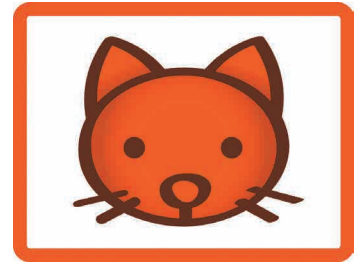


# Your cat's welfare needs



Do you know the five key things cats need for a happy and healthy life?

According to the recent "Pet-Care Practices in Victoria"<sup>1</sup> research, many Victorian cat owners don't.

This research involved a survey of 1,629 dog, cat, bird and rabbit owners in Victoria. It aimed to measure how well owners understood their pets' welfare needs.

The five key welfare needs are summarised as follows:



## Environment

The need for a suitable environment (place to live)



## Diet

The need for a suitable diet



## Behaviour

The need to express normal behaviour



## Companionship

The need to live with, or apart from, other animals



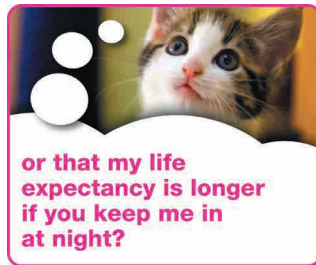
## Health

The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

## Welfare worries for cats

- Forced to share - in multiple cat households, up to 58 per cent of cats are stressed and aggressive because they don't have their own litter trays, beds or food bowls.
- Wandering at large - 49 per cent of cats are allowed to roam free when outdoors, risking shortened lifespans due to being hit by cars, injured in fights and contracting diseases such as feline AIDS.
- Obesity - up to 40 per cent of cats are overweight. Obesity can cause major health problems such as diabetes, and can reduce quality of life and shorten lifespan.
- Inability to express natural behaviours - 50 per cent of cats don't have access to a scratching post, and 11 per cent don't have access to toys or other objects to manipulate.
- Lack of preventative vet care - 29 per cent of cats are not vaccinated against common diseases, 13 per cent aren't treated for fleas and 16 per cent aren't wormed.
- Lack of identification - 10 per cent of owners have been unable to find their lost cats.

<sup>1</sup> Bennett, P.C., Mornement, K., & Howell, T. (2013). Pet-care practices in Victoria, 2013: a survey of bird, cat, dog and rabbit owners. Unpublished report, La Trobe University, Australia.



## Top tips for cat owners

- More than one cat? Ensure each has its own food and water bowl, litter tray and cat bed (plus one other spare set for the household). Space these out around the house to avoid competition between cats.
- Want your cat to live up to 3 three times longer? Don't allow him or her to roam free. It's easier to confine your cat than you think - you can buy or build cat enclosures or cat- proof fencing. And contrary to popular belief, cats don't have to roam. With a few simple steps you can ensure your cat is just as happy when confined to your property. Visit the DEPI website for more information – [www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets).
- Learn about your cat's ideal body shape - view the cat body condition score chart on the DEPI website - [www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets). If your cat is overweight, avoid feeding unhealthy treats (and if you do feed treats, adjust the quantity of your cat's regular diet accordingly). Talk to your vet to ensure your cat is on the right diet for its age and lifestyle, and follow feeding instructions on food packets carefully.
- It's easy to give your cat more opportunities for play, and to express natural behaviours. Simple and cheap toys include crumpled paper balls, paper bags to explore, cardboard boxes, ping pong balls, and toilet paper tubes. Try stuffing old cotton socks with cotton balls and some catnip, and tying a knot in the end. Hide your cat's dry food around the house. Buy your cat a scratching post, made from sisal (a coarse natural fibre), carpet, cardboard or wood, and encourage use by placing catnip on it.

- Check when you last treated your cat for fleas and worms. Get advice from your vet regarding suitable and safe treatments, and ensure your cat's vaccinations are up to date.
- Contact your local council (animal management section) to register your cat. Identifying your cat through registration (and microchipping) will greatly increase his or her odds of being returned to you if he or she becomes lost. If you move house, make sure you update your details with your local council, and also with the microchip registry (you have to contact both organisations separately). You might also be surprised to learn about the wide range of activities that your cat registration fee funds - visit the DEPI website for more information – [www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets).

Doing just one of these things today could make a big difference to your cat's life.

## Learn more

Learn more about the Pet-Care Practices research results, and the welfare needs of cats – visit [www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets)



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