

Relinquishing ownership

Cat ownership/guardianship is a commitment for the cat's lifetime, which can be up to 18 years. Best practice is to honour this commitment, except in extraordinary circumstances when best practice becomes responsible re-homing.

If such a situation arises, cats should be:

- rehomed to someone who is prepared to undertake the commitment of ownership/guardianship; or
- relinquished to an animal welfare shelter (such as SPCA) for adoption to a new owner/guardian.

It is an offence under the Animal Welfare Act & Auckland Regional Pest Management Plan to abandon a cat.

Did you know?

Every year SPCA shelters receive about 9,000 cats and 11,000 kittens, many of these in summer and especially after Christmas.

Before giving a kitten as a gift, be certain the recipient will be able to care for it long-term.



Cat welfare

The [Companion Cats Code of Welfare](#) provides minimum standards, best practices, and enforceable requirements for cat care under the Animal Welfare Act. Cat owners/guardians should familiarise themselves with the code.

The code covers a range of topics important for cat welfare, such as food, water, desirable body condition, hygiene, housing and caging requirements, behavioural and health issues, and transportation.

Routine veterinary care is important for cat welfare.

An important requirement of the code is that cats which are badly injured must either receive urgent vet care, SPCA inspectors must be made aware under the Animal Welfare Act, or alternatively, the cat humanely euthanised. It's also recommended this same approach is taken to cats whose ownership is unknown.

Anyone who witnesses pain or suffering inflicted on a cat in breach of the Animal Welfare Act should report the incident to the police and/or SPCA. If euthanasia is required, as a minimum legal standard:

- (a) when a cat is euthanised it must be carried out in such a way to ensure death occurs quickly; and
- (b) cats (including kittens) must not be killed by drowning (it is an offence under the Animal Welfare Act).

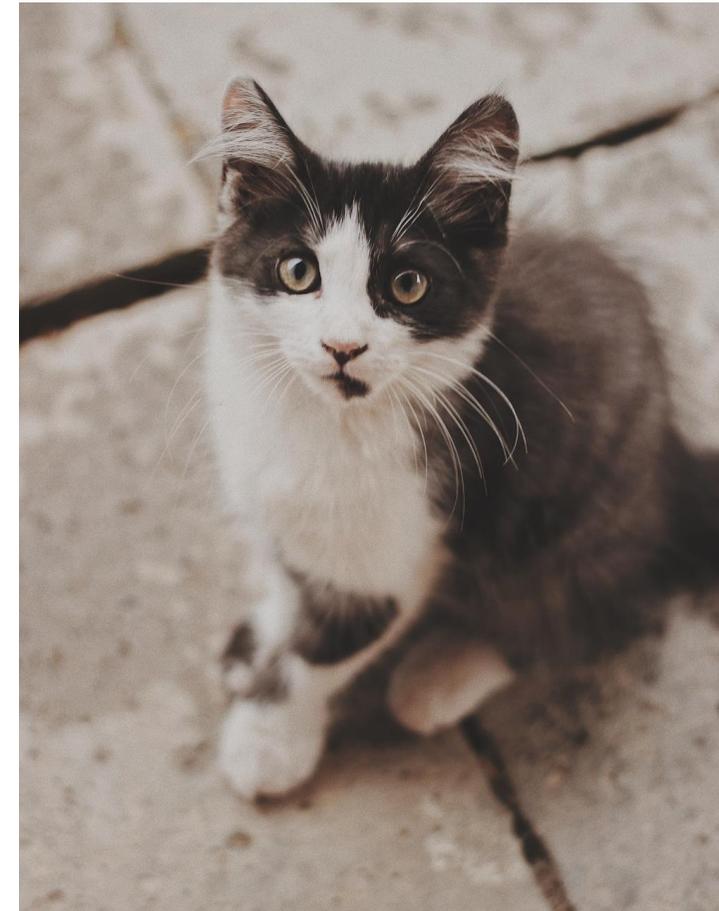
Euthanasia by a vet is best practice where possible, but the appropriate method of euthanasia may vary depending on the situation.



Phone 09 301 0101 or visit
aucklandcouncil.govt.nz



Best practice guidelines for cat ownership and welfare



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De-sexing

De-sexing is the most important and fundamental requirement of sustainable and humane cat management.

All kittens should be de-sexed before reaching puberty.

Older cats that were not de-sexed as kittens should be de-sexed as soon as practically possible.

Cats and kittens should always be de-sexed prior to sale or change of ownership, except registered breeding animals. This is the responsibility of the pet shop, breeder, rescue group or individual who is undertaking the sale or organising the adoption of any cat or kitten.

Did you know?

A female cat can have up to 300 kittens in her lifetime. In some parts of Auckland there can be more than 50 stray cats per km².

De-sex kittens early to avoid contributing to too many kittens without good forever homes.



Identification and safety

Cats can get lost. Microchipping is an effective way of ensuring your cat can be returned home safely. Microchips should be registered on the New Zealand [Companion Animal Register](#).

For kittens, microchipping and registration should be done at the same time as de-sexing.

Whenever cats make a visit to the vet, owners/guardians should ask the vet to check the microchip is still locatable and working.



A named and addressed collar may facilitate quick identification, but such collars must have elastic or quick release mechanisms for the cat's safety.

Did you know?

Following the 2011 Christchurch earthquake, 85% of microchipped animals were reunited with their owners, compared with just 15% for those without microchips.

Have you heard about [Ollie](#), the Auckland cat who was returned home safely after being found on the other side of the harbour bridge? He was found 30km from home – all thanks to his microchip.



Did you know?

A Wellington study found cats crossed an average of four roads per day and one “super cat” had a home range of 214 hectares!

Keep cats safe from getting lost, or from traffic injuries, dog attacks and cat fights by keeping them contained inside the home or on properties. This can help protect native wildlife as well.

Indoor/outdoor options such as ‘catios’ and cat-proof additions to fences can make it easier to have a stay-at-home cat. It may also be easier to get a kitten used to indoor lifestyle from early age rather than trying to convert an older cat.

However, it's essential a [stay-at-home](#) cat's [behavioural needs](#) can still be met.