

## FACTSHEET

### Cat-proof fencing and enclosures

The choice between cat-proof fencing all or part of your yard, using netting, fence-top devices, erecting a free-standing enclosure, or a combination of methods, depends on the size and type of yard, what will best suit your cat/s and their level of escape capability, as well as accommodating the other uses of the yard such as gardens, washing lines, barbecues and so on.

There is a variety of products on the market from DIY kits to professionally installed bespoke outdoor cat runs, from fence-top devices that prevent cats escaping to fully enclosed netting options. This factsheet is intended to help you think about what you need to consider in order to identify and design the best solution for your cats and your home. If you are renting, you will need the permission of the owner to make any modifications to the property. For information on balconies, see our factsheet **Balcony safety**.

With all options, cats need access to adequate weather shelter and water. Yard enclosures may be combined with a cat flap to the house, steps, hammocks and runways.

It is possible to design a garden that is wildlife-friendly as well as providing safe and interesting space for your cat; contact your local wildlife community group, WIRES or the environment department of your local council to discuss the most sensitive and suitable options for your yard.

Whatever your final design, it is very important to supervise your cats in their new enclosure in order to observe their behaviour and make sure that they are unable to escape. Some cats will find ingenious ways to thwart the enclosure that didn't occur to the designer.

#### Cat-proof fencing

In most local government areas in Australia, fence extensions and raising the height of your fence is legal unless extending beyond your property boundaries. That said, you should still check with your local council, and most importantly, your neighbours, in order to gain their approval.

A number of cat-proof fence suppliers and installers are well-established and experienced in the Australian market. A number employ netting to cat-proof existing fencing or to create enclosures. These include CatMax [www.catmax.com.au](http://www.catmax.com.au) who provide a tailored design and installation service; SecureaKat [www.secureakat.com.au](http://www.secureakat.com.au) who provide an installation service and DIY kits and supplies; Sydney Cat Enclosures [www.sydneycatenclosures.com.au](http://www.sydneycatenclosures.com.au) who provide custom-built solutions and enrichment options such as perches; and CatNets [www.catnets.com.au](http://www.catnets.com.au) who provide an installation service and DIY kits and supplies.

Oscillot Cat Containment Solutions [www.oscillot.com.au](http://www.oscillot.com.au) offer a fence-top roller cat containment device that avoids the use of netting.

Before adding netting or other devices, you need to begin by cat-proofing the existing fence by sealing any gaps or holes in or under the fence. Trees and shrubs near the fence will need to be trimmed to eliminate climbing or jumping sites. If other pets or wildlife dig under or penetrate your fence, you may need additional ground level guards such as the 'snake deterrent netting' provided by SecureaKat.

### **Trees**

For large trees inside the enclosure that could be used by a cat to climb and then jump out of the enclosure, tree banding can be employed to deter the cat's ability to climb. A metal or weatherproof plastic band attached to the trunks of large trees can prevent cats climbing the tree. As a rough guide (but this will depend on your individual cat/s) the bands should be 600mm wide and 2.5 metres from the ground, or sufficiently higher than your cat's vertical leap. Obtain advice on the most suitable banding material for the type of tree from your gardening or hardware store. *Tree banding may not be suitable because of wildlife considerations.*

An alternative to tree banding is to install additional fence posts within your yard so that the enclosure bypasses trees or heavily vegetated areas. As a rough guide, the depth of the post hole should be equal to at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the total length of the post, and the diameter of the hole should be 3 times the width or diameter of the post. A gate or zipper for netting enclosures can be added for human access to a sectioned-off area if necessary. For CatNet DIY zippers see <http://www.catnets.com.au/products/d-i-y-installation-accessories>

### **Free-standing enclosures**

Free-standing enclosures erected within your yard or extended from a window or veranda can often be the simplest and cheapest solution. There are many available in kit form ready to be erected by the owner or handy person. For a variety of free-standing enclosures, see the following providers:

[www.secureakat.com.au/cat-cube/](http://www.secureakat.com.au/cat-cube/)

[www.catnets.com.au/products/category/14-freestanding-cat-enclosures](http://www.catnets.com.au/products/category/14-freestanding-cat-enclosures)

[catmax.com.au/product-category/catmax-caboodles/](http://catmax.com.au/product-category/catmax-caboodles/)

<http://catnip.com.au/product-category/accessories/>

[www.sydneycatenclosures.com.au/enclosures](http://www.sydneycatenclosures.com.au/enclosures)

Free-standing enclosures are also the best option if you do not own your home as they can be moved with you; likewise if you are planning to move house, a free-standing enclosure is a more economical and practical choice.

### **DIY**

If you choose to design and build your own tailor-made solution to safe outdoor access for your cat, there are many freely downloadable plans on the web and when it comes to building, you might like to seek the in-store expert advice from your local Bunnings Warehouse [www.bunnings.com.au/stores](http://www.bunnings.com.au/stores) or hardware store.

*While all care has been taken in preparing this document, it is intended to provide general information only and should not be taken as constituting professional advice. Mention of a product or business does not mean endorsement by Cat Protection.*