a cat to be showing signs of ill-health, neglect, or injury including:*
  - > *pain or signs of pain such as reduced appetite, withdrawal from family, or other behavioural changes; or*
  - > *physical or mental distress; or*
  - > *rapidly or chronically deteriorating health; or*
  - > *serious injury; or*
  - > *repeated straining over a continuous period of thirty minutes, as if to pass urine or faeces; or*
  - > *if the urine is cloudy, sludgy or contains blood; or*
  - > *difficulty breathing or change in breathing pattern including open mouth breathing; or*
  - > *uncontrolled, profuse bleeding; or*
  - > *unexplained, rapid, or significant weight loss*

*must seek immediate attention from a veterinarian.*

- c. *If a cat is suffering from unreasonable pain or distress that is untreatable, then the cat must be euthanised immediately.*
- d. *A cat must be provided with sufficient means to prevent UV induced skin damage and skin cancer.*
- e. *A person who has trapped a cat near human populations must take reasonable steps taken to locate the owner or person in charge of the cat.*



## Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 16 – Ill Health and Injury

- A cat is observed to eat, drink, move, urinate, defaecate, and behave normally.
- No sick, painful, or injured cat is left untreated.
- There is documented evidence that a veterinarian was consulted, and their advice followed for cat health problems.
- When required, euthanasia is undertaken as soon as possible.
- A cat has unrestricted access to natural or artificial shade.
- A cat exposed to UV light does not show signs of skin disease such as squamous cell carcinoma (superficial scabs on skin extremities).
- For breeders, animal welfare and rescue organisations, boarding facilities, and research, teaching, and testing facilities:
  - > A cat's health records show that all treatments have been administered appropriately.
  - > A cat first aid kit is kept on site and all staff are aware of the contents of the kit, can demonstrate knowledge of how to treat a minor injury and to recognise when veterinary assistance is required.
  - > There is evidence that staff and volunteers collectively possess the skill and knowledge required to recognise and treat ill-health and injury.
  - > Daily inspections and remedial outcomes are documented.
- A light-coloured cat, or a cat with minimal hair covering or pale skin on the nose or ears is kept out of direct sunlight during the sunniest times of the day, including provision of shade, or is provided regular application on nose and ears of appropriate cat-safe sunscreen, especially during the summer.
- A person who has trapped a cat has checked the cat for a microchip, collar, or other form of identification.

## Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A cat should have an annual health check conducted by a veterinarian or allied veterinary professional.
- (b) An owner or person in charge of a cat should use a companion animal veterinarian.
- (c) A cat showing signs of illness not listed in Minimum Standard 16 should seek immediate veterinary advice or treatment.
- (d) A cat of unknown ownership that is injured or unwell should receive urgent veterinary attention to alleviate pain or distress.

## General Information

A veterinarian, allied veterinary professional, or appropriately trained and experienced practitioner can provide treatment for a cat that is experiencing ill health or injury. Courses on first aid for animals are available through some veterinary clinics and polytechnics.

Refer to [Part 10: Humane Killing](#) for more information on euthanasia.

It is normal for a cat to vomit to empty their stomach of indigestible contents such as the bird feathers, grass, or fur swallowed during grooming. Veterinary attention should be sought if vomiting persists, or there are other signs of ill health such as the cat is not eating or drinking normally.



## Injuries

Cats are commonly injured or killed by road traffic. Drivers of a vehicle who are aware they have injured a cat should stop and render assistance.

An injured cat may be in severe pain and may bite and scratch during attempts to handle it. The cat should be moved off the road using a blanket or similar device, and urgently brought to the attention of a veterinarian. Attempts should be made to contact the owner. An injured cat should not be left at the roadside. Medical advice should therefore be sought if any doubt exists.

Injuries such as puncture wounds can be worse than they look. Veterinary advice should be sought if any doubt exists about their severity.

## Skin Diseases

Skin diseases may cause considerable stress and distress to a cat. Dermatitis and eczema are common problems in cats, and causes may include allergies, parasitic diseases, infections, nutritional imbalances, and hormonal disorders.

Ringworm is a fungal disease to which young cats are particularly susceptible. The first sign of infection in the cat is usually the appearance of small circular bald areas on any part of the body including the head. Not all types of ringworm are visible.

Abscesses (are walled-off pockets of infection) are a frequent result of wounds caused by fighting that become infected. Such abscesses can be painful and may result in the spread of potentially life-threatening infection through the cat's body. Home treatment of abscesses is not recommended, and veterinary assistance should be sought. Analgesia should always be given in the treatment of abscesses.

Cancer can occur in many forms in cats. Cancer caused from ultraviolet radiation from the sun can cause the skin on the edge of a cat's ears or nose to ulcerate and slowly erode. If left too long this form of cancer can become untreatable, so early detection and treatment is advised. Skin cancers may cause considerable pain and distress.

Skin diseases can be associated with excessive chewing and scratching, and hair loss and skin thickening. Delays in seeking help may lead to more severe problems when skin damage leads to complications such as bacterial infection. Few of these conditions will resolve without appropriate treatment, therefore, veterinary advice should be sought to minimise stress and further health risk to the cat.

A cat caught in a live trap will likely be fearful and stressed and may be aggressive. Given most companion cats in New Zealand are allowed outdoors with little restrictions, it is likely that a trapped cat in areas of human habitation is a companion cat. Therefore, making a reasonable effort to identify the owner of a trapped cat should be required of any trapper.

## 7.2 Prevention and Management of Infectious Diseases

### Introduction

Vaccination is an important means of controlling infectious diseases. Viral diseases can spread rapidly among unvaccinated cats and have severe impacts on animal welfare. There are infectious diseases that can be avoided by vaccination. If a cat becomes infected, early veterinary attention is imperative.





Minimum standards and recommendations for best practice relating to ill-health ([Part 7.1: Ill Health and Injury](#)) also apply to the management of cats with infectious diseases.

## 17. Minimum Standard – Prevention and Management of Infectious Diseases

- a. An owner or person in charge of a cat showing signs of an infectious disease must follow veterinary advice for treatment or to provide euthanasia.
- b. A cat must be vaccinated against infectious disease according to veterinary recommendations in accordance with science and good practice.
- c. A kitten must receive a course of vaccinations beginning at the age of six to eight weeks.
- d. An owner or person in charge must make a reasonable effort to hold a vaccination history for their cat.
- e. Where there is evidence of an infectious disease, owners or persons in charge of cats must take suitable biosecurity steps under veterinary guidance to prevent the cat from infecting other cats.
- f. Where there has been an outbreak of an infectious disease, housing and equipment that has been exposed to infected cats must be sanitised, and bedding materials sanitised or destroyed.

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 17 – Prevention and Management of Infectious Diseases

- A cat shows no signs of infectious disease that is not under treatment.
- An owner or person in charge of a cat has documentation that a cat has received vaccinations.
- For a cat kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching, policy documents describe biosecurity plans and measures such that:
  - > provisions are in place to control disease entering facilities where a cat is kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching.
  - > animals suspected of having an infectious disease are placed in isolation for observation and/or veterinary treatment; and
  - > in the event of a disease outbreak, animals are quarantined to reduce the spread of infection and details of the intervention are documented.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A cat should have vaccination boosters under veterinary guidance before entering a stressful or high-risk environment such as a cattery.
- (b) Setting such as animal shelters and catteries that are high-risk for the spread of infectious disease should vaccinate their cats and kittens in accordance with shelter medicine best practices.

### General information

Cats are commonly vaccinated against diseases such as feline panleukopaemia virus (FPV), feline calicivirus (FCV), and feline herpes virus (FHV). Vaccines are also available for feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and chlamydia, and their use should be discussed with a veterinarian.



Vaccination is important for controlling infectious disease in cats. High-risk situations include animal shelters, boarding catteries, cat shows, multi-cat households, and neighbourhoods with a dense cat population and/or a stray cat population. Veterinary advice needs to be sought regarding the most appropriate vaccination programme, as requirements vary depending on the disease and the age of the cat. Kittens are particularly susceptible to infectious diseases. It is essential for kitten health that they receive their full course of vaccinations.

Animal shelters are considered a high-risk environment due to being a high stress environment and housing a dynamic population of animals of unknown vaccination status. Earlier and more frequent vaccination may be recommended for kittens housed in shelters in accordance with shelter medicine best practices.

## 7.3 Prevention and Management of Parasitic Diseases

### Introduction

Internal parasites such as roundworms and external parasites such as fleas, mites and lice can be a significant cause of distress and ill health. Effective treatments and preventive programmes are available.

Minimum standards and recommendations for best practice relating to ill-health ([Part 7.1: Ill Health and Injury](#)) also apply to the management of cats with parasitic diseases.

### 18. Minimum Standard – Prevention and Management of Parasitic Diseases

- a. *A cat must be treated for external parasites if there are signs of infestation (e.g., scratching, chewing or hair loss, presence of parasites, or parasite faecal material).*
- b. *A cat with urine or faeces scald or fly strike must be treated immediately.*
- c. *A cat showing signs of internal parasites (e.g., weight loss, dull coat, nematodes visible or identified through faecal testing), must be treated appropriately.*
- d. *Appropriate preventive care such as internal and external parasite treatments must be provided in accordance with science and good practice.*
- e. *A cat must only be treated with products registered for use on cats, or according to veterinary advice.*

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 18 – Prevention and Management of Parasitic Diseases

- There are regular inspections for signs of external parasite infestation (e.g., scratching, coat chewing).
- A cat's faeces do not show signs of internal parasites.
- A cat does not show hair loss or excessive matting.
- A cat does not have excessive flaky skin.
- A cat does not scratch at their skin or ears.
- Flea dirt is not present on a cat.



- A cat's ears are clean and free of signs of parasites.
- A cat with parasitic disease has received appropriate and timely veterinary care.
- An owner or person in charge of a cat has documentation that a cat has received parasite treatment.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) An internal or external parasite management plan should be developed with advice from a veterinarian or allied veterinary professional.
- (b) A cat should be wormed according to age and product.

### General Information

External parasites that live on the skin of a cat include fleas, mites, and lice. Their presence may be indicated by excessive grooming, scratching, rubbing, fur loss, scabs, or scale. Fleas or flea dirt (black coils that turn red when moistened with water) may also be seen in the coat. Veterinarian advice is recommended if signs of irritation from fleas or lice are detected and do not resolve with flea and lice treatment.

Crowded and unsanitary living conditions assist the spread of many insect parasites. Ill health may increase susceptibility to external parasites. A cat can develop hypersensitivity to external parasites and show extreme skin irritation, even when parasite numbers are low.

Fleas are common and their population can increase rapidly in warm environmental conditions. Most of a flea's life cycle is spent, not on the cat, but in its environment, therefore carpets and bedding should be cleaned and/or treated. Routine cleaning such as vacuuming does not kill fleas, their eggs, or larvae. Where there is infestation, advice on appropriate treatment of both environment and animals should be obtained. Effective treatment of fleas requires that all animals in the household, including dogs, should be treated at the same time.

The ears of a cat, especially a young cat, should be checked regularly for evidence of ear mites (dark-brown discharge) and other disease. The signs of ear mites include hair loss, dandruff and flaky skin, redness, and excessive scratching of the ears. Treatment can be difficult particularly in advanced cases, and it is important to seek veterinary help at an early stage of the disease.

Internal parasites, such as intestinal worms or lungworms, are common and require regular monitoring and treatment. These parasites are particularly prevalent in young cats or kittens. Loss of body weight plus a tendency to a prominent belly, dry coat, and regular licking at the anus are signs that may indicate the presence of roundworms. Since a queen can transmit roundworms via her milk, all kittens should be regularly wormed with an effective roundworm treatment. See Recommended Best Practice in [Part 7.1: Ill Health and Injury](#) for more information. If there are indications that a cat is infested with internal parasites, this can be confirmed by faecal examination and then treated with an anthelmintic authorised by a veterinarian.

Lungworms can cause serious ill health in an affected kitten. A wet, unproductive cough, which may be mistaken for a vomiting bout can indicate the presence of lungworms in kittens. If this is suspected, veterinary attention should be sought immediately.



A cat can be susceptible to fly strike, especially a young kitten needing assistance with toileting, or a senior or disabled cat that struggles with grooming or is incontinent. Fly strike occurs when flies lay their eggs on skin, especially if conditions are unsanitary or a cat is unhealthy (e.g., with urine scald or matted coats that contain faeces).

Only products specifically registered under the [ACVM Act](#) or prescribed by a veterinarian can be used for a cat, as some products are not suitable and may be toxic and cause fatal seizures.

Where problems are identified, preventive programmes that include environmental management should be used to reduce the need for anthelmintic treatment. Advice on the appropriate treatment of the environment and animals should be sought where there is an infestation of any parasite.

### Diseases Transmissible to Humans (Zoonoses)

Some diseases (e.g., ringworm, toxoplasmosis, round worm, hook worms, disease from mites and fleas) can be transmissible between cats and other species, including humans (zoonotic diseases). Veterinarians, allied veterinary professionals, animal welfare and rescue organisations, research colonies, cat breeders, and pet shops/online retailers should take steps to prevent the spread of disease, including advising new owners. People who are pregnant or immunocompromised should wear gloves when cleaning up cat faeces and wash their hands thoroughly afterwards if there is concern of toxoplasmosis transmission.

An owner may not be aware of the potential public health risk of a zoonotic disease, putting the owner and their family at risk, or alternatively, having a cat humanely killed unnecessarily. Where there is concern about a zoonotic disease or one has been diagnosed, a discussion with a veterinarian is recommended to enable the owner of the cat to make an informed decision on the best course of action for both the cat and owner.

## 7.4 Care of Claws and Coat

### Introduction

Cats are fastidious groomers and, in general, will take good care of their coat. Short-haired cats usually keep their coats in good condition through self-grooming. Long-haired cats should be regularly groomed to remove excess fur and prevent matting. Failure of a cat to groom is often a sign of ill health and may also indicate a cat is in pain. See [Part 7.1: Ill Health and Injury](#) for more information. A neglected coat can cause considerable distress to a long-haired cat due to matting.

Providing a cat with appropriate items such as scratch posts or pads on which to scratch their claws is important for maintaining claw health.

Minimum standards and recommendations for best practice relating to ill-health ([Part 7.1: Ill Health and Injury](#)) also apply to the management of a cat with ailments relating to claws and coat.



## 19. Minimum Standard – Care of Claws and Coat

- a. *The coat of a long-haired cat must be groomed and/or clipped at a frequency that will prevent discomfort, pain, and distress caused by matting or parasite infestation.*
- b. *Care must be taken to avoid damage to the nail bed and other soft tissue when a cat's claws are trimmed.*
- c. *A cat's claws must not be removed other than for the cat's welfare in accordance with veterinary advice.*

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 19 – Care of Claws and Coat

- There is no matting present in a cat's coat.
- A long-haired cat does not have an excessively long coat that is soiled, impedes their movement, or causes skin or other disease.
- A cat is not experiencing pain or distress due to failure to attend to or inappropriate attempts to attend to matted fur.
- A cat's claws are kept short enough to prevent injury.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A cat's claws and coat should be examined daily.
- (b) A cat should be trained to accept nail trimming.
- (c) A cat should be introduced grooming at a young age or gradually to ensure the cat is comfortable with the type of grooming device used.
- (d) A cat should not be bathed unless it is the best interest of the cat including instances such as a parasite infestation, the cat is soiled in faeces or urine, or they have come into contact with a toxic substance.

### General Information

Claws may require careful trimming, while avoiding damage to the nail bed and soft tissue which will result in pain and bleeding. Veterinarians, allied veterinary professionals, or professional groomers can assist and advise on trimming claws.

It is important a cat is provided access to scratching posts or pads to help maintain claw health.

Declawing of cats is a significant surgical procedure (see [Part 7.7: Significant Surgical Procedures](#)) under the Act, and therefore can only be carried out by a veterinarian, or a person who is acting under the direct supervision of a veterinarian and who is a student undergoing his or her training to become a veterinarian. The declawing of cats to alleviate perceived problem behaviours is not acceptable. The removal of a cat's claw(s) can only happen when it is in the best interest of the animal as deemed by a veterinarian.

Cats moult regularly. A cat with a long coat needs more frequent coat maintenance to prevent them from ingesting too much hair during grooming. Hygiene around the perineum, anus, and tail is particularly important in all cats to reduce soiling and the risk of flystrike.



Hair mats can harbour external parasites and dermatitis is likely to develop in the underlying skin. Mats may be gently brushed out by the owner. Severe matting of a long-haired coat results in discomfort for the cat, as the skin beneath the mats may become irritated and inflamed. Mats may provide hiding places for fleas and lice, causing even greater irritation as the cat is not able to groom the parasite out. When matting is severe, an owner or person in charge of a cat should seek expert assistance.

Bathing a cat is stressful for the cat and should only be done when necessary to protect the cat's welfare such as advanced parasite infestation, a coat soiled in faeces or urine, or under veterinary advice. Spot cleaning the cat's coat should be attempted before a full bath. It is important to only bathe a cat with cat-specific products to ensure their skin and coat are protected.

## 7.5 Toxic and Harmful Substances

### Introduction

A cat is susceptible to accidental poisoning by many substances including poisonous houseplants such as lilies, household cleaners, antifreeze, and contaminated water. A cat can also ingest toxic substances from their coats when grooming. Some medicines prescribed for humans or other animals are poisonous to a cat, so it is essential that a cat is only treated with medication recommended or prescribed by a veterinarian.

### 20. Minimum Standard – Toxic and Harmful Substances

- a. An owner or person in charge of a cat must take all practical steps to ensure that cats are not exposed to poisons and harmful substances.*
- b. An owner or person in charge of a cat who is known to have consumed a harmful substance or showing signs indicative of poisoning (e.g., vomiting, diarrhoea, drooling, disorientation, tremors, seizures, loss of appetite, sudden drowsiness, or collapse) must seek immediate veterinary attention.*
- c. Unauthorised restricted medicines (human or animal) must not be given to a cat without veterinary advice.*

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 20 – Toxic and Harmful Substances

- No toxic or harmful substances are present in a cat's home environment, enclosure, or exercise area.
- A cat is not given medicines for humans or other animals unless instructed by a veterinarian.
- A cat does not have access to sources of polluted water.
- Toxic houseplants are out of a cat's reach and any dropped leaves or petals are disposed of quickly.
- Cat housing or exercise areas that are outdoors should not contain or be overhung by poisonous plants.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A cat that has come into physical contact with a toxic substance should receive veterinary care.



## General Information

A cat can be poisoned by many substances. Care should be taken to prevent exposure to poisonous plants (indoor and outdoor), household and garden chemicals such as insecticides or fungicides, lead paint or objects, and timbers treated with arsenic. A cat can also have adverse reactions to shampoos and grooming sprays, or medicines such as antibiotics.

A cat can be poisoned by drinking water polluted with toxins such as sheep dip, horticultural sprays, or antifreeze. Care should be taken to prevent access to polluted water. It is important to know if pest control measures are being used in a cat's vicinity. A cat can be poisoned either through direct ingestion of a toxin or indirectly from eating an animal poisoned by a toxin.

## 7.6 Care of Older Cats

### Introduction

As a cat ages, their needs often change and some adjustments to their care may be required. In many cases, the difficulties of advancing age can be managed by treatment and improved nutrition. Veterinary and nutritional advice and specific treatments should be sought to help an aging cat.

A cat that reaches a senior age (ten years and older) may require extra care and attention. Some diseases occurring in an older cat may be interpreted by the owner as part of the natural ageing process. An owner or person in charge of a cat may not be aware that changes they associate with age are related to specific diseases that may be managed by treatment and appropriate nutrition.

### 21. Minimum Standard – Care of Older Cats

- a. An owner or person in charge of a cat must manage and treat age related diseases in accordance with veterinary advice.*

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 21 – Care of Older Cats

- Veterinary advice for disease related to older age is followed.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A cat over the age of ten or eleven years should receive regular veterinary checks every six months to ensure that their health and welfare is maintained by early diagnosis and treatment of age-related problems and diseases.
- (b) Special attention should be given to providing an appropriate diet for the age and health of an older cat.

## General Information

A cat is considered senior by eleven years of age and geriatric by fifteen years of age, although this varies by breed and should be considered on an individual basis. An older cat may benefit from specially formulated diets.





Kidney disease, oral disease, diabetes, hyperthyroidism, heart disease, cancer and arthritis are some of the serious diseases that can occur in an older cat. Weight loss, excessive drinking or urination, increased or decreased appetite, and increased or decreased activity may be seen with these conditions. In such cases, veterinary advice should be sought to determine specific treatment that may be required.

Floor coverings, extra litter boxes, more ground floor space (rather than multiple levels and ramps), better traction, and soft bedding will improve the comfort of an older cat.

Older cats may sometimes show signs of cognitive dysfunction. Signs include confusion or disorientation, changes in sleep patterns, house soiling, changes in interactions with other animals or people in the home, change in diet, activity, and memory, aimless wandering or pacing, and increased anxiety and irritability. A management plan can be developed in consultation with a veterinarian to improve quality of life.

## 7.7 Significant Surgical Procedures

### Introduction

The Act sets criteria for whether a procedure carried out on an animal is a significant surgical procedure. The criteria are set out in Section 16 of the Act.

If any person has to determine whether a procedure carried out on an animal is a significant surgical procedure under this Act, the person must determine the question by considering the following criteria:

- (a) whether the procedure has the potential to—
  - > cause significant pain or distress; or
  - > cause serious or lasting harm, or loss of function, if not carried out by a veterinarian in accordance with recognised professional standards; and
- (b) the nature of the procedure, including whether this involves—
  - > a surgical or operative procedure below the surface of the skin, mucous membranes, or teeth or below the gingival margin; or
  - > physical interference with sensitive soft tissue or bone structure; or
  - > significant loss of tissue or loss of significant tissue.

Only a veterinarian, or a person who is acting under the direct supervision of a veterinarian and who is a student undergoing their training to become a veterinarian, are able to perform a significant surgical procedure, unless a regulation says otherwise.

For all animal welfare regulations please see [www.legislation.govt.nz](http://www.legislation.govt.nz). Note that not all of the surgical procedures included within these regulations may be meeting the criteria of a significant surgical procedure, some have been regulated for clarity only.

See also the regulations listed below:

- [Regulation 56D – Cutting teeth of animals](#)
- [Regulation 59A – Surgical Reproductive Procedures](#)
- [Regulation 59B – Transcervical Insemination](#)
- [Regulation 59C – Cystocentesis](#)
- [Regulation 59E – Epidurals](#)
- [Regulation 59F – Urinary catheterisation](#)



# PART 8:

## Behaviour, Enrichment, and Training



It is important that an owner or person in charge is aware of cat behaviour, and how enrichment and training can promote positive cat welfare and reduce the risk of developing unwanted and abnormal behaviours.

### 8.1 Behaviour

#### Introduction

Cats express their behaviours in many ways. Having opportunities to engage in certain behaviours, such as hiding, scratching, and scent-marking is essential for cat welfare. It is also important to recognise that cats are individuals and express their behaviour differently. Some normal cat behaviours may be seen as problematic or unwanted. A cat's welfare may be compromised when inappropriate attempts are made to manage problematic or unwanted behaviours.

A cat will have individual differences in how social they are with other cats. Some cats prefer other cats as companions, whereas others prefer to not interact with other cats. A cat in a multi-cat household or setting will need their own space, resources such as food and water bowls, and litter trays.

#### 22. Minimum Standard – Behaviour

- a. *A cat must not be punished for displaying unwanted or inappropriate behaviour.*
- b. *A cat must be provided with opportunities to express appropriate and normal behaviours such as hiding, climbing, perching, scratching, and scent-marking.*
- c. *An owner or person in charge of a cat must recognise and respond to aggression between cats through the provision of separate space and resources to allow avoidance of each other.*
- d. *Separation and reintroduction or permanent separation must be followed if aggression between cats can cause stress and injuries.*
- e. *Cats that have formed a strong bond with one another must not be separated unless absolutely necessary.*

#### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 22 – Behaviour

- Cats are in a hide or are climbing and perching on structures, or there is evidence that a cat uses the hide or structure such as presence of fur or worn areas.
- Scratching posts are worn.
- Facial scent marks are present on walls or items.
- There are no injuries caused through housing aggressive individuals together.
- Bonded cats are sold, adopted, or rehomed together.



## Recommended Best Practice

- (a) Companion animals living together should be compatible and should not display aggressive behaviours that cause stress to other cats.
- (b) A sociable cat should be provided opportunities to socialise with other cats and people.
- (c) Advice should be sought at the early stages of a behaviour problem from a veterinarian with behavioural expertise or a cat behaviour consultant.
- (d) One deep litter tray should be provided for each indoor cat plus one additional tray.

## General Information

To help ensure a cat experiences positive welfare, they need to be provided opportunities to express appropriate normal behaviours such as hiding, climbing, perching, scratching, and marking. See [Part 8.2: Enrichment](#) for more information.

A cat that is desexed and provided with enough space, enrichment, appropriate nutrition, and a suitable companion does not usually exhibit behavioural problems. Cats that grow up together can remain compatible throughout their lives.

Socialisation and training are important aspects of promoting a cat's positive welfare. Socialisation involves gradually introducing a kitten to new sights, sounds, surfaces, and situations and pairing these with something positive, like treats or petting. Adequate socialisation helps to prepare a cat to be comfortable and confident in different environments and activities. While socialisation is most effective during the sensitive socialisation period (two to seven weeks of age), socialisation can also occur after this age. See [Part 6.5: Removal of Kittens from the Queen](#) for more information.

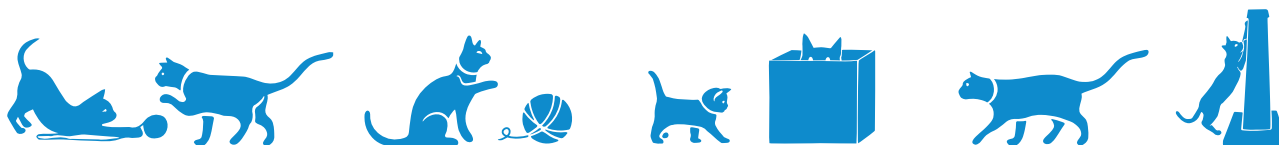
Where a behavioural problem occurs, it is important to look at all aspects of the cat and their living situation and advice should be obtained from a veterinarian with behaviour expertise or a behaviour consultant. The earlier that behavioural problems are addressed, the greater the chance of resolving them.

Behavioural problems are often due to a cat feeling fearful or experiencing anxiety. Behaviours such as aggression often have underlying causes such as inappropriate living conditions, frustration, fear, or boredom from a lack of suitable companionship. Aggressive or irritable behaviour may be related to pain or have a health basis, be age-related, or be due to inappropriate handling.

Inappropriate urination and defecation may indicate a medical problem or may be associated with stress in a cat in a multi-cat household, insufficient cleaning of a litter tray, size of litter tray, or difficulty accessing the outdoors. Punishing a cat (e.g., as a means of toilet training) is inappropriate and unlikely to change a cat's behaviour and may exacerbate the unwanted behaviour. Punishing a cat may result in the development of either excessive timidity or aggression in the cat and therefore never be used.

A cat should be provided different options for a litter tray as they may prefer a covered or uncovered tray. Litter trays should be of adequate size (at least one and a half the length of a cat) and depth to allow a cat to dig and to squat comfortably. Cats prefer deep levels of litter. Litter trays should be sufficiently filled to encourage a cat to use the tray and allow them to bury their waste appropriately.

The type of litter used should be based on an individual cat's preference. Cats tend to prefer sand-like, small grain, clumping litter. Some cats may be fine using paper, wood (in pellet form), or corn or wheat-based litters. Some cats may prefer scent free litter, whilst others may not seem to mind. A cat may need



to try different options to find the one they are comfortable using. Any change in litter should be gradual to allow a cat to adjust.

An owner should observe their cat's behaviour when a new litter is introduced to ensure the cat does not ingest the litter. An owner should stop using clumping litter if they find their cat ingests it. Standard clay should be avoided because it is very dusty. Sawdust and wood shavings are not advised as they can irritate the skin and lungs.

Litter trays should be accessible for a cat at any life-stage or physical ability (e.g., they have trouble climbing). In multi-cat circumstances, litter trays should be spread out around a home environment, cage, or room to prevent one cat controlling access to them. Litter trays should be in quiet locations away from foot traffic and noises such as appliances to help ensure a cat is comfortable using them.

Cats can be territorial. The sudden appearance of inappropriate toilet behaviour, aggressiveness, or other unacceptable behavioural problems may indicate that an unwelcome cat, especially a tomcat, has entered the cat's territory.

Companion cats adapt well to daytime or nighttime lifestyles depending on the activities of the people with whom they live. Many sexually related behaviours are expressed at night. Such problems as caterwauling, fighting, and territorial disputes may lead to injuries from fighting, trauma from road traffic, and unplanned breeding.

A cat should be prevented from roaming from home or leaving the owner's property to reduce the risk of related injuries from fighting or being hit by vehicles. A cat's behavioural needs can be met in enriched indoor environments or outdoor housing, or in a garden with an escape proof fence. See [Part 8.2: Enrichment](#) for more information.

## 8.2 Enrichment

### Introduction

Enrichment is the provision of objects or activities that give opportunities for animals to express behaviours, actively engage with their environment, and socialise. Providing cats with enrichment helps promote normal development, provides opportunities for positive mental experiences, and reduces the risk of developing abnormal or unwanted behaviours.

There are many ways to provide enrichment for cats in their home environment, through exploring other environments, and through social interactions. Cats vary in what they find enriching. It is important to monitor a cat's behaviour to ensure enrichment is appropriate for the individual cat.

### 23. Minimum Standard – Enrichment

- a. *Enrichment must be provided and suitable to the individual cat.*
- b. *Enrichment must not cause injury or distress to the cat.*
- c. *Harnesses, collars, and leads must not be used on a cat in a way that causes injury or distress.*
- d. *A cat on a harness must be monitored.*



## Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 23 – Enrichment

- Enrichment is monitored for its effect on cat behaviour and adjusted as needed.
- A cat demonstrates behavioural diversity and positive social interactions.
- A cat has access to toys that simulate normal behaviours.
- A cat interacts with the enrichment items provided or there is evidence of interaction with enrichment items (e.g., scratch or bite marks on toys).
- Enrichment toys provided are made from cat safe material, with no protrusions or abrasive surfaces.
- A harness that is used fits well and does not cause injuries to a cat.

## Recommended Best Practice

- (a) Enrichment items should be rotated and allow the cat to choose the item with which to engage.
- (b) Enrichment should aim to address a cat's social, physical, nutritional, sensory, and occupational behaviours.
- (c) Novel items should be introduced so that they stay interesting to the cat and provide environmental variability.

## General Information

Provision of enrichment is important for all cats. Enrichment can promote positive experiences by providing a cat with opportunities to engage in rewarding and pleasurable behaviours. Enrichment can fall into five categories; social (e.g., social play with humans or other companion animals), physical (e.g., toys), nutritional (e.g., food puzzles or scatter feeding), sensory (e.g., opportunities to explore new smells), and occupational (e.g., training).

A cat should be given regular opportunities to forage including hiding their food around the house or in their enclosure. Some cats enjoy cat nip and cat grass. Cat grass should be provided in moderation. A cat should be given regular opportunities to explore including providing tunnels and hides. A cat should be given regular opportunities to play including using toys that simulate chasing and stalking behaviours.

The impact of enrichment on a cat's welfare should be monitored so that enrichment should be removed or changed if the outcome is negative. Enrichment should be presented as a choice which allows individuals to express their preferences which can also vary between cats and settings. Toys and furniture should be switched around every now and again to provide a cat with novelty and variety. However, care should be taken to not entirely remove items or clean areas so that a cat's scent markings are removed.

Enrichment items should not overcrowd the space available for a cat to move. Enrichment items such as laser pointers may be frustrating for a cat (i.e., when they cannot 'catch' the point), therefore, caution should be exercised when using these devices.

Human interaction, for example through training or playing with toys, can also be enriching for cats. Interactions between cats and humans should be on the cat's terms, and they should be able to end them at any point.

Training a cat to wear a harness with a lead provides a feasible option for supervised access outdoors where no other options exist. See [Part 8.3: Training Cats](#) for more information.



## 8.3 Training Cats

### Introduction

Cats are intelligent animals that can be trained to carry out a variety of behaviours. Training methods and equipment that apply reward-based learning may include food, praise, petting, and play based on an individual cat's needs or preferences

#### 24. Minimum Standard – Training Cats

- a. *Training methods and equipment must apply reward-based training methods.*
- b. *Training methods and equipment must not cause cats to experience physical or psychological discomfort or distress.*

#### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 24 – Training Cats

- Aversive training equipment such as spray bottles, electronic, or ultrasonic training aids are not present.
- Punishment is not used to train a cat.
- An owner or person in charge of a cat kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching facilities can demonstrate knowledge of reward-based training techniques.

#### General Information

A cat can be trained using reward-based methods such as positive reinforcement. Methods and equipment that apply reward-based learning can be effective ways to train without causing a cat pain or distress. Training is also a form of enrichment which can mentally and physically stimulate a cat, facilitate exercise, and provide an opportunity for the cat and human to bond.

Training animals can help reduce stress associated with situations such as entering a travel crate, being handled, and nail trimming for both the cat and the person. Training a cat to walk on a harness can facilitate normal behaviours such as exploring the outdoors. However, this needs to be at a pace that respects the cat's comfort level and ability to learn.

Cats can become frightened or stressed, which should be considered when handling and training takes place. Using unpleasant methods such as yelling at a cat or spraying a cat to stop or prevent unwanted behaviour is unacceptable.



# PART 9:

## Transporting Cats



### Introduction

A cat may need to be transported in a vehicle. The Act requires that every person in charge of a vehicle in which an animal is being transported must ensure that the welfare of the animal is properly attended to. Additional information about transport is contained in the [Code of Welfare: Transport](#) within New Zealand.

An adult cat may show varying degrees of anxiety when confined in a cat-carry container and transported in a vehicle. To ensure the safety of both the cat and the occupants of the vehicle, and occupants of other vehicles, a cat needs to be securely contained while being transported in a vehicle.

Preparing a cat for transport can prevent or mitigate the welfare consequences a cat may experience related to transport, such as handling stress, injuries, restriction of movement, sensory overstimulation, motion stress, heat stress, cold stress, prolonged hunger, and prolonged thirst.

### 25. Minimum Standard – Transporting Cats

- a. A cat must be securely contained in a suitable carrier while being transported.
- b. A cat transported must have sufficient space within the container to sit, turn around and rest in a normal position.
- c. The interior of the container must be smooth, with no projections that could cause injury to the cat.
- d. A cat must be provided with adequate ventilation both within the container (there should be multiple holes on at least three sides of the container) and the vehicle.
- e. A cat must not be left unattended in a vehicle or aircraft in conditions where the cat is likely to suffer from stress.
- f. All efforts must be made to minimise fear, distress, and injury whilst placing a cat into the suitable container.
- g. A cat experiencing thermal stress during or as a result of transport must receive immediate veterinary attention.
- h. The container is restrained while travelling, for example with a seatbelt, or by placing the carrier in a suitable restricted space.

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 25 – Transporting Cats

- Handling techniques that reduce stress or food rewards are used to place a cat in a container.
- A cat readily enters a container when they have access to it.
- The floor of the carrier is supportive and covered with a soft or non-slip material to provide good traction for the cat to avoid injury.
- Medication to reduce anxiety is used where appropriate.





- The container securing a cat during transport provides space to turn around and is free from projections and rough surfaces.
- A cat during transport does not show signs of heat stress (increased breathing rate, drooling, lethargy, wetness around the nose).
- A cat during transport does not show signs of cold stress (shivering, low-no activity, loss of coordination, reduced reactivity).

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A cat should be introduced to a container early in life to form positive associations.
- (b) A cat should be trained to enter their container.
- (c) A cat should be provided with an opportunity to hide in whilst in their travel container.
- (d) Familiar smelling bedding or objects should be provided to a cat during transport.
- (e) The container should be positioned level; if on a slant the cat cannot sit or lie comfortably.
- (f) A cover for the container such as a lightweight cloth (e.g., pillowcase) that prevents a cat seeing out of the container without impeding ventilation should be available.
- (g) A cat should not be transported in the closed boot of a car as this may have inadequate ventilation.
- (h) A cat should not be left unattended in vehicles unless there is provision for shade, ventilation, or warmth to prevent thermal stress.
- (i) An owner or person in charge should have easy and safe access to all cats transported as a group.
- (j) A cat awaiting loading onto aircraft should be kept in a secure and quiet environment, sheltered from the elements.
- (k) Cats that are at an increased risk of heat stress including those who are brachycephalic, very old or young, sick, obese, or pregnant should not be transported unless absolutely necessary.
- (l) A cat should be provided a litter box when transported over long distances.

### General Information

It is important to minimise a cat's distress and physical discomfort during transport. A cat should be transported within a suitable carry container which keeps them confined but comfortable. Cat-carry containers should be constructed from fibreglass, metal, rigid plastic, weld metal mesh (although the weld metal mesh should not be at the bottom of the container to protect a cat's feet), solid wood, or plywood. Containers made of sturdy reinforced fabric may be suitable for certain cats and where cats are monitored to ensure they have not chewed or clawed through the fabric. Containers should be well-ventilated.

Cardboard carry boxes are suitable for short journeys only if they are designed for travel and keep a cat secure. A cloth covering the container (provided it does not impede ventilation) may help some cats to travel with less stress. Introducing a kitten to transportation by car at regular intervals can help develop a higher tolerance for travel.

Care needs to be taken when transporting a cat by car. The temperature in a closed vehicle in full sun can reach 50 degrees Celsius in less than fifteen minutes. In a closed container, the temperature of the enclosed cat will rise rapidly, which will produce extreme distress and death. A cat who is heat stressed should be cooled by wrapping them in a damp (but not wet) towel and should be offered water to drink.



Immediate veterinary treatment is required for a cat experiencing heat stress.

Transporting a cat over long distances, either by road or by air, has additional requirements such as appropriate ventilation and provision of water. A cats should be kept in a secure, tranquil, and quiet environment and should be sheltered from the elements awaiting loading onto aircraft. Some airlines will not transport brachycephalic cats due to their increased risk of death during transport.

Sedating a cat for transportation is not recommended. Medication for anxiety or nausea may be beneficial. Advice should be sought from a veterinarian if a cat is transported over long distances.

A person wishing to export a cat from New Zealand to any country, including New Zealand dependencies, should first seek advice from the Ministry for Primary Industries Biosecurity New Zealand or a licensed animal transport agent as to any requirements they must meet.

## PART 10: Humane Killing\*



### Introduction

It is an offence under the Act to kill an animal in such a manner that they suffer unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress. A humane killing requires brain activity to cease as rapidly and painlessly as possible, with death ensuing as soon as possible.

Euthanasia is the induction of a painless and rapid death where this is for the benefit of the animal (e.g., to mitigate suffering). A lethal injection administered by a veterinarian is the recommended method for killing a companion cat.

### 26. Minimum Standard – Humane Killing

- a. *When a cat is killed or euthanised, they must be handled, restrained, and killed in such a manner that they do not suffer any unnecessary pain or distress prior to death.*
- b. *A person undertaking killing or euthanasia must be appropriately trained and competent in humane killing or euthanasia.*
- c. *When a cat has been killed or euthanised, death must be confirmed afterwards.*
- d. *Cats of any age must not be killed by drowning or through use of car exhaust (carbon monoxide poisoning).*
- e. *A cat must not be killed or euthanised within view of other cats.*

### Example Indicators Minimum Standard No. 26 – Humane Killing

- Cats are killed or euthanised by methods prescribed in relevant codes of welfare and as per relevant, accepted guidelines.

*\*Please note: Section titles are set by NAWAC. SPCA prefers the term ‘End of Life’.*



- A cat is managed gently and calmly at all stages of the killing.
- Persons undertaking humane killing are appropriately trained.
- Death is confirmed following the procedure.
- Cats are not killed or euthanised by drowning or car exhaust.
- There is the ability to block the view of other cats in view of a cat being killed.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) In anticipation of a cat requiring euthanasia, an owner or person in charge should consult with a veterinarian ahead of time to develop a plan for the day of and discuss the procedure and follow up processes.
- (a) A companion or laboratory cat should be euthanised by a veterinarian using an intravenous injection of a drug registered for this purpose.
- (a) A cat should not be killed with blunt force trauma.

### General Information

Decisions to end an animal's life may be difficult and emotive. There are tools available to assess quality of life which may facilitate decision making. In addition, veterinarians and allied veterinary professionals can provide advice and support.

The Act provides for the euthanasia of a severely injured or sick cat by a veterinarian, in whose opinion, the animal should be killed because reasonable treatment will not be sufficient to make the animal respond, and the animal will suffer unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress if they continue to live. A veterinarian may euthanise the cat without the permission of the owner, where the owner cannot be found within a reasonable time or where the owner does not agree to the euthanasia but does not obtain a secondary opinion from a veterinarian within a reasonable time.

A warranted inspector or auxiliary officer under the Act (e.g., an SPCA inspector or auxiliary officer) may also perform this task; or provide authority to a veterinarian to euthanise an animal. However, it is preferable that euthanasia be performed by a veterinarian if immediately available and veterinarians are authorised to do this under [s138 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999](#).

It is an offence to kill a cat of any age by drowning. Drowning does not provide a humane death. Drowning causes an animal to experience severe and prolonged suffering. During drowning a cat will experience severe anxiety, pain, and "air hunger", where the animal feels an urgent need to breathe but cannot, before losing conscious prior to death.

Using car exhaust to poison an animal through carbon monoxide poisoning is not a humane death because of the pain and discomfort of breathing in exhaust fumes and the length of time it may take for an animal to become unconscious and die.

Lethal traps should cause irreversible loss of consciousness and death as quickly and painlessly as possible and avoid catching non-target animals. Only traps that have passed welfare performance testing should be used (e.g., [National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee \(NAWAC\) Guideline: Assessing the welfare performance of restraining and kill traps](#)).



A humane shooting should result in the shortest period between when the animal is shot and when they experience irreversible loss of consciousness followed by death. Best practices to ensure a humane shooting include:

- shooters are competent and can clearly identify the animal before taking a shot.
- the correct firearm, ammunition, range, and shot placement is used.
- a wounded animal is promptly killed; and
- if lactating animals are killed, efforts are made to find and humanely kill her offspring. All efforts should be made to avoid peak kitten season.

## PART 11: Contingency Planning



### Introduction

Contingency plans for emergencies and disasters (e.g., earthquakes, floods, fires, storms, snow or drought, volcanic eruptions, biosecurity events, and infrastructure failures) need to be in place to protect the welfare of animals. A cat should be included as part of readiness plans.

MPI has checklists for emergency planning and companion animals and can be found here: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/funding-rural-support/adverse-events/animals-in-emergencies/>

### 27. Minimum Standard – Contingency Planning

- An owner or person in charge of a cat kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching must have a documented contingency plan that addresses any anticipated adverse events which might affect the welfare of the animals negatively.*
- An owner or person in charge of a cat kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching must ensure the facilities systems (such as fire systems, alarms, etc) are effective and functioning to prevent loss of life during fires and other adverse events.*
- An owner or person in charge of a cat must take all reasonable and practicable steps to rescue animals following a civil emergency.*

### Example Indicators for Minimum Standard No. 27 – Contingency Planning

- Adequate safety measures are in place to prevent loss of life.
- A written contingency plan is available for inspection.



- An owner or person in charge of a cat kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching are familiar with the contingency plan and what is required to implement it.
- A documented contingency plan was followed.
- Alternative sources of food and water are available in case of emergencies.
- There is a plan in place to evacuate animals if this is appropriate.
- All reasonable and practicable measures were taken to prevent death or injury.
- Biosecurity protocols are in place to reduce the risk of disease outbreaks and address relevant action should these be unsuccessful.
- Contingency plan covers large scale euthanasia in the event of a disease outbreak for cats kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching.
- An owner or person in charge of a cat are aware of the CDEM regional plan for animal welfare emergencies.
- An owner or person in charge of cat has one cat carrier per cat, bedding such as a blanket, and dry food and water supply should be on hand to enable evacuation in emergencies.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) An owner of person in charge of cats should be able to readily evacuate cats, if this is possible without endangering human safety.
- (b) In areas subject to floods and storms, persons in charge of cats kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing or teaching should:
  - > follow weather forecasts and heed weather warnings;
  - > ask for assistance, if needed, from local and regional authorities including CDEM and veterinarians; and,
  - > be aware of the [CDEM regional animal welfare plan for emergencies](#).

### General Information

New Zealand is subject to regular adverse events. Planning for different emergencies and disasters can help minimise stress on both people and their cats.

### Natural Hazard Events

Natural hazards events such as storms can cause disruption to power and water supplies. An owner or person in charge of cat should ensure sufficient food and water is available, enclosures can withstand adverse weather conditions, ventilation systems work effectively and have backup, and watering systems will continue to work effectively. Climate change may cause extreme weather events in areas where they have previously been rare. There are situations when people and cats need to be evacuated in emergencies.

Civil Defense and Emergency Management (CDEM, located within local Councils) are responsible for leading responses to adverse events. The Ministry for Primary Industries is responsible for coordinating the response for animal welfare in adverse events.



## Infrastructure Failures

Contingency plans for infrastructure failures such as power outages that can affect water, lighting, and ventilation needs to be in place.

## Biosecurity and Disease events

An owner or person in charge of a cat should have biosecurity plan to address disease incursion including how to prevent or minimise the spread of disease to any cats under their care. An owner or person in charge should ask their veterinarian for advice on how to prepare for a biosecurity or disease event.

Further information on preparing for emergencies and adverse events may be obtained by referring to the MPI website at <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/funding-rural-support/adverse-events/resources-for-adverse-events/>

# PART 12: Stray Cats in Managed Colonies



## Introduction

A stray cat lives in areas where people do but does not have an owner. Stray cats can range in how sociable they are with people depending on their life experiences. Some cats are born stray, whereas others may be a lost or abandoned companion cat. A stray cat is dependent on humans to meet some of their needs, either directly or indirectly.

A stray cat may live singly or may join a colony, particularly in urban environments where there is shelter (e.g., abandoned buildings, dense undergrowth) and a food source (being fed by colony carers, rubbish tip, restaurant rubbish bins, etc). Given the numbers of cats living in New Zealand, such colonies will require ongoing management to ensure the number of cats in the area stabilises and reduces over time.

Colonies need to be managed on a more systematic basis which makes provision for the welfare of the cats and aims to reduce the size of the colony.



## 28. Minimum Standard – Cats Living in Managed Colonies

- a. Where a person manages a cat colony, the following must always be provided:**
- > Adequate quantities of nutritious food to enable each cat to:
    - » maintain good health; and
    - » meet their physiological demands, including those resulting from pregnancy, lactation, growth, exercise, and exposure to cold; and
    - » avoid metabolic and nutritional disorders.
  - > Continuous access to water that is palatable, not harmful to health, and available in quantities sufficient to maintain vital bodily functions.
  - > Adequate shelter that protects against thermal stress.
  - > Access to veterinary care including routine vaccinations and parasite control and care as needed due to injury, disease, or other indicators of poor health.
- b. A cat living in a managed colony must be desexed and ear tipped.**
- c. A cat living in a managed colony must be microchipped.**
- d. A management plan must be in place for a managed cat colony that includes a register of all cats under the care of the colony manager that details:**
- > identification such as ear tipping and/or microchipping;
  - > evidence a cat is desexed;
  - > guidelines for trapping, desexing, and returning a cat to the colony;
  - > guidelines for adopting and rehoming a cat or kitten based on health and behavioural criteria; and
  - > guidelines for euthanasia for a cat or kitten where this is required.

### Example Indicators for Minimum Standard No. 28 – Cats Living in Managed Colonies

- Adequate sources of nutritious food, water, and shelter are present where the colony is managed.
- A colony register is available and includes information on identification, desexing, rehoming, and euthanasia.
- Records of veterinary care are available.
- There are no cats requiring urgent veterinary care or euthanasia.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) A person managing a cat colony should register the cats' microchips on a national database.
- (b) A person managing a cat colony should be knowledgeable of their obligations under the Act and understand the minimum standards and best practices described in this Code.
- (c) There should be a landowner agreement where a person is managing a cat colony.
- (d) A maximum number of cats per colony should be determined in agreement with the neighbours and local authorities as part of a management plan.
- (e) Cat colony management agreements should include a written contingency plan in the event there is a welfare emergency related to biosecurity or natural disaster.





- (f) All people involved in the colony management should be familiar with the contingency plan.
- (g) A person who feeds any stray cat should desex, microchip, and/or ear tip the cat and provide access to veterinary care if needed.
- (h) Cat colony management should not occur near areas of wildlife vulnerable to cat predation.

## General Information

Some cat colonies in New Zealand are cared for by individuals under a management plan agreed with the landowner.

A cat colony management plan needs to include means of identification; provision of nutritious food, water, and access to shelter; a vaccination and parasite programme; provision of veterinary treatment; a desexing programme; and a long-term management strategy including continuity of care.

Colony stabilisation, reduction, and extinction through managed and targeted trap neuter return (mtTNR) programmes require a high proportion of the cats in a specific area to be desexed each year. It is also important that a plan for colony stabilisation, reduction, and extinction also includes rehoming of kittens and adults that are socialised with people and the euthanasia of cats or kittens where this is a humane option for them due to poor health. A colony will require monitoring for any new cat that immigrates into the area to ensure they are provided care, desexed, and identified.

The provision of food to stray cats can contribute to the proliferation of unwanted cats. When a person regularly feeds stray cats, they should make efforts to desex and permanently identify the cat through an ear-tip and/or microchip and provide access to veterinary care when needed. Funding to help desex and/or microchip a cat is available through some local councils, and animal welfare and rescue organisations.

## Trapping of Cats

A person setting a live trap must do so in accordance with Section 36 of the Act.

Where practicable, it is strongly recommended when trapping stray cats and cats in colonies that traps be checked more frequently than the requirements in [Section 36 of the Act](#).

A trapped cat must be provided with basic care to meet the requirements of the Act or be released if uninjured or be humanely killed if the cat is subject to conditions under the [Biosecurity Act](#) (i.e., a cat is designated a pest, therefore cannot be released). A cat returned back into the colony must be in sufficiently good health to be able to fend for itself, and have ongoing access to adequate food, water, and shelter to meet their daily needs.

Before a person has set a trap for a cat, they should have a plan for what they will do with the cat and where they will be taken for services such as desexing, microchipping, or veterinary care. Once they have trapped a cat, they should make efforts to determine if the cat has an owner by scanning for a microchip or checking for information if a cat has a collar. Other steps to find an owner include talking to people who live in the area, using a paper collar with a note to the owner to alert them where their cat was trapped, and sharing the cat's information on lost pet websites.

Certain types of leg-hold traps are permitted for use in New Zealand (with conditions for where they can be used), however, these should not be used to trap stray cats.



[The Act \(see section 141\)](#) provides that, where a stray cat is trapped and placed in the care of an approved organisation under the Act, that organisation must take reasonable steps to identify the owner of the cat and may take steps to prevent or mitigate any suffering of the cat. If the owner of the cat cannot be identified then, after seven days, the cat may be sold, found a new home, or humanely killed. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is the only approved organisation under the Act.

Under the Act, there is no provision for veterinarians to humanely killing healthy stray cats. Veterinarians who take possession of a suspected stray cat should make reasonable effort to determine if the animal has an owner. If they have made sufficient effort and have not found an owner, the veterinarian may elect to rehome, desex and return, or humanely kill the cat.

## PART 13: Welfare Assurance System



### Introduction

The maintenance of good records is an integral part of a welfare assurance system and good management. This section relates to cats kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing, or teaching only.

### Recommended Best Practice

- (a) The elements of the welfare assurance system should provide for the recommendations for best practice of this Code.
- (b) Guidelines, codes of practice, etc should be independent and aim for transparency, high standards and ethical practice (i.e., over and above the law).
- (c) It should be drafted and enforced independently from the industry or commercial activity.
- (d) There should be provision for regular audits to be carried out transparently and independently.
- (e) There should be an enforcement and compliance framework (such as appropriate investigation, mandatory reporting, and sanctions by, registration bodies).
- (f) The welfare assurance system should be easily accessible to all personnel, and they should adhere to it.
- (g) The welfare assurance system should provide for all incidents resulting in significant sickness, injury, or death of animals to be fully investigated and documented.
- (h) The welfare assurance system should require continual review of existing practices and procedures that will improve the welfare of cats.
- (i) Animal handling procedures should be included as written procedures in the welfare assurance system.
- (j) The welfare assurance system should institute a process to facilitate employees to come forward and raise animal welfare concerns.



- (k) The documented system should identify:
- > positions of individual persons who are responsible for carrying out specific tasks;
  - > methods and procedures the owner or person in charge of animals will implement to achieve specified tasks;
  - > system and frequency of checks on animals, facilities, and equipment;
  - > training, competence, and supervision of persons carrying out specified tasks;
  - > procedure for recording numbers and circumstances for all animal injuries and deaths on farm and the corrective actions taken; and
  - > corrective actions that will be taken in the event of non-compliance with the requirements of the programme.
- (l) The documented system should be reviewed using performance-based audits on at least an annual basis. Corrective actions should be completed as required by the audits.

## General Information

The adoption or adaptation of an industry generic welfare assurance programme for welfare and husbandry procedures may meet this standard.

Where improvements to current practice are identified, these are communicated to persons in charge of cats kept for breeding, kept in temporary housing, or used in research, testing, or teaching via appropriate technology transfer methods such as seminars, workshops, and industry newsletters.

There is currently no industry body but when there is an industry body it is expected that the results of an investigation may have implications for current industry management practices, a report outlining the incident and implications should, as soon as it is available, be forwarded to the appropriate industry body for consideration.



# APPENDIX I:

## Interpretation and Definitions

---

### Act

The Animal Welfare Act 1999

### allied veterinary professionals

The term allied veterinary professional is a condensed term covering allied and veterinary professionals. In general terms, an allied veterinary professional (AVP) is all/any of those professional roles including a veterinary nurse, technician, technologist, or allied animal healthcare professional.

### animal

- a) As defined in the Act: Means any live member of the animal kingdom that is –
  - > A mammal; or
  - > A bird; or
  - > A reptile; or
  - > An amphibian; or
  - > A fish (bony or cartilaginous); or
  - > Any octopus, squid, crab, lobster, or crayfish (including freshwater crayfish); or
  - > Any other member of the animal kingdom which is declared from time to time by the Governor-General, by Order in Council, to be an animal for the purposes of this Act; and
- b) Includes any mammalian foetus, or any avian or reptilian pre-hatched young, that is in the last half of its period of gestation or development; and
- c) Includes any marsupial pouch young; but
- d) Does not include –
  - > A human being; or
  - > Except as provided in paragraph (b) or paragraph (c) of this definition, any animal in the prenatal, pre-hatched, larval, or other such developmental stage.

### body condition score

A scoring system used to classify the condition of animals, based on the assessment amount of fat and/or muscle covering they have (see [Appendix III: Assessment of Body Condition of Cats](#)).

### breeder

A person who is purposely breeding cats for sale or transfer of ownership.

### colony

A group of three or more sexually mature cats living and feeding in close proximity.

### companion cat

A cat considered owned by a person, sociable, and directly dependent on humans.

### domestic cat

A domestic cat (including a kitten unless otherwise stated) includes:



- (a) Companion (owned) cat; or
- (b) Stray cat

### **euthanasia**

Euthanasia is the induction of a painless and rapid death where this is for the benefit of the animal (e.g., to mitigate suffering).

### **feral cat**

A feral cat is unowned, unsocialised, and has no relationship with or dependence on humans.

Feral cats do not live around centres of human habitation. Feral cat population size fluctuates independently of humans, is self-sustaining and is not dependent on input from the companion cat population.

### **good practice**

NAWAC takes to mean a standard of care that has a general level of acceptance among knowledgeable practitioners and experts in the field; is based on good sense and sound judgment; is practical and thorough; has robust experiential or scientific foundations; and prevents unreasonable or unnecessary harm to, or promotes interests of, the animals to which it is applied. Good practice also takes account of the evolution of attitudes about animals and their care.

### **ill-treat**

As defined in section 2 of the Act: “in relation to an animal, means causing the animal to suffer, by any act or omission, pain or distress that in its kind or degree, or in its object, or in the circumstances in which it is inflicted, is unreasonable or unnecessary.”

### **juvenile**

A young animal.

### **kitten**

A cat less than six months of age.

### **Low Stress Handling**

An approach to handling animals which aims to minimise the stress an animal experiences as a result of interacting with people. Principles of low-stress handling are included in Appendix II.

### **managed colony**

A colony that is controlled by a trap-neuter-return programme including provision of care (e.g., nutrition, veterinary care, shelter), and rehoming and euthanasia where appropriate.

### **minimum standards**

Minimum standards provide the details of specific actions people need to take to meet the obligations of the Act. They are identified in the text by heading and use the word “must” or similar. They are highlighted in boxes within the text.

### **owner**

As defined in section 2 of the Act: “in relation to an animal, includes the parent or guardian of a person under the age of 16 years who –



- a) owns the animals; and
- b) is a member of the parent’s or guardian’s household living with and dependent on the parent or guardian.”

### passive restraint

Passive restraint of cats has been validated in a veterinary setting. It is defined as gentle handling of the cat using the least amount of restraint possible in a position of the cat’s choosing, allowing movement of their head, body, and limbs, but restricted from moving beyond the area directly in front of the handler.

### person in charge

As defined in section 2 of the Act: “in relation to an animal, includes a person who has an animal in that person’s possession or custody, or under that person’s care, control, or supervision.”

### physiological state

Relates to the functioning of the body, the organs and body systems.

queen An adult female cat that has not been desexed.

### recommended best practice

NAWAC takes to mean the best practice agreed at a particular time, following consideration of scientific information, accumulated experience, and public submissions on this code. It is usually a higher standard of practice than the minimum standard, except where the minimum standard is best practice. A best practice that can change as new information becomes known. Recommendations for best practice will be particularly appropriate where it is desirable to promote or encourage better care for animals than is provided as a minimum standard. Recommended best practices are identified in the text by a heading and use the word “should”.

### registered breeder

Registered as a breeder holding a current registered prefix with any of the recognised national cat organisations.

### scientific knowledge

NAWAC takes to mean knowledge within animal-based scientific disciplines, especially those that deal with nutritional, environmental, health, behavioural and cognitive/neural functions, which are relevant to understanding the physical, health and behavioural needs of animals. Such knowledge is not haphazard or anecdotal; it is generated by rigorous and systematic application of the scientific method, and the results are objectively and critically reviewed before acceptance.

### scruffing

Using one hand to pick up the cat at the ‘scruff’ (back of the neck), while supporting the back legs with the other hand.

### shelter

Cover or protection from weather including sun, rain, wind, and snow.

### SPCA

Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

### stray cat

an unowned cat, of varying sociability, interactions with, and dependence on humans.



This category is subdivided into:

- > Socialised stray cat: this category includes managed and unmanaged socialised stray cats.
- > Unsocialised stray cat: this category includes managed and unmanaged unsocialised stray cats.

Managed stray cats may be managed in a colony as a group or as an individual cat who is not part of a colony.

Stray cats have many of their needs indirectly supplied by humans and live around centres of human habitation. Stray cats are likely to interbreed with the unneutered companion cat population.

### **stud**

An unneutered or undesexed adult male cat.

### **temporary housing facility**

A temporary housing facility is any facility that receives companion animals which require temporary housing away from their usual place of keeping.

A temporary housing facility is not limited to but may carry out one or more of the following services: provide temporary accommodation and care, rehome by either sale or adoption, arrange euthanasia of those animals whose welfare needs cannot otherwise be adequately met, reunite the animal with their owner or provide specific services such as grooming for the animal.

Examples of temporary housing facilities include (but are not limited to): boarding establishments, pet shops/online retailers, animal welfare centres, shelters, and pounds, quarantine/isolation facilities, animal daycare centres, grooming establishments, and animal wholesale facilities.

### **veterinarian**

A person who is registered under the Veterinarians Act 2005 and holds a current practising certificate.

### **veterinary nurse**

A person who holds a veterinary nursing qualification recognised by the New Zealand Veterinary Nurses' Association (NZVNA).

### **zoonoses**

Diseases that are transmissible from animals to humans.





## APPENDIX II:

# Principles of Low-stress Handling

---

- Principle 1** Start with a comfortable environment.
- 
- Principle 2** Keep the animal from pacing, moving nervously or excitedly, squirming, or suddenly trying to escape.
- 
- Principle 3** Support the animal well by having your hands, arms and body positioned appropriately. The animal should not feel as if he will fall or is off balance.
- 
- Principle 4** Be aware that physically positioning animals or asking them to perform behaviours when they are nervous, scared or confused can cause them to resist handling. Thus, when they act confused or scared it is important to move deliberately and slowly to avoid a reflex resistance or escape behaviour.
- 
- Principle 5** Know how to place your hands and body to control movement in any direction.
- 
- Principle 6** Wait until the pet is relaxed before starting a procedure.
- 
- Principle 7** Use the minimum restraint needed for the individual.
- 
- Principle 8** Avoid prolonged (more than 2 seconds) or repeated fighting or struggling.
- 
- Principle 9** Use distractions and rewards when appropriate.
- 
- Principle 10** Adjust your handling based on the animal and their response to restraint and learn to adjust your sample-taking technique.





## APPENDIX III:

# Assessment of Body Condition of Cats


## BODY CONDITION SYSTEM

**TOO THIN**



- 1 Ribs visible on shorthaired cats; no palpable fat; severe abdominal tuck; lumbar vertebrae and wings of ilia easily palpated.
- 2 Ribs easily visible on shorthaired cats; lumbar vertebrae obvious with minimal muscle mass; pronounced abdominal tuck; no palpable fat.
- 3 Ribs easily palpable with minimal fat covering; lumbar vertebrae obvious; obvious waist behind ribs; minimal abdominal fat.
- 4 Ribs easily palpable with minimal fat covering; noticeable waist behind ribs; slight abdominal tuck; abdominal fat pad absent.

**IDEAL**



- 5 Well-proportioned; observe waist behind ribs; ribs palpable with slight fat covering; abdominal fat pad minimal.

**TOO HEAVY**

- 6 Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering; waist and abdominal fat pad distinguishable, but not obvious; abdominal tuck absent.
- 7 Ribs not easily palpated with moderate fat covering; waist poorly discernible; obvious rounding of abdomen; moderate abdominal fat pad.
- 8 Ribs not palpable with excess fat covering; waist absent; obvious rounding of abdomen with prominent abdominal fat pad; fat deposits present over lumbar area.
- 9 Ribs not palpable under heavy fat cover; heavy fat deposits over lumbar area, face and limbs; distention of abdomen with no waist; extensive abdominal fat deposits.

The BODY CONDITION SYSTEM was developed at the Nestlé Purina Pet Care Center and has been validated as documented in the following publications:  
 Ladumme DP. Development and validation of a Body Condition Score System for Cats: A Clinical Tool. *Practice Practice* 2007; 25: 49-51.  
 German AJ et al. A Simple, Reliable Tool for Owners to Assess the Body Condition of Their Dog or Cat. *J. Nutr.* 2006; 136: 2021S-2023S.  
 Bjornvad CR et al. Evaluation of a Nine-point Body Condition Scoring System in Physically Inactive Pet Cats. *AVJ* April 2011; 167:72, No. 4.



## APPENDIX IV:

# Signs of Ill Health in cats

---

The signs of ill health in cats may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Abnormal dullness or lethargy, abnormal agitation/excitement, or seizures
- An unexplained increase or a decrease in thirst and/or appetite
- Vomiting and/or diarrhoea
- Difficulty breathing, open mouth breathing
- Persistent bleeding from an orifice (e.g., mouth, nose, genitals, or anus)
- Bleeding that continues for more than 2 minutes from a skin wound
- Straining to pass urine or faeces
- Change in urine colour or cloudiness
- Persistent sneezing, persistent coughing, or persistent abnormal breathing
- Lameness, unsteady gait, or inability to stand or walk
- Significant weight loss or weight gain, or change in girth of the cat
- Swellings or lumps, (presence of abscesses)
- Paleness of gums
- Failure to groom
- Persistent scratching or biting of skin, or persistent shaking of the head
- Presence of scabs without incidence of known injuries
- Areas of hairlessness
- Unpleasant smell from ears or mouth
- Weeping and/or inflamed eyes
- Discharge from nose
- Encrustations on ears or nose
- Disorientation.
- Too hot or too cold
- Wet chin or drooling
- Abnormal posture, such as hunched posture or puffed fur
- Unexplained changes in behaviour e.g., aggression



## APPENDIX V:

# Pain Assessment

---

Pain in cats can be difficult to assess due to their stoic nature. Accurately assessing and treating pain in cats is important to prevent negative impacts to their welfare and indicators include:

- Lameness
- Difficulty jumping
- Abnormal gait
- Reluctance to move
- Reaction to palpation
- Withdrawn or hiding
- Absence of grooming
- Playing less
- Decrease in appetite
- Overall activity decrease
- Less rubbing toward people
- Changes in general mood or temperament
- Hunched-up posture
- Shifting of weight
- Licking a particular body region
- Lower head posture
- Blepharospasm (eyelid contractions)
- Change in feeding behaviour
- Avoiding bright areas
- Growling
- Groaning
- Eyes closed
- Straining to urinate
- Tail flicking

Validated pain scales for clinical use include:

- [UNESP-Botucato Multidimensional Composite Pain Scale](#) which measures four indicators of pain expression, four indicators of psychomotor change, and two measures of physiological variables.
- [Glasgow Composite Measure Pain Scale](#) includes 28 descriptor options and seven behavioural categories.
- [Feline Grimace Scale](#) includes five facial measurements including ear position, assessment of orbital tightening, muzzle tension, whisker position, and head position.

Validated pain scales for layperson assessment:

- [Feline Grimace Scale](#) includes five facial measurements including ear position, assessment of orbital tightening, muzzle tension, whisker position, and head position.

