



## Code of Practice for the Private Keeping of Cats (Victoria)

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## 1. Preface

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* came into force on 20 May 1986 and is administered by the Department of Primary Industries. It has the purpose of protecting animals, encouraging the considerate treatment of animals and improving the level of community awareness about the prevention of cruelty to animals. It establishes fundamental obligations relating to the care of animals in general terms. Details of obligations are found in codes of practice that are made under the provisions of the Act. These set out minimum standards and recommendations relating to important aspects of the care of animals. They are developed following a process of consultation with stakeholders and the community.

Codes reflect the views and values held by Victorians with respect to the care of animals. It is recommended that all those who care for animals become familiar with the relevant codes.

This code was initiated by the Bureau of Animal Welfare and prepared in consultation with an advisory committee. This committee was comprised of persons who have knowledge and expertise in particular areas such as animal welfare, veterinary science, the commercial use of animals and the standards and conduct of the ethical use of animals.

## 2. Purpose of the code

This Code is made under the provisions of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*. The Code and its provisions are to be observed by owners, carers and custodians of cats.

This Code of Practice is intended to provide the minimum standards of accommodation, management and care appropriate to the physical and behavioural requirements of cats.

Other codes relevant to the welfare of cats include:

*Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act 1994* (DFNA) mandatory codes

- *Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Establishments*
- *Code of Practice for the Operation of Boarding Establishments*
- *Code of Practice for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds*
- *Code of Practice for the Operation of Pet Shops*

This Code of Practice reflects current knowledge and opinion and aims to promote better cat welfare by providing education and minimum standards for cat owners.

### 3. Introduction

From their origins in Egypt around 4000 years ago, domestic cats have spread to nearly every corner of the inhabited world. Cats (*Felis catus*) have become a truly domesticated animal in that their breeding, care and feeding are more or less influenced by humans. Cats are one of the world's most popular companion animals and are valued for their role in rodent control. In Australia approximately 23% of homes have a pet cat.

The human health benefits as a result of pet ownership are well known. Cats are excellent animals to keep as a pet as they provide valuable companionship to owners. Owners need to understand their cat's requirements and ensure they provide the proper care and protection to ensure a healthy and happy life for their pet.

Anyone considering owning a cat should read this code and ensure they can meet these minimum standards before undertaking ownership of a cat.

### 4. Definitions

For the purposes of this code the following definitions apply:

**Authorised officer:** means an officer authorised under the *Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act 1994*.

**Domestic animal business:** means

- (a) an animal shelter, council pound or pet shop;
- (b) a cat breeding enterprise that is run for profit in which:
  - (i) the enterprise has more than 10 fertile female animals; or
  - (ii) the enterprise has less than 10 fertile female animals but the owner is not a member of an applicable organisation under the *Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994*; or
- (c) a cat rearing, training or boarding enterprise that is run for profit.

**Owner:** includes any person who owns, has care or custody of, or keeps or harbours, a cat for the time being whether the cat is at large or in confinement.

**Queen:** means an entire female cat of breeding age.

**Veterinarian:** means a registered veterinary practitioner.

## 5. Legal responsibilities

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* sets out the offences for failing to properly care and provide for your cat. This Act also covers offences such as deliberate cruelty, ill treatment, causing unnecessary or unreasonable pain or suffering, and abandonment.

The *Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act 1994* sets out requirements such as registration, confinement and identification of cats and the powers of local councils to ensure these requirements are met.

### ***Minimum Standards***

- Owners must provide their cat with proper and sufficient food, water, shelter and veterinary treatment.
- Cats must be treated humanely.
- Owners must ensure that they abide by legislative requirements including:
  - Cats must be registered with, and identified as required by, the local council.
  - Cats must not be allowed to create a nuisance problem.
- Found or stray cats in the possession of a person, other than the owner, must be handed over to the local council as soon as possible.
- Cats must be microchipped where required by legislation.

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

All cats should be microchipped to ensure they are permanently identified. Owner contact details need to be kept up to date with the microchip registry.

Cats should be kept indoors at night (house, enclosure, shed or garage) and preferably confined to the property at all times both for the cat's welfare, to prevent nuisance problems (for instance, trespassing and spraying on private property) occurring and to protect native wildlife.

### ***Guidelines***

Local councils or animal welfare shelters should be contacted promptly in regard to a lost cat to see if it has been found and impounded. It is

important to start looking for a missing cat immediately as pounds are only required to hold stray and impounded cats for 8 days, after which they may be euthanased or rehoused.

It is a legal requirement to hand over stray cats as soon as possible to the local council, as they are the first point of call for any owner who has lost their cat. They will check the cat for identification, such as a registration tag or microchip, which can identify the owner. Just because a cat is straying does not mean it is unowned or unwanted.

Councils have specific local laws and orders regarding cat management and cat owners need to be aware of these and abide by them. Local laws/orders cover issues such as the number of cats allowed per property, confinement of cats and banning the presence of cats in certain areas such as sensitive fauna reserves.

## 6. Owner responsibilities

### ***Minimum Standard***

- Owners are responsible for the health and welfare of their cat(s) and must provide both the basic necessities and a good quality of life for their cat(s).

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

Choose a cat breed most suitable to your lifestyle and circumstances. When selecting a new cat you should consider:

- activity level of cat (some breeds are more active than others)
- grooming requirements (long compared to short hair)
- breed temperament
- colour of nose and ears (if white or non-pigmented they will be predisposed to skin cancer and need to be kept inside)
- other breed characteristics, eg Siamese are highly vocal
- known breed problems (eg breed associated genetic disorders that may develop later in life) - ensure parents have been tested for such disorders where possible
- degree of human socialisation (eg. wild born kittens generally do not make good pets)
- cost of care and feeding.

Cats should be de-sexed from 8 weeks of age by a veterinarian to prevent indiscriminate breeding and for the cats' own welfare. If a cat is not desexed owners need to take steps to ensure that it will not be able to breed unwanted litters (ie confine females when on heat). Males should be

desexed to prevent nuisance behaviours ie urine marking habits, reduce fighting and prevent siring of litters.

### ***Guidelines***

Good cat welfare depends on owner and handler competency. Owners need to understand and provide appropriate care, handling and management requirements of their cat. Expert advice is readily available from veterinarians, cat organisations and councils (refer to Appendix 1). A list of further reading on cats is included in this code (see Section 19).

## **7. Nutrition**

### ***Minimum Standards***

- Cats must be fed at least once a day.
- Cats must be fed a diet that provides proper and sufficient food to maintain good health and meet their physiological needs.
- Cats are carnivores and must not be fed a purely vegetarian diet.
- Cats must not be fed a diet consisting purely of fresh meat (including fish).
- Kittens from 6 weeks to 6 months of age must be fed a minimum of 2 meals per day.
- Cats must not be fed dog food as it lacks nutrients that cats require.

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

Cats need to be fed a well-balanced diet to maintain health, vitality and body weight in the correct range for their breed and age. Regularly monitor a cat's body condition to ensure its diet is adequate (see body condition category section below and Appendix 3).

Cats should be fed at least once daily. However it is recommended that cats are fed twice daily (to avoid overfeeding divide the daily feed into two smaller meals) as their feeding habits are more for small frequent meals rather than one large meal. As a general guide a moderately active cat requires around 70 Kcal x body weight (kg) of food a day.

Diets composed entirely of vegetable matter are not nutritionally adequate for cats, even if such diets are sufficiently palatable to be readily eaten. Nor should cats be fed a diet solely of fresh meat (including fish), as the required minerals and other nutrients will not be provided.

A balanced diet is important as cats have specific nutrient requirements and sensitivities; eg excessive feeding of liver will cause Vitamin A toxicity problems. If not feeding a commercial cat food to your cat, seek veterinary advice to ensure a properly balanced diet is being provided for your cat.

Cats have differing nutritional requirements depending on their stage of life, amount of exercise and physiological needs, eg during growth (kittens), pregnancy, lactation (kittens suckling), old age and cold weather. They may require food of differing nutritional value rather than just a greater or lesser volume. As a guide the feeding instructions on the can or pack can be followed.

It is important that the body condition of pregnant or lactating queens is maintained within the ideal body weight range to avoid the development of metabolic diseases. Lactating queens usually have increased nutritional requirements to enable them to maintain body weight while feeding kittens and need to be carefully monitored.

Kittens have special feeding requirements and require more food (per kilogram of body weight) because in addition to requiring energy for maintenance and activity they need extra nutrients for growth. A number of small meals need to be provided daily as their daily requirement of food is greater than their stomach can accept in one feed. Ideally kittens up to 12 weeks of age should be fed 3-4 meals a day, from 12 weeks to 6 months 2-3 meals a day and from 6 months 1-2 meals a day.

Kittens should be fed on commercial kitten food or a balanced diet specially formulated and discussed with a veterinarian to ensure all nutrient requirements are being met. Poor nutrition during this growth stage can create health/skeletal problems in later life

Cats and especially kittens can be lactose intolerant so feeding cow's milk is not recommended. If giving milk to a cat it should be lactose free milk designed for cats.

Cats should be provided with raw bones regularly for good dental health (eg raw chicken wings). Cooked bones should not be fed as they are likely to splinter and may lodge in the cat's throat or intestine causing serious health problems. If cats have trouble with bones they need to be provided with an alternative chewing item in order to maintain good dental health (seek advice from your veterinarian).

A separate food bowl needs to be provided for each cat and should be maintained in a clean condition.

## **Guidelines**

Obesity is a major health and welfare problem for cats, which is often not recognised by owners. It is important to regularly assess whether your cat is receiving too little or too much food by its body condition. By monitoring your cat's body condition you can adjust their diet to ensure they are maintained in good condition without becoming overweight.

### **Guidelines for checking if your cat is at an ideal weight/condition**

#### **Body condition categories:**

Underweight	Ribs are easily seen, obvious waist and no fat cover under the skin.
Ideal	Outline of the ribs can be felt but not seen with slight fat covering. Cat has a waist when viewed from above.
Overweight	Ribs cannot be easily felt. Cat has no waist when viewed from above. Belly is obviously rounded. Cat has excessive filled skin flap in front of hind leg.

\*Appendix 3 has diagrams that provide a visual assessment of a cat's body condition.

In general cats should be maintained in an 'ideal' body condition. Both underweight and overweight cats can have serious health and welfare problems and veterinary advice should be sought for these cats.

Feed a complete commercial cat or kitten food, as this should provide the appropriate amounts of protein, fat, vitamins and minerals. The quantity of food required is usually indicated on the food package label however caution should be applied as the suggested amounts may not be appropriate for your cat. If feeding a home prepared diet consult a veterinarian to ensure all necessary nutrients are being provided for the cat.

Care should be taken when introducing a new food to ensure it provides adequate nutrition as sudden changes in diet can upset a cat's digestive system.

Feeding an inappropriate diet to cats can cause metabolic disease, vomiting or diarrhoea or problems such as skin disorders. Veterinary advice should be sought where such problems are suspected.

Moist or semi-moist food should not be left out ad lib as it may spoil or attract flies or vermin.

**If there is any doubt about the appropriate feeding of a cat, advice should be obtained from a veterinarian.**

## 8. Water

### ***Minimum Standards***

- Cats must have access to clean drinking water at all times.
- Water containers must be checked daily and maintained in a clean condition.

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

Water should be provided in a container that is not easily tipped over. The container should be large enough or refilled often enough to provide access to water twenty-four (24) hours a day.

Water containers should be of a design that is easily cleaned and does not cause injury to the cat.

If kittens are present, the container should not be so large or deep that they can fall in and drown.

### ***Guidelines***

As a general guide the amount of water needed daily by an adult cat is 50 ml water per 1 kilogram of body weight (more for a lactating queen).

An individual cat's daily water requirement varies depending on factors such as daily temperature, amount of exercise, water content of diet (ie greater water requirements if fed dry food compared to canned food), age etc.

## 9. Health and disease

### ***Minimum Standards***

- A cat's health and welfare must be checked daily.
- Veterinary advice must be promptly sought for cats showing signs of parasites, injury, ill health or distress.
- Cats must be treated regularly for internal and external parasites and vaccinated against common diseases.

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

When checking daily for health problems: examine the cat's physical condition, check for signs of ill health and make sure that the cat is eating, drinking, toileting and behaving normally. (Refer 'indicators of health' in Appendix 2).

It is important to present sick or unwell animals for examination early in the course of a disease as this gives the veterinarian the best opportunity to quickly return the pet to good health.

Cats should receive an annual health check by a veterinarian. More frequent checks may be needed for older cats or those with health problems.

Regular vaccinations for the control of contagious diseases, as well as preventative treatments for internal (ie worms) and external (ie fleas) parasites need to be provided to safeguard the general health of cats. Frequency of treatment depends on the product used and life stage of the cat.

Kittens should be vaccinated (at least 8 days prior to rehoming), wormed and desexed before going to a new home. They require a course of vaccinations from 6-8 weeks of age. Kittens also require more frequent worming than adults, starting at 2 weeks of age. Seek veterinary advice regarding vaccination and worming regimes.

Cats should receive regular check ups of their teeth for dental problems and be fed raw bones or other appropriate chewing/teeth cleaning substitutes to help prevent dental problems from occurring. Talk to a veterinarian for advice on dental health.

Cats should be groomed regularly if they have a long coat. Severe matting of the coat is not acceptable and requires a veterinarian or experienced groomer to correct this problem. To avoid this matting long-haired cats will require regular grooming and may require clipping (this should be done by a veterinarian or experienced person).

Scratching posts should be provided for cats. Clipping of nails of cats which are allowed outside is not recommended as blunt nails will affect the cat's ability to climb and escape from dangers such as dogs. Clipping of nails should be done by an experienced person or veterinarian.

White or light coloured cats, particularly those with white or non-pigmented ears, eyelids and noses, are prone to sunburn and skin cancers. Precautions, such as use of sunscreen, should be taken to protect the vulnerable areas or alternatively keep white cats indoors especially during the heat of the day.

Due to the risk of miscarriage or foetal abnormalities through contracting toxoplasmosis pregnant women should practice extra care around cats and never handle litter trays or faeces without wearing gloves and following strict hygiene guidelines.

Keep any poisons used in the house, garden or work place stored away from any areas which your cat may have access to.

### ***Guidelines***

Some animal diseases and parasites are transferable to humans (zoonoses). It is important that those handling cats practice good personal hygiene, particularly when cleaning out litter trays.

Cats can appear quite resilient to pain and may just go quiet or hide as a response to injury or disease. This does not mean that they are not in pain or injured. Abnormal behaviours can indicate underlying health problems and a veterinarian should be consulted.

Human medicines should not be given to cats except on veterinary advice as they can be harmful.

## **10. Breeding and reproduction**

### ***Minimum Standards***

- A breeding cat must be free of disease, and be fit and healthy.
- Cats with a known history of physical or genetic defects (that will affect the cat or its progeny's quality of life) must not be used for breeding.
- Female cats must not be bred before 9 months of age.
- Veterinary advice must be sought immediately there are any concerns about a pregnancy or labour.
- Kittens must not be separated from the mother before 7 weeks of age and not sold or given away before 8 weeks of age.

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

If it is not intended to use a male or female cat for responsible breeding purposes then they should be desexed by a veterinarian. Desexing can be done safely from 8 weeks of age and preferably before puberty (around 4 months of age).

Before breeding, cats should be health-checked by a veterinarian. This will include checking for any known breed genetic defects (that will affect the cat or its progeny's quality of life). Inherited defects may detract from the cat's overall health and cause pain or discomfort which cannot be cured and animals with such defects should not be bred from.

Females must not be bred before 9 and preferably not before 12 months of age. Although female cats (queens) can physically produce 2 or 3 litters per year, breeding should be restricted to a maximum of 2 litters in any 18-month period.

### ***Guidelines***

Desexing has positive welfare and health benefits for cats as well as preventing them from straying and calling (howling). It is not necessary for the psychological or physical welfare of female cats to have a litter of kittens.

If a female cat is not desexed it can be placed on a contraceptive where prescribed by a registered veterinary practitioner. Once on heat a cat may remain on heat (ie receptive to mating) until she is pregnant. A cat on heat will call loudly and often, roll on the floor, rub against people and items in the house and be anxious to get outside. Seek veterinary advice about contraception and what to do if your female cat comes into season.

If you intend to breed from your cat, contact a veterinarian or cat organisation to obtain information on health, nutrition and birth procedures.

Gestation (length of pregnancy) is generally nine weeks (about 63 days). A pregnant queen has increased health requirements and requires regular veterinary checks during the pregnancy.

A suitable warm and safe environment needs to be provided for the queen to give birth. In general labour will be over within 2-4 hours and there should be no more than 30 minutes between the birth of each kitten. If more than 10 minutes has passed after the appearance of the nose or legs of the kitten without delivery being completed or the cat or kittens appear distressed seek veterinary help.

Owners inexperienced in the birthing of cats should seek advice from their veterinarian or an experienced breeder and preferably have an experienced person present.

**Veterinary advice should be immediately sought if there are any concerns regarding a labour.**

## 11. Surgical procedures

### ***Minimum Standards***

- Surgical procedures (eg desexing) must only be carried out by a veterinarian.
- Cats must not be de-clawed except by a veterinarian and then only for therapeutic purposes.

## 12. Housing

### ***Minimum Standards***

- Cats must be provided with access to adequate shelter from sun, wind and rain.
- If not kept in the house, a cat must be provided with access to a weather-proof sleeping area with a bed.
- Adequate ventilation must be provided if cats are housed in enclosed areas or buildings to prevent build up of stale air and odours that can cause respiratory problems in cats.
- Cats must not be tethered at any time.
- Enclosures for cats must meet the minimum standards set out in Appendix 4.
- All housing areas for cats must be maintained in a safe, clean and hygienic condition at all times.
- When confining cats there must be no dangerous items or sharp edges used in the structure or fencing.
- Cat litter must be cleaned daily to remove urine and faeces.
- Disinfectants containing phenol must never be used around cats.

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

Cats should be confined to the owner's property from dusk until dawn and preferably at all other times, for the protection of the cat's welfare. Keeping cats confined reduces the chances of them being hit by cars or involved in fights with other cats or dogs, contracting diseases such as cat flu and feline AIDS from other cats as well as protecting them from poisons, theft or trapping. It also reduces predation by cats on wildlife. Cats are generally

sedentary animals and can be confined to the owner's property at all times without a risk to their welfare providing environmental needs are met (including exercise eg through play).

If cats are kept inside on a permanent basis, they need to be provided with a litter box placed well away from the cat's eating and sleeping areas. Litter must be cleaned daily to remove urine and faeces for hygiene reasons. Many cats will not use soiled litter and will therefore soil elsewhere in the home.

Cats require some exposure to sunlight to ensure good health. If they are kept indoors for long periods access to sunlight through a window or fly screen is usually sufficient.

Care should be taken to protect cats from hazards within the household such as electrical appliances, power cords, household poisons and water sources such as toilets or swimming pools.

Suitable accommodation and carers must be provided for cats when owners go away on holidays eg a boarding cattery that is registered with the local council or ensure a responsible person is providing the necessary daily care for the cat.

### ***Guidelines***

Cats can be contained to their property by:

- Keeping them in the house at all times;
- Building or buying cat enclosures, these can be separate or connected to a cat door into the house;
- Enclosing verandahs; or
- Making property fences cat proof, eg placing netting at an inward angle on top of the fence or adding a ledge to the inside of the fence so that cats cannot climb over.

Cat modules/enclosures can be created either separately or linked to the house and can be a great way to provide an interesting environment while containing cats to the property. Such cat housing needs to be easily cleaned and maintained and human access points are needed in case of emergencies.

An important aspect of cat enclosures is the complexity of the environment. Cats require regular exercise. Environmental enrichment and exercise needs can be met through the use of platforms at different heights in the vertical space connected by walkways (static and swinging), climbing frames and an interesting visual outlook. Constant confinement without stimulation for exercise and play can lead to a dull, apathetic cat or to the development of destructive behaviour. Scratching poles need to be provided for confined cats.

In a group enclosure a number of hiding and escape areas should be provided to create a refuge from other cats and humans. Group housing pens should have a scratching pole and at least two levels joined by a climbing plank. When cats are group housed they should be socially compatible. It is strongly recommended that only desexed cats and/or female cats are group housed, entire male cats should be housed individually to avoid conflict or else only with desexed cats provided they are compatible.

Cats also respond to visual stimulation so enclosures for solitary cats should be situated where the cat can see other activities.

For further information on confining cats obtain a copy of '*Make sure your cat naps when you do*' or '*How to build cat proof fencing or enclosures*' brochures from your local council, or visit [www.pets.info.vic.gov.au](http://www.pets.info.vic.gov.au).

### 13. Transport

#### ***Minimum Standards***

- Cats must be confined in a secure, escape-proof, well-ventilated container when travelling.
- Travelling containers/cages must enable cats to comfortably stand, turn around, lie down and act normally.
- Adequate ventilation must be provided in the vehicle and travelling container/cage. For containers/cages this means multiple holes on at least three sides of the container/cage.
- Travelling containers must not have any projections that may cause injury to the cat.
- Travelling containers must be secured or restrained in the vehicle.
- Cats must not be transported in the boot of a car.
- Cats must not be left unattended in the car if there is a possibility of heat stress occurring or in situations of extreme cold.

#### ***Recommended Best Practice***

Cats should be adequately restrained when travelling inside a vehicle for the safety of both the cat and human passengers. Unrestrained cats can cause accidents and should never be allowed in the vicinity of the driver. In the case of an accident, an unrestrained cat may become a projectile and can damage itself and/or the occupants of the vehicle.

If a cat must be left in a parked car, lock all doors, park in a shady area and open windows wide enough to provide ventilation (without enabling the cat to escape or get its head caught). Leave water available in a container that will not tip over. Be aware that the interior of a car can rapidly become hot enough to cause heat stress and even death in a cat even on mild days.

If being transported long distances, cats should be given regular opportunities to drink. Temperature and transporting conditions should be taken into account when determining the frequency of provision of water. The best way to provide water is via a container within the cat's basket that can be filled without opening the basket. If the basket has to be opened caution should be taken to ensure the cat does not escape.

Cats should also be fed at least once every 24 hours and have regular access to a litter tray and water if these are not provided in the travelling container.

### ***Guidelines***

If a cat is not accustomed to car travel, take it for a few short rides before taking it on a long trip. If the cat is very anxious or suffers from motion sickness it may be medicated under veterinary advice.

When cats are being transported by air the international air transport association regulations will apply.

## **14. Training and Socialisation**

### ***Minimum Standard***

- Training methods used with cats must be humane and not cause pain or distress.

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

Cats should be trained to fit in with the life of their owners (eg trained to not jump onto tables).

Cats do not require obedience training but do require familiarisation/training with any new experience or environment and socialisation with other cats, animals and humans.

It is important that from as young as 3 weeks of age, cats have regular social contact with a human carer. Cats also need plenty of stimulation

(both mental and physical) so toys and a stimulating environment need to be provided. Teach family, friends and children how to properly interact with cats.

Cats should be toilet trained to use a litter tray. If unsure how to do this seek advice from a veterinarian or experienced person.

Collars should be elasticised or 'quick release' so the cat will not choke if the collar gets caught. They need to be snug fitting to ensure paws can not get caught up in them but not so tight that they rub or choke the cat. Collars should be checked daily for any sign of rubbing or injury.

Collars, travel/carry cages and harnesses used for leading should be introduced gradually. Where a cat is trained to lead, the lead should be attached to a harness and not to a collar.

### ***Guidelines***

Care is needed when introducing a new cat into a household with existing cats or dogs. Introduce a new cat slowly and under supervision to ensure any conflict over territory or hierarchy is minimised.

New cats should be kept inside for a period of at least 2 weeks to enable the cat to become familiar with its surroundings. Young kittens should be supervised outside until at least 5-6 months of age as they are too young to protect themselves from predators and other hazards.

Young children should not be left unsupervised around cats.

## **15. Injury and other welfare risks for cats**

### ***Minimum Standard***

- Injured or ill cats must be promptly taken to a veterinarian or an animal shelter with a veterinary clinic for examination and treatment.

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

Cats should be confined at night. Most injuries to cats can be prevented by confinement, particularly at night. Cats that are not confined are susceptible to developing abscesses or diseases from fighting, suffering injuries caused by being hit by a car and are at risk of dog attack or being trapped. Most nuisance problems caused by cats also occur at night.

An injured cat should be handled carefully as it can react aggressively from fear and pain. If handling an injured cat, it should be supported carefully to prevent worsening of injuries, confined and veterinary attention sought quickly. Keeping the cat in the dark while seeking help may calm it and reduce fear. If an injured stray cat cannot be safely handled you should contact your local council so it can be picked up and taken for treatment.

Many cats are fearful of fireworks and/or thunderstorms. Bring cats inside or if this is not possible, make sure they are housed or confined securely so that they cannot escape or harm themselves. If a cat is affected by this problem contact your veterinarian for advice.

## 16. What if you are unable to keep your cat?

### ***Minimum Standard***

- It is an offence to dump or abandon a cat or kitten.

### ***Guidelines***

Circumstances may arise that mean owners are no longer able to keep a cat or kittens. In this situation either find an appropriate new home for them, surrender them to the local council or an animal shelter or have a veterinarian put them to sleep (euthanase them).

Abandonment of cats can lead to suffering for the animal as a result of starvation, disease or injury and is illegal.

## 17. Trapping stray and feral cats

### ***Minimum Standards***

- Trapping methods must be humane.
- Trapping must be carried out in accordance with legislative requirements and the DPI information note for the humane trapping of cats.
- Steel leg-hold, snares or noose traps must not be used.
- Water must be provided if cats are held in cages for any period of time, especially in warm weather.
- Shelter must be provided to cats held in cages to protect from sun and rain.

- Trapped cats must be handed to an authorised officer of the local council as soon as possible.
- Cats must not be kept in trap cages for any longer than 24 hours.
- Trapped cats must be placed in a quiet location away from other animals and people until handed to the local council.
- Feeding wild/feral cats must not be practised (except if undertaking an appropriate trapping program).

### ***Recommended Best Practice***

Trapping, utilising a pressure plate cage trap, is the recommended method of trapping cats as it is an effective and humane method to catch and remove cats, particularly for those that are wild and not able to be handled.

Trapped cats need to be promptly handed to an authorised officer of the local council or their contracted pound/shelter facility. Trap type cages are unsuitable for housing cats for long periods and ideally for no more than a few hours. Cats in cages for longer than a couple of hours must be provided with water. Ideally cover cages holding cats with a permeable cloth or cover e.g. sheet or blanket as this minimises stress.

### ***Guidelines***

Trapping of cats can be done to catch wild unowned cats or when a cat is on private property without the owner's permission, but must be carried out in accordance with legislative requirements and the DPI Information Note for the humane trapping of cats.

Feeding wild/feral cats must not be practised as it promotes their reproduction and increases the risk of wildlife predation, and injury of pet cats due to fighting.

## **18. Euthanasia**

### ***Minimum Standards***

- Euthanasia must be humane.
- Cats and kitten must not be killed by being poisoned, drowned or gassed.

***Recommended Best Practice***

Euthanasia should be undertaken only by a veterinarian or person who is appropriately trained in humane euthanasia. The recommended method of euthanasia is by lethal injection administered by a veterinarian however a gun shot at close range into the brain by a licensed and proficient person is also acceptable.

Gassing using car exhaust fumes is inhumane, because the exhaust fumes are hot and contain various irritant compounds.

Drowning and poisoning are not humane methods of euthanasia.

**19. Further reading**

*Everycat* (1997) by Eric Allan and Lynda Bonning, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

*The Domestic Cat* (1998) by Dennis Turner and Patrick Bateson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Brochures available from your local council (produced by DPI):

- *Pet Registration*
- *Make sure your cat naps when you do*
- *The 10 commandments of responsible pet ownership*
- *How to build cat proof fencing & cat enclosures*
- *If you love your cat, tag it*
- *The time to desex is when you get your pet*
- *Microchip for life*
- *Things you should know about pet shops*
- *Things you should know about breeding establishments*
- *Dogs, cats, neighbours and you* (brochure produced by Victorian Law Foundation)
- *Humane Trapping of Cats Information Note* (Agnote)

Many of these brochures as well as other information is available at either [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare) or [www.pets.info.vic.gov.au](http://www.pets.info.vic.gov.au)

***Or phone the DPI Customer Service Centre on 136186***

## Appendix 1: Organisations that can provide further information

Organisation	Phone number	Web site
Australian Veterinary Association or your local veterinarian	see Yellow Pages directory	<a href="http://www.ava.com.au">www.ava.com.au</a>
Bureau of Animal Welfare	136 186	<a href="http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare">www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare</a>
Cat Protection Society of Victoria	(03) 9434 7155	<a href="http://www.catprotection.com.au">www.catprotection.com.au</a>
Feline Control Council	(03) 9720 8811	<a href="http://www.hotkey.net.au/fccvic">www.hotkey.net.au/fccvic</a>
Governing Council of Cat Fancy	(03) 9752 4217	<a href="http://www.cats.org.au">www.cats.org.au</a>
Local councils	see Yellow Pages directory	<a href="http://www.mav.asn.au">www.mav.asn.au</a>
Lort Smith Animal Hospital	(03) 9328 3021	<a href="http://www.lortsmith.com">www.lortsmith.com</a>
The Lost Dogs' Home	(03) 9329 2755	<a href="http://www.dogshome.com">www.dogshome.com</a>
Petcare Information and Advisory Service		<a href="http://www.petnet.com.au">www.petnet.com.au</a>
RSPCA (Victoria)	(03) 9224 2222	<a href="http://www.rspcavic.org">www.rspcavic.org</a>
The Cat Authority of Victoria	(03) 5986 1119 or 0417 597 241	<a href="http://www.alphalink.com.au/~cavinc/cavindex.htm">www.alphalink.com.au/~cavinc/cavindex.htm</a>
Victorian Animal Aid Trust	(03) 9725 5608	<a href="http://www.vaat.org.au">www.vaat.org.au</a>

## Appendix 2: Indicators of cat health status

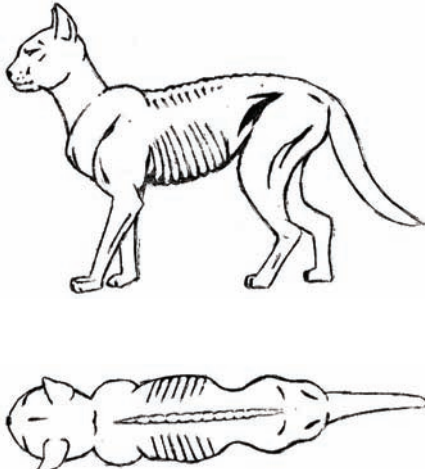
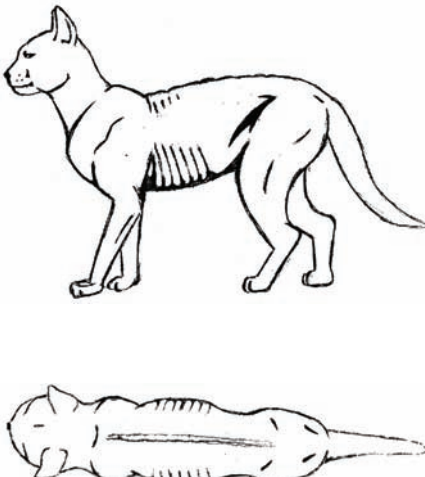
### 1. Signs of ill-health are:

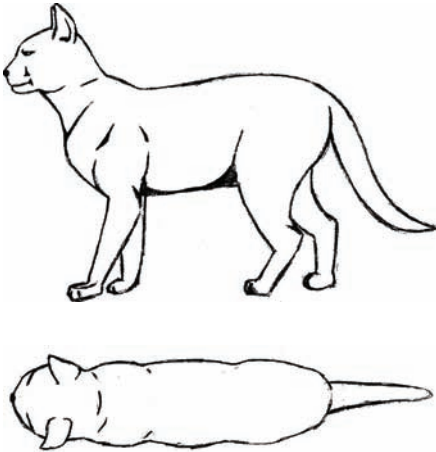
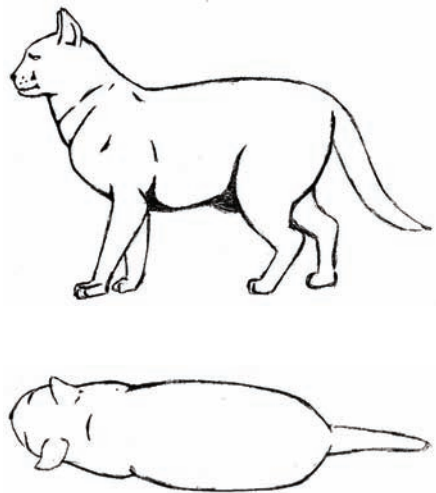
- Marked increase in appetite or water consumption
- Loss of appetite or weight loss
- Unusually dull or lethargic
- Vomiting or diarrhoea
- Straining to urinate or pass a bowel motion
- Runny or weepy nose or eyes
- Lameness, difficulty standing or walking or a reluctance to move about
- Bleeding that has not stopped in a few minutes
- Swelling of any body part
- Apparent pain or discomfort
- Sneezing or coughing repeatedly
- Difficulty breathing, excessive or prolonged panting
- Patchy or excessive hair loss
- Scratching at or shaking the head repeatedly
- Persistent scratching of body or tail
- Wounds or inflamed areas
- Loss of balance
- Fits or seizures
- Hiding or not wanting to be touched
- Any other physical or behavioural abnormality

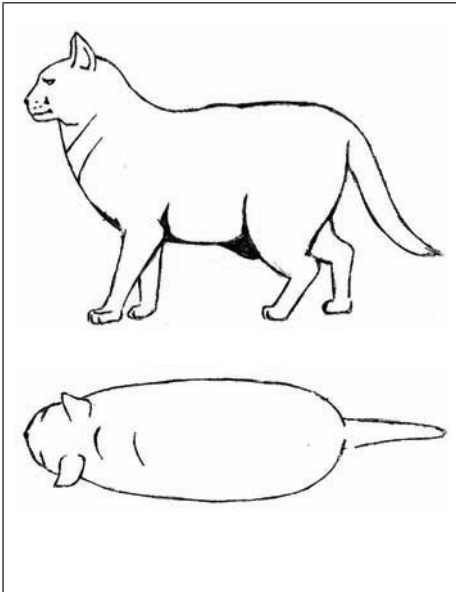
### 2. Signs of a healthy cat are:

- Bright, alert and responsive
- Clean, shiny coat free of bare patches
- Free of wounds, parasites, swelling or lumps
- Healthy appetite, normal weight and "ideal" body condition
- Moving freely and easily when walking or running
- Passes a bowel motion at least once a day but does not have diarrhoea
- Urinating at regular intervals through the day
- Free of abnormal discharges from eyes, nose, mouth or ears
- Not coughing or sneezing excessively
- Free from abnormal odours

## Appendix 3: Body Condition Chart – Cats

	<p><b>EMACIATED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Individual ribs, spine and pelvis prominent and evident from a distance</li> <li>▪ Lack of muscle mass</li> <li>▪ Little or no body fat</li> <li>▪ Rump hollow</li> <li>▪ Waist prominent when viewed from above</li> <li>▪ Neck thin</li> <li>▪ No flank fold (under belly), abdomen very tucked up</li> </ul> <p><b>Veterinary advice must be sought.</b></p>
	<p><b>THIN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ribs, spine and pelvis bones visible and easily felt</li> <li>▪ Little body fat</li> <li>▪ Neck thin</li> <li>▪ No flank fold (under belly), abdomen tucked up</li> <li>▪ Obvious waist when viewed from above</li> </ul> <p>Increase feeding and worm cat if not wormed recently (ensure all-wormer used – some products do not cover all worms).</p> <p>Seek veterinary advice if cat remains underweight or unsure of feeding or worming regime.</p>

	<p><b>IDEAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ribs and spine can be felt, last few ribs may be visible</li> <li>▪ Flank fold (under belly) may be visible from side</li> <li>▪ Cat should have a waist when viewed from top</li> <li>▪ Good muscle mass</li> </ul>
	<p><b>OVERWEIGHT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ribs and spine not visible but can be felt</li> <li>▪ Little or no waist when viewed from above, rounded appearance</li> <li>▪ Flank fold (under belly) clearly visible and will wobble when cat moves. Belly and chest rounded</li> <li>▪ Large ventral fat pad covering hind legs</li> </ul> <p>Reduce feed intake or provide lower calorie feed. Consider options to increase exercise level of cat.</p>



### **OBESE**

- Ribs and spine not visible and difficult to feel
- Tail has obvious fat deposit
- No waist and back broadened when viewed from above
- Flank fold (under belly) hangs down and will sway when cat moves, belly and chest very rounded

**Seek veterinary advice on diet and exercise regime.**

## Appendix 4: Cat enclosure standards

1. Where cats are permanently kept in an enclosure there must be at least 2 square metres floor space per cat unless otherwise stated by an applicable code of practice under the *Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act 1994*.
2. The main section of such an enclosure must be 1.8m high and should contain sleeping quarters, feeding area and provision of a litter tray (away from feeding/watering area).
3. Cats may also be multiple housed in colony pens however there must be no more than 8 cats per pen and all cats should be desexed. Entire females can be housed together however entire males must be housed separately from other entire cats of either sex. Every cat that is multiple housed must have an individual raised sleeping area and feed bowl. Enclosures need to incorporate a scratching pole and be designed to provide cats with at least two levels joined by a climbing plank and refuges.



