

The feral cat epidemic

Every year in Canada, many cats end up homeless. They are either born feral or abandoned by their owners.

- Never abandon an unwanted cat or kitten.
- Resist feeding unowned or feral cats. It can allow cats to breed at a younger age and have larger litters, worsening the problem.
- Unwanted cats or feral cats deserve to be taken to a shelter for the best chance of finding a safe home.



What can we do to help?

- There are an estimated 1.4 – 4.2 million unowned cats in Canada. This is a tragedy for cats and communities.
- Adopt from your local shelter. Cats come spayed and neutered, and there are all ages and temperaments to choose from.
- Always have your cats spayed or neutered before five months of age to prevent unwanted kittens.
- Respect and follow animal responsibility bylaws in your municipality.

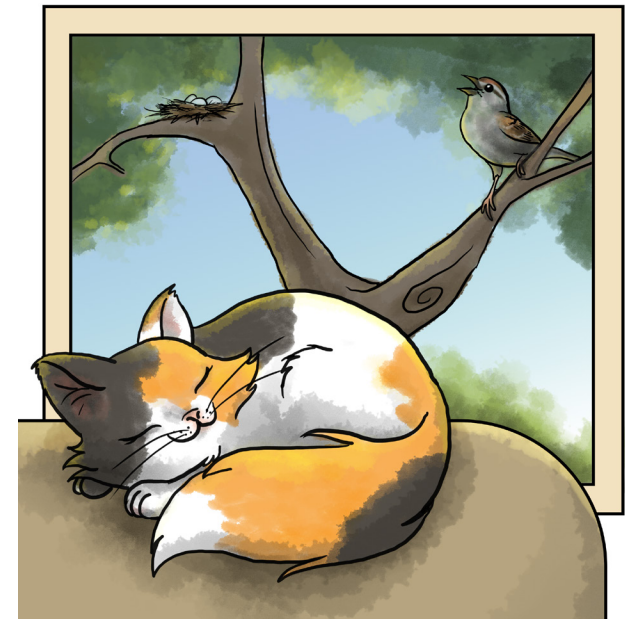
Fact: Spaying female cats before their first heat reduces the rate of mammary cancer by 80-90%. Neutered male cats are less aggressive and they spray less often than intact males.

Tips to keep your cat happy & healthy

Because cats are smart and independent, we think they can look after themselves outdoors but that simply isn't true. Outdoor cats are exposed to the risks of predation, parasites, diseases, trauma, and toxins. Due to these risks, cat welfare groups recommend keeping cats indoors with only supervised outdoor access.

Indoor cats can lead happy and healthy lives provided their behavioural and emotional needs are met.

- Provide window spots so your cat can look outdoors and watch the neighbourhood.
- Ensure your cat has sufficient vertical and private space to hide, sleep and feel safe.
- If you have multiple cats, be sure that all resources such as sleeping and hiding spots, feeding, and litter are separated.
- Have enough litter boxes for all cats. Cats prefer two large litter boxes with daily cleaning. Avoid scented litter.
- Play with your cat regularly and encourage their urge to chase and pounce with toys.
- Provide your cat's favourite type of scratching posts, such as vertical or horizontal posts of cardboard, carpet or natural fibre.
- Use food puzzles so that your cat has to "hunt" for their food or "scatter-feed" kibble so that your cat chases and catches its food like prey.
- Provide access to the outdoors with a screened porch or an enclosed outdoor run (catio).
- Like dogs, with training, cats can adapt very well to walking with a leash and harness.



The Happy Cat



STEWARDSHIP CENTRE
FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Stewardship Centre for BC urges you to keep your cat indoors, supervise outdoor access, and adopt these tips. It's better for cats and better for birds, bats, and other wildlife.

For further information, visit:

www.stewardshipcentrebc.ca/cats-and-birds

Art by Manda Maggs. Photos from Ted Ardley, Jared Hobbs, and Wikimedia Commons.

Canada

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What is a responsible cat owner?

Being a good guardian isn't just about keeping your cat fed and healthy. It's also your job to keep your cat safe and be responsible for your pet's behaviour.

Do:

- ✓ Keep your cat indoors and supervise outdoor access.
- ✓ Ensure your pet is spayed or neutered by 4-5 months.
- ✓ Identify your cat with permanent identification, so it can be returned to you if lost.
- ✓ Take your cat to the vet for annual check-ups and vaccinations.

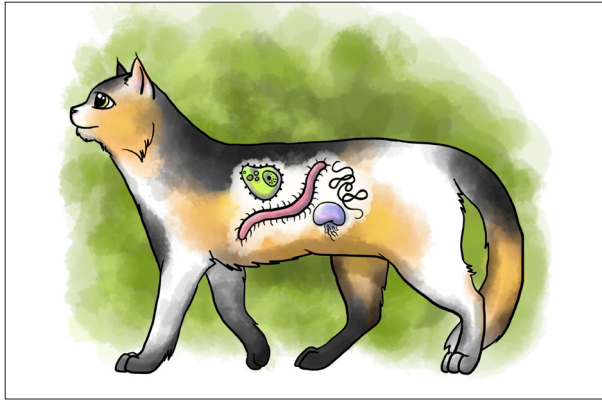
Don't:

- ✗ Let your cat roam where it may meet other cats or predators.
- ✗ Let your cat cross roads where it could get hit.
- ✗ Let your cat use gardens and children's play areas as a litter box.
- ✗ Let your cat chase and kill birds, bats, or other wildlife.



Fact: An indoor cat's estimated life span is 12-15 years, but an outdoor cat's is only 3-5 years.

Look what the cat brought in!



When our pets hunt wildlife, it's possible for them to bring home pathogens such as parasites, bacteria or viruses that can infect us or anyone else in contact with their feces. Examples are various types of roundworms, tapeworms, *Toxoplasma gondii*, salmonellosis and even rabies virus, which can have very serious health implications for people. Allowing your cat to roam is not worth the risk to you or your neighbours. All cats should receive regular parasite tests and be vaccinated against all preventable infectious diseases.

Cats are natural hunters

Like dogs, cats can impact native wildlife because of their powerful hunting instinct. Even if they leave the house on full stomachs, cats will seek out and catch birds, bats and other wildlife. Studies have demonstrated that cats only bring home about 23% of their wildlife prey.

- As their caregivers, we need to replace that hunting activity with stimulating activities with toys such as those that mimic fluttering (e.g., feathered wand toys) or that mimic scuttling movement (e.g., laser pointer).
- Whatever the toy is, make sure that your cat gets to catch it before you put it away.

Wildlife in Canada need your help

Birds play an important role in all ecosystems and brighten our lives with their beauty, bird song and activity. Next to habitat loss, the #1 source of bird deaths in the country is hunting by domestic and feral cats. Cats are estimated to kill 100-350 million birds every year in Canada. Cats also hunt other wildlife, including bats. Bats can eat their body weight in insects every night and are vital to control insect pests. Cats may hunt bats as they swoop out of their roosts to forage or prey on sick or injured bats on the ground.

Cats and wildlife don't mix!

- Don't put out feeders if you have cats coming into your yard.
- Keep bird seed off the ground by using seed hoops or trays.
- Do not place bat houses or bird feeders in areas where cats can reach them.
- Keep your cat inside or supervised when wildlife is present.
- Deter cats from your yard with plants with lemony scents, wet coffee grounds or with purpose-built fence toppers.



Fact: Canada's songbird populations are in serious decline. Many bat species are now at risk such as this endangered Little Brown Myotis.