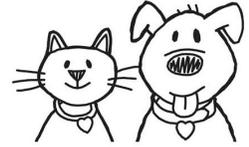




Resources for Pet Owners



Discouraging Roaming Cats

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We recognize that unwanted cats coming onto your property can be frustrating, but do not offer removal or relocation because it has proven to be an ineffective answer to the problem. You certainly have the right to enjoy your yard and the birds that visit it, and to protect your own pets. However, it's your responsibility to use only humane methods to solve the problem.

Why Are They Picking On Me?

Although a destructive neighborhood cat can be very frustrating, don't take it personally. The cat isn't acting out of spite or picking on you for some unknown reason. He's behaving naturally, just in places that are inappropriate. The solution lies in making those places undesirable so the cat will behave naturally somewhere else.

Cats have preyed upon birds for thousands of years and there's no foolproof way to discourage this natural instinct. Fortunately, birds have developed survival techniques over the years, and it's unusual for a cat to actually catch a healthy, mature bird.

Another natural instinct for a cat is to relieve himself in an area where he can cover his scent by burying the waste. Cats appreciate the soft, pre-dug dirt of gardens and or sandboxes, as a handy toilet.

A cat napping on the hood of your car or in your flowerbed, is simply sunning himself in a nice, warm spot and doesn't realize the damage he's doing. He won't connect your negative reaction with the place where he naps, and although he may learn to avoid you, he won't avoid the place or the activity.

A roaming cat may approach your window or patio door and challenge your cat or dog through the glass with blatant body language and/or vocal insults. The best way to relieve your pet from this type of situation, is to keep the outside cat away from the areas that your pet can see.

Since not all cats are kept indoors, you'll need to take steps to solve the problem without harming the cats or other animals. Since each situation is different, you may need patience and ingenuity to find the appropriate deterrent(s) through trial and error.

Repellents

Repellents and devices designed to startle the cat "in the act" will work best to condition them to avoid the area. Never use poisons. Not only is poisoning animals inhumane and illegal, it's not an effective solution to the problem. Poisons will only rid you of one pest, but won't deter any others. You'd have no way of knowing or controlling what, or who, might find and ingest the poisonous substance.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has registered over thirty compounds for safe use in repelling domestic cats. Check with any pet supply store or garden suppliers for commercial cat repellents. Many home remedies to deter cats also exist. Applying or spreading scents that cats don't like, such as citrus peels or citrus-scented sprays, coffee grounds, vinegar, or pipe tobacco, as well as essential oils like lavender, lemongrass, citronella, or eucalyptus can help keep cats out of unwanted areas. Vinegar has the added benefit of destroying cat urine odors.

Keep in mind that the effectiveness of any repellent will deteriorate with moisture and/or time. Whether you use a home remedy or a sophisticated, commercial mixture, you'll need to re-apply the solution after each rain, heavy dew or watering. Check with your garden supplier to be certain that the solution you choose won't harm plants growing in that area.

For areas where cats want to dig, lava rock or other large decorative rock may be an effective deterrent. Avoid those that are very round or smooth, as they make a great cat bed. Rocks or pebbles should be firmly secured into the dirt or mulched area so they can't easily be moved or overturned. Small-gauge

chicken wire or Cat Scat mats can also be buried under a light layer of dirt or mulch, and may even restrain some weeds. The sharp pebbles and/or rough wire will be uncomfortable to soft paws and make it difficult to dig.

"Surprise" Devices

To teach a cat to avoid a specific area, you must make that area unattractive to him. The best method is to surprise the cat "in the act," but the villain should be the area itself, not you. Simple devices can be used to effectively "booby-trap" the area that a cat has found attractive.

- ❖ **Sound & Movement:** Scatter dry beans, macaroni or birdseed on a metal tray (disposable pie pans or cookie sheets work great and are inexpensive). Balance several trays along the fence, porch or deck railing, the windowsill, or around the edge of any vehicle where the cat jumps onto the surface. Birds can still land safely if the trays are balanced properly, but the weight of a cat leaping onto the surface will upset the tray. The cat will be startled by the noise and by the unsteady, collapsing perch. Ultrasonic deterrents can be low cost and are motion activated. They will emit a sound frequency that cats can hear but does not affect people. This will startle the cat when they come within range of the deterrent.
- ❖ **Texture:** To keep a cat from jumping onto flat surfaces (railings, vehicles or decks), criss-cross double-sided tape onto a piece of sturdy plastic - either a heavy, plastic drop cloth or a vinyl tablecloth would work well. Drape the plastic over the surface, and secure it with cord, or at least one weighted object, to keep it in position. The sticky tape on the cat's paws is annoying (without causing pain or panic), and the slick plastic rattles and offers no foothold.
- ❖ **Water:** This method works especially well for those areas where birds feed on the ground or where cats are using a garden area as a litter box. When the temperature permits, turn on a water sprinkler during the usual time of disturbance (dawn or dusk if the cat is on your property to hunt). A timing device for the sprinkler, set to a staggered schedule, will help discourage those intelligent cats who would otherwise simply avoid the area at "regularly wet" times of day. As a variation on the "falling tray" method, set shallow plastic lids filled with water on each end of the tray to add a shower to the noise and movement of the falling tray. Motion-activated sprinklers work well for keeping unwanted cats out of yards and gardens, by spraying a burst of water when the cat walks within range.
- ❖ **Obstacle:** Nail a galvanized metal guard or "collar" in the shape of a cone around trees to prevent cats from climbing them to get on rooftops. The same can be used to protect post-mounted birdhouses and feeders. Netting can also be used to block access to areas you don't want the cats.

Responsibility

If these suggested remedies fail to provide relief, we encourage you to call our Community Cat Program. The "problem cat" may be an owned cat that's allowed to roam or the cat may have no real owner. If the cat belongs to a neighbor, your problem is a shared one. It's not always easy to discuss neighborhood issues diplomatically. Remember that the cat is your neighbor's pet, even though he's a pest when he's on your property. By emphasizing your concern for the cat's safety, instead of the problems he's causing, you have a greater chance of gaining your neighbor's cooperation.

If you're unable to establish the cat's ownership, the problem is in your hands. It's often impossible to distinguish a feral cat from a potentially friendly stray, so play it safe and don't touch the cat.

Creating a Cat-friendly Space

In addition to deterring cats from places you *don't* want the, you can also encourage cats to spend more time in other areas. You can do this by providing outdoor shelters, planting catnip, and placing "litter boxes" areas of sand or peat moss (don't use cat litter) to give cats an easily cleaned bathroom area.

Humane Traps and Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return

While these deterrents will help to keep the cats out, the true solution to a cat problem is ultimately going to be Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return (TNVR). TNVR is a humane way to end continued population growth, and will also put an end to most cat nuisance behaviors like fighting, spraying, nighttime vocalizations, and more. An altered cat tends to stick closer to their food source and roam less frequently, so once the cats have been trapped and fixed, you should hopefully see a dramatic reduction in the number of cats visiting your yard! Our Community Cat Program staff can give you more information about this option.