

Do I have to register my cat?

Yes. From 1 July 2022 all pet cats need to be registered every year. It is an offence to keep an unregistered cat, or for a person to keep a cat who is registered to someone else, unless the cat is < 8 weeks old or kept for < 28 days or you are in the ACT for < 28 days (\$350 fine for failure to comply).

If any of your details change (eg your address), you must notify DAS within 14 days (\$150 fine for failure to comply). If you give the cat to someone else, you and the new keeper must tell DAS within 14 days (\$250 fine for failing to comply).

What if I hit a cat while driving my car?

If you injure a cat, you are legally obliged to take reasonable steps to assist with the cat's injury, eg taking the cat to a vet. You must also tell Access Canberra or an RSPCA inspector or the animal's keeper, within 2 hours after the injury that the cat was injured and the location. Penalties apply.

Cats and the law in the ACT

Relevant laws and guidelines in the ACT are:

- *Domestic Animals Act 2000*
- *Domestic Animals Regulation 2001*
- *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 specific advice please contact the ADO or another lawyer. The ADO accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage suffered by a 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 main exceptions are if:

- you hold a permit to keep your cat 'entire', or
- a veterinarian has certified in writing that desexing would pose a serious health risk to the animal.

If your cat is not desexed and an exception does not apply, you could be fined \$350.

If you need to, you can prove your cat has been desexed by providing a certificate signed by a veterinarian. 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 \$1,500. The mother cat and the kittens can be seized by authorised officers if you breed a litter from your cat without a licence.

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 could receive a \$450 fine if your cat is not microchipped.

Do pet cats have to wear a collar?

No. Cats are legally required only to be identified by a microchip.

Do you have to keep your cat contained?

YES, if you live in a 'cat containment area'*.

YES, if you live anywhere in the ACT and your cat is born **after** 1 July 2022.

NO, if your cat is born **before** 1 July 2022 and you do not live in a 'cat containment area'*.

* ACT cat containment areas include Bonner, Coombs, Crace, Denman Prospect, Forde, Jacka, Lawson, MacNamara, Molonglo, Moncrieff, Strathnairn, Taylor, Throsby, Whitlam, Wright, and certain parts of Watson (ie "The Fair" development) and the Gungahlin Town Centre (east). Your cat is 'contained' if he or she is secured on your premises or in your car, or is controlled by a harness and leash.

You can receive a \$300 fine and your cat can be seized if your cat is found in breach of the cat containment rules.

Can a neighbour complain about your cat?

Yes. Members of the public can 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.

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

Keeper: in relation to a registered cat, means the registered keeper of the cat. If a cat isn't registered, it means the owner of the cat.