



## Fact Sheet

# Cats – Your Responsibilities

All sections referred to in this fact sheet refer to the *Domestic Animals Act 2000* (ACT) unless otherwise stated.

### Identifying and microchipping your cat

Unlike dogs, cats are not legally required to be registered in the ACT. However, cats are required to be identified (section 83 of the Act). The [Domestic Animals Regulation 2001 \(ACT\)](#) (*Regulation*) states that cats must be identified by a microchip. Microchips are tiny identification chips that are inserted under your cat's skin. The chip contains readable data about the identification of the cat and its owner. In the event a missing cat is found, this data can be easily accessed to aid in finding the owner.

Section 8 of the *Regulation* requires a cat to be microchipped if:

- it is at least 12 weeks old; or
- it has been sold.

However, a cat does not need to be identified if it is less than 6 months old and a vet states, in writing, before the cat was 12 weeks or first sold (whichever came first), that microchipping would be a serious health risk to the cat (section 8(2) of the *Regulation*).

Getting your cat microchipped is a simple process. Cats rarely show signs of discomfort when the chip is inserted. Microchips can be inserted by any veterinarian in Canberra, as well as by the [RSPCA](#) or by Domestic Animal Services (DAS) in Symonston. If you wish to get your cat microchipped by DAS, call Access Canberra on [13 22 81](#) before attending the shelter.

### De-sexing your cat

De-sexing your cat is important. It reduces the number of stray or feral cats that often have a terrible impact on birds, other wildlife, and the environment.

Given the impacts of abandoned and stray cats, it is a strict liability offence to keep a cat that has not been de-sexed (sections 74(2) and (3)). This means that even if you were unaware or had no intention to keep a cat that was not de-sexed, you can still be prosecuted.

A cat must be de-sexed unless (sections 74(4)):

- it is younger than three months;
- was born before 21 June 2001; or
- the owner holds a permit or breeding licence issued by the Registrar of Domestic Animal Services.

See the [RSPCA Vet Clinic](#) for more information about getting your cat de-sexed.



It is an offence to sell a cat that hasn't been desexed, is 3 months old or older, and that you don't hold a permit for, unless a vet has certified in writing that desexing would be a serious health risk for the cat (section 74A of the Act).

You can apply to the registrar for a permit (fee payable) to keep a cat that has not been de-sexed (section 75). An application form can be obtained from DAS.

## How many cats can I have?

Under section 84A of the *Domestic Animals Act* and section 9A of the Regulations it is an offence to keep four or more cats in one residential premises without a multiple cat licence. It is a strict liability offence (section 9A of the *Regulations*). This does not apply to cats: less than 84 days old; a cat kept for less than 28 days; if you reside in the ACT for less than 28 days; assistance animals; and cats in an animal care facility.

If you are interested in keeping multiple cats in 1 residential premises, you [may make an application to the registrar](#) to approve a multiple cat licence. The registrar will refuse any such application unless the residential premises can appropriately accommodate the amount of cats. The registrar may consider, for example, the size of the premises, the security of the premises and the potential impact on the occupiers of neighbouring premises (section 84C). The registrar may also impose certain conditions stated on the licence.

## Cat containment – why contain your cat?

In the ACT, research has found that domestic cats are responsible for killing 67 different species of birds and animals. Cat containment protects native wildlife in areas where cats pose a serious threat to native flora or fauna in the area. You can reduce this threat to native wildlife by keeping your cat confined to your premises. "Premises" means a completely or partly enclosed space from which a cat cannot escape, including a building (or part of a building), a vehicle, or a cat cage. You can contain your cat by keeping it indoors or in an outdoor cat enclosure (called a "cat run"), and by fixing a bell to your cat's collar to provide a warning to other animals.

## Do I have to contain my cat?

Yes, you will need to contain your cat [to your premises](#) if you live in the following areas, declared by the ACT Government as cat containment areas (section 81):

- Bonner
- Crace
- Coombs
- Denman Prospect
- Forde



- Jacka
- Lawson
- Molonglo
- Moncrieff
- The Fair at Watson
- Throsby
- Wright.



This is a cat containment symbol, and is used in cat containment areas to remind owners that their cats must be contained on their premises at all times.

If your cat is in one of the above areas and not confined to a keeper or a carer's premises (building, vehicle or cat cage), then you have committed a strict liability offence (section 82). Your cat can be seized (section 86) and you may be issued a fine of up to \$1500 (section 82).

## How do I contain my cat?

Cats can be kept indoors or in an outdoors purpose built enclosure where they can explore without the risk of roaming. See the [TCCS website](#) for some examples.

## I saw a cat roaming in a cat containment area!

If you see a cat roaming in a cat containment area you can contact DAS by email or on 13 22 81. As cats are difficult to catch and have often left the area once a ranger arrives, having details of the owner or a description of the cat is helpful.

## What happens if my cat is lost or has been seized?

Lost and found cat details are listed at <https://www.tccs.act.gov.au/city-living/pets/cats/lost-cats>. All cats found in the ACT are housed by the RSPCA who can be contacted on (02) 6287 8100. Your cat can be seized if it is found roaming in a cat containment area, or if it is not wearing identification (section 86). Arrangements will be made for the temporary care of the cat (section 87) and notice (oral or written) will be given to you if your cat can be identified (section 87). The notice should state (section 88):

- When and where the cat was seized
- The reason the cat was seized
- Where the cat can be claimed
- Information about and cost of implanting a microchip if the cat does not have a microchip



- That your cat may be sold or put down if not claimed
- The period the cat may be claimed before the above occurs
- That you may relinquish ownership of the cat

There may be a fee to pay for the release of your cat. Your cat may be sold or put down if the approved provider cannot identify the owner or if you do not notify the provider in writing that you wish to claim the cat within seven days of the notice given to you (section 90).

## Appealing a Decision

A number of the decisions made by the registrar, as set out above, are reviewable decisions, which means they can be reviewed by the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) (see sections 118 to 120 of the Act). For example, a refusal to issue a multiple cat licence is a reviewable decision. Schedule 1 to the Regulation has a full list of reviewable decisions. See ACAT for [more information](#) on the process of review.

## Where can I go for more information?

For further information on any of the information above, check out the [Transport Canberra and City Services](#), the [Access Canberra](#) website, [DAS](#) or the [RSPCA](#).

**Disclaimer:** The law described in this fact sheet is current at 30 June 2018. This fact sheet has been designed to give readers plain English background information in planning and environmental law in the ACT. It is brief, for general information purposes only and does not replace the need for professional legal advice in individual cases. To request free initial legal advice, please contact us on (02) 6243 3460. While every effort has been made to ensure the information is accurate, the EDO ACT does not accept any responsibility for any loss or damage resulting from any error in this fact sheet, or reliance or use of this work. Duplication and reproduction of the information is permitted with acknowledgment of the EDO ACT. This fact sheet was produced with the assistance of funds made available by the ACT Government through the Justice and Community Services Directorate.