



Humane Cage Trapping of Domestic, Unowned and Wild Cats

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Cats are valued members of many families across Victoria, however, some cats can cause nuisance in their neighbourhoods; often these cats are unregistered, unowned or wild. Most Councils offer a cat trap hire service to their residents. Traps can also be purchased or hired from animal welfare and commercial organisations. This document sets out basic guidelines for humane cat trapping and highlights many of the welfare concerns associated with using cat traps and transporting cats once caught.

General Information

In Victoria, under the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 (the Act), property owners and occupiers have the right to seize or trap cats when they trespass on their properties. If a cat has been on your property more than once, without your permission, you may legally seize it, by containing the cat in your house or a box or by trapping the cat. Once a cat has been trapped or contained you must deliver, as soon as reasonably possible, the cat to an Authorised Officer (also known as a Ranger or Animal Management Officer) of the Council, Council Pound or Council contracted Animal Shelter. Do not dump the cat in the wild; it is an offence to abandon a cat under the Act.

Property owners and occupiers also have the right to seize or trap a cat if the Council has made an Order in relation to a cat curfew or no cat zone under the Act. The same rule applies that you must deliver, as soon as reasonably possible, the cat to an Authorised Officer of the Council, Council Pound or Council contracted Animal Shelter.

1. Equipment and Baits

Any method of trapping cats must be humane. There are two main designs of cat traps that are considered acceptable. These traps are usually rectangular wire cages and both are operated by the cat touching a metal plate on the floor of the trap with either a drop down guillotine-style or hinged swing-style door. It is illegal to use or set leg hold or steel jawed traps in urban areas and these traps are not suitable for the purpose of trapping cats in any area. Penalties apply for setting and using these types of traps under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act

1986. Hook operated cat traps should not be used for trapping cats, as the 'hook', used to hold the bait, can often injure a cat that has been caught.

The term bait is not to be confused as a poisoned bait; the term 'bait' is meant as the lure or food used to get the cat to enter the trap. Oily, fish-based baits are considered the best lure for cat trapping. Baits like cooked chicken or other meat on the bone are not appropriate as they can injure the cat if ingested.

Note: use of a poisoned bait would constitute an offence under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986.

2. Trapping Process

When undertaking a trapping process the following steps are recommended:

Feeding program – start by offering food over two or three nights in the area where you intend to set the trap to ensure the cat is willing to take the food.

Free feed the trap – lock or wire open the trap and place the food inside the trap for two or three nights so the cat becomes familiar entering the trap without risking scaring the cat.

Set Trap – place the food that you have been using during the free feed program in the end of the trap, and set the plate to operate the trap when a cat enters. Only set the trap when you are around to ensure you are prepared to monitor the trap and transport a trapped cat as soon as possible.

- Do not place traps on top of roofs, embankments or on slippery surfaces;
- Do not place trap in direct sunlight;
- Do not set the trap on days that are likely to exceed 27 degrees Celsius or when rain is expected, as these extremes of weather conditions will affect your success in trapping and may cause stress for the cats when trapped;
- Do not place a trap in an area where other pets can have access to or harass a trapped cat.

Monitor trap – cats, whether owned or not, when caught in a trap are likely to be stressed, even if it is for a short time. Ensure you are either home while the trap is set or able to

regularly check the trap during the day. At night, check the trap prior to going to sleep and first thing in the morning.

- Do not set the trap if you are not going to be at the property for an extended period or if you are going away on the weekend;
- Ensure you contact the Council to determine if they offer a collection service for trapped cats or how to access the Council pound if a cat is caught;
- Once a cat is caught, cover the trap with a blanket or something similar leaving the ends exposed for ventilation or remove the trap to a sheltered area where people, pets or other animals can not harass the cat. Many cats, even owned cats, can become very stressed while trapped and may take some time to calm down;
- Call the Council for pick up or transport the trap to Council pound or Animal Shelter;
- Where there may be a short delay (ie an hour or two) in collection of cat or drop off at the Council pound then offering the cat clean, cool water in a clean bowl would be beneficial, and is vital on hot days. Do not give a cat milk, as a majority of cats are lactose intolerant;
- Other than the bait used, do not give the cat extra food while in the trap. The Authorised Officer must feed the cat at the Council pound;
- If the cat is injured ensure you inform the Council of the injury immediately or take the cat to a vet. Council pounds and Animal Shelters have access to veterinarians to treat injured cats;
- Traps must be cleaned between catching cats to ensure no diseases are transferred from one trapped cat to another. Do not use disinfectants containing phenol, as cats are highly sensitive to this chemical.

3. Accidental trapping of other animals

There is a chance that while setting a trap to catch a cat, that you may catch another animal such as a possum or bird. This is another reason in being vigilant in inspecting the trap while free feeding and setting the trap.

When using cage traps you have the opportunity to release these animals immediately on identifying that you have accidentally caught an animal other than a cat.

If the animal is injured you will need to seek veterinary advice before releasing the animal.

4. Transporting trapped cats in private vehicles

- Organise to transport the cat directly to the Council pound or Council contracted animal shelter;
- Trapped cats must not be transported in the boot of a car;
- Transport the trapped cat in a well ventilated or air conditioned area such as the rear seat of a sedan or the cargo area of a utility;

- Be careful not to slide the cat trap on the back seat or floor of the cargo area as the trapped cat's paw may get caught through the mesh used in the floor of the trap;
- Cover the trap with an old blanket or towel to provide a darkened area for the cat to help to reduce stress on the cat while being transported;
- To further reduce stress for the trapped cat and reduce the chance of disease transfer do not transport a trapped cat with other pets;
- If transporting in a sedan, ensure the rear seat is covered to protect from urine and faeces. Ensure the cat trap cannot slide around by anchoring the trap with a seat belt in the back seat;
- If transporting in a utility or van ensure the cage is restrained to prevent the cage from sliding around in the cargo area. After you remove the trap and cat from the cargo area, clean the cargo area with a non-phenol based disinfectant.
- Disinfecting the cargo area can reduce the chance of disease transfer to future trapped cats, your own pets and zoonoses (diseases that can transferred between animals and humans) such as toxoplasmosis being contracted by a member of your family;
- Toxoplasmosis can be an issue for pregnant woman, as this parasitic disease can cause deformities in fetuses. It would be preferential for a pregnant woman not to handle a trapped cat. Although, if this cannot be avoided, as a zoonoses prevention measure, a pregnant woman must ensure while handling a trapped cat that they wear gloves and wash their hands with warm water and disinfectant before handling food or doing any other tasks around the house.

5. Result of trapping a cat

Once a cat is handed over to a Council, the Authorised Officer must assess the cat for identification, injuries, temperament and diseases to determine the appropriate action to take. If injured, the cat will be taken to a veterinary clinic for assessment and treatment (this cost may be passed onto the owner).

Identified owned cats

Identified cats will be impounded for a minimum of 8 days to give the owner an opportunity to claim the cat. The Council will contact the owner to advise them of the impounding of their cat and where it can be collected. Council pound fees often apply before a cat can be claimed. Unregistered cats must be microchipped and registered before the Council can release the cat to the owner. If the owner fails to collect the cat, the cat can be rehomed or destroyed by the Council after the 8th day. Where the cat has been trapped as a result of a complaint of trespassing on private property, the Council must issue a Notice of Objection to the cat owner. The Notice of Objection advises the cat owner of the address where the cat must not enter and that if the cat does enter this property again penalties can apply.

Unidentified owned cats that are not wild, uncontrollable or diseased cats

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Unidentified wild, uncontrollable or diseased cats

Council may destroy these cats immediately, which is usually in the best interest of the cat's own welfare and the welfare of other cats at the Council pound, especially in relation to possible diseases these cats may have. If the cat is deemed wild, uncontrollable or diseased the cat would not be considered suitable for rehoming.

6. Duty of care when trapping cats

While using cage traps to catch cats is legal in Victoria there is a duty of care when attempting to catch a nuisance cat.

Failure to properly monitor a cat trap or treat a trapped cat humanely can result in legal action under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 if it can be proved that the cat has been caused pain or suffering by your actions.

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