

Cats and the law in the ACT

This fact sheet sets out important matters about cats and the law in the ACT including:

- How many cats a person can keep
- Whether or not cats have to be desexed
- Whether you need a licence to breed from a cat
- Whether cats have to be microchipped
- Whether cats have to wear a collar
- Where cats have to be kept inside at all times
- What a neighbour who doesn't like your cat can and can't do
- What rangers can do if they find your cat.

The main laws and guidelines covering cats in the ACT are:

- *Domestic Animals Act 2000*
- *Animal Welfare Act 1992*
- *Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats in the ACT (2007)*
- *Animal Welfare (Breeding Standard) Determination 2015 (No 1)*

DISCLAIMER

While all care has been taken in preparing the information on this fact sheet, it is not a substitute for legal advice. For any specific questions we recommend you seek legal advice. The Animal Defenders Office accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage suffered by people relying on the information on this fact sheet.

About us

The Animal Defenders Office (ADO) is a nationally accredited community legal centre that specialises in animal law. Our mission is to use the law to protect animals.

This includes:

- providing free advice about animals and the law;
- increasing public awareness about how the law affects animals; and
- working to improve animal protection through law reform.

How to help

The ADO relies solely on the generosity of the public to stay in operation. We do not receive any government assistance, and all our lawyers and staff are volunteers.

If you would like to support us, you can go to our website at www.ado.org.au.

Thank you

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CATS and the LAW in the ACT



Animal Defenders
Office



How many pet cats can you have in the ACT?

Each person in a residence can keep up to 3 pet cats at the residence. If a person wishes to keep more than 3 cats at the residence, the person must apply for a 'multiple cat licence'. It is an offence under ACT law if a person keeps 4 or more cats in the one residence without holding such a licence. You could be fined up to \$8,000 and/or be imprisoned for up to 6 months if you break this law.

If you do apply to the Domestic Animal Services ('DAS') for a licence, DAS will consider things such as the number of cats you want to keep, the size and security of your premises, the suitability of the facilities in which the cats will be kept, and the potential impact on your neighbours.

Do you have to get your cat desexed?

Yes, any cat who is 3 months or older must be desexed. The only exceptions are if:

- you hold a special permit, or
- your cat was born before 21 June 2001, or
- a veterinarian has certified in writing that desexing would pose a serious health risk to the animal.

If your cat isn't desexed and none of these exceptions applies, you could be fined up to \$8,000.

If you need to, you can prove your cat has been desexed by providing a certificate signed by a veterinary surgeon. ACT vets are also required to mark a cat's ear with a tattoo to show that the cat has been desexed.

Do you need a breeding licence for cats?

Yes. In the ACT anyone who breeds a litter from a cat needs to apply for a breeding licence. If you allow your cat to breed and do not have a breeding licence you could be fined up to \$8,000.

Do you have to have your cat microchipped?

Yes. Under ACT law a cat over 12 weeks old, or a cat being sold regardless of their age, **must** be identified by microchip. You may be fined up to \$2,400 if your cat isn't microchipped.

Does your cat have to wear a collar?

No. Only dogs are required by law to wear collars in the ACT.

Do you have to keep your cat inside your premises at all times?

You have to keep your cat within your premises only if you live in certain areas in the ACT. The Government declares which suburbs in the ACT are 'cat containment' areas. ACT cat containment areas include Bonner, Coombs, Crace, Denman Prospect, Forde, Jacka, Lawson, MacNamara, Molonglo, Moncrieff, Strathnairn, Taylor, Throsby, Wright, and certain parts of Watson (ie "The Fair" development) and the Gungahlin Town Centre (east).

You can be fined up to \$1,600 if your cat is found outside your premises in these areas.

Can a neighbour complain about your cat?

Yes. ACT law allows a person to complain to DAS about an 'animal nuisance'. A cat may cause an 'animal nuisance' if, for example, the cat damages property owned by someone other than the cat's keeper, or causes excessive disturbance to someone due to noise. You may be fined up to \$1,600 if you allow your cat to be an 'animal nuisance'. If you are convicted of an offence of 'animal nuisance' by a court, the court may order that your cat be sold or destroyed.

ACT law allows occupiers of premises to set certain traps on their own premises to catch a cat, but they must not harm the cat.

What can rangers do if they find your cat?

Authorised officers may seize a cat if the cat is:

- in a 'cat containment' area and is not kept in the premises of the cat's keeper or carer; or
- not identified; or
- causing an animal nuisance.

Terminology

Carer: in relation to a cat, means a person over 14 years of age who is in charge of the cat at a particular time.

DAS: means the Domestic Animal Services, which is a government organisation that administers the *Domestic Animals Act 2000* in the ACT.

Keeper: in relation to a cat, means the owner of the cat.