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Fact Sheet



Reducing Wandering

It's important to keep cats indoors overnight where they are protected from the dangers of cars and cat fights, and to protect native wild-life. But what about setting boundaries for your cat during the day, when you might wish to allow outdoor access but prevent wandering?

One of the first things to do is ensure your cat is desexed. Desexing helps reduce wandering behaviours and your cat will not want to try to find a mate! Desexing does not always stop all cats from wanting to explore as some cats just like looking around, but being sexually entire is one of the main reasons cats do wander.

Placing physical limits on the yard is the best way to keep your cat safely on your property. This is part of being a good neighbour as well as protecting cats from harm. A cat-proof fencing product from a company such as Oscillot (oscillot.com.au) is a popular solution, and is both reasonably priced and easy to install. This type of system uses rollers to cap existing fences, preventing cats from successfully scaling boundary fencing.

Another alternative is to install a cat run, or outdoor cat enclosure. Commercial cat enclosures are available and can be installed professionally or ordered as DIY kits. See our factsheet on Cat-proof fencing and enclosures for more information. Options range from enclosed tunnels to multilevel cat complexes. These may be attached to an existing structure, such as your home, or they may be free-standing. Outdoor enclosures require a financial (and possibly time) investment, but once installed will reduce the risks associated with your cat being outdoors.

Alternatively, you might like to restrict your cat's outdoor access to supervised time with you in the garden or courtyard. This is a lovely way to spend time with your cat, as well as investing time in your own relaxation. Human intervention is the means of stopping your cat from climbing the fence and wandering off your property. It's also helpful to plant a border around the area where you want your cat to spend time. Citrus smelling herbs are great for this purpose; as well as being non-toxic, most cats do not like the smell of citrus and will not want to brush past them to escape.

A final option is to train your cat to spend time outdoors using a harness and lead. Leadwalking may be a great way for your cat to enjoy the outdoors in safety, and a rewarding experience for both you and your cat. See our factsheet for more information.

Keep in mind that cats who have had lots of outdoor access in the past will need to be provided with enough stimulation indoors to stop them becoming bored and destructive. Multi-level scratch posts, interactive toys and window perches are perfect for this. Have a look at our factsheet, Happy, healthy indoor cats for more information.

Source: [NSW Cat Protection Society](#)

An outside run

Veranda or balcony cat-nets are a simple and highly effective choice when installed from floor to rooftop. A range of netting products is available, with both commercial installation and DIY options. Specially designed cat safety nets are UV and chew resistant. Or build or purchase a specially-designed cat enclosure for your yard. See our factsheet on catproof fencing and enclosures for more information and suppliers.

Walk your cat

Cat harnesses are available for cats of all sizes. These fit around your cat's body and attach to a lead that lets you walk your cat safely outside. Keep in mind you should never attach a lead to a collar as you would with a dog, as a cat's throat is very sensitive and will be harmed by tugging on the collar. Lead walking may be a great way for your cat to enjoy the outdoors, and a rewarding experience for both you and your cat. Please note that only particularly relaxed and outgoing cats may be trained to successfully walk with a harness and a lead, and only in an appropriate outdoor environment. Many cat personalities are simply NOT suited to this training. Remember that your cat depends on you for security and protection. See our factsheet on harness and lead training for more information.

Windows

Install a window seat or place a scratch post or piece of furniture under a window so your cat can look out. Cats love to sun themselves in the window and look at the world outside. Remember, light coloured cats are at risk of sunburn through the glass, so it may be necessary to take precautions for this. Also remember your cat will be happy looking out; this doesn't mean they want to get out. Most cats still try to pounce on bugs and birds through the glass.

Clean the litter tray

Cats are very clean animals with a very good sense of smell, so ensure that solid waste is removed from your cat's litter tray daily. Regularly clean the litter tray entirely as per instructions on the litter pack. Always keep the litter tray in a low traffic area. Cats, just like humans, would prefer to go to the toilet in private. If you place the litter tray in an area where people are walking past all the time your cat might not use it. Ensure the tray is the right size for your cat. Your cat should be able to turn around comfortably inside the tray and there should be enough space around the tray for your cat to have head room outside without bumping surrounding furniture. A large adult cat should not still be using the tray you bought for them as a kitten or toileting accidents are likely to happen. Litter trays should be equal to the number of cats in the home plus one extra tray. You might prefer litter trays with hoods to help minimise odours.

Spend time with your cat

Nothing beats spending quality time with your cat. Every cat has a different personality, so some might like just a few good pats or chin rubs while others will curl up with you for hours. Not all cats like to be picked up, and some become over-stimulated easily. Most cats love to bond through playtime, as well as through grooming and even conversation. Learn to 'read' what your cat is telling you. Cat owners are reported to have better communication skills than non-cat owners; this is thought to be because they have become more attuned to non-verbal communication cues.

Multi-cat household

For many cats the best way to keep them entertained indoors is by getting a second cat, or by adopting more than one cat in the first place. This will ensure your cat is never lonely and always has a playmate. Do keep in mind though that some cats prefer to be on their own, and it is very important to consider your cat's personality before adopting another cat. Adopt from a reputable source who can help identify for you which cats get on well with others or have lived with other cats before.

Stress

Signs of stress can include over-grooming and inappropriate toileting, aggression or withdrawal. However, these can also be indicators of serious illness so it is very important to contact your vet if you ever see signs of changed behaviour in your cat. Maintenance of routines is important for cats so try to keep a regular schedule. Also, be mindful that your cat sees your home as their territory and will scent-mark by scratching and rubbing their cheeks on surfaces. If your cat is not using their scratch post, it might simply be in the wrong place – watch where your cat scents. You will notice they tend to take the same pathways through your home. Move the objects you want them to mark, such as scratch posts, onto those pathways. Vacuum cats bedding regularly and hang it in sunlight but don't wash it too often: again, its familiar scent comforts your cat.

Source: [NSW Cat Protection Society](#)