

The Cat Manifesto



CATS
PROTECTION

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Manifesto overview

Cats Protection campaigns to make sure cats are not forgotten by decision makers. Sadly, many cats continue to be victims of cruelty, neglect and poor welfare. We campaign on areas relevant to cat welfare to improve the lives of cats and to protect them from harm.

We're determined to stand up for every cat who needs us, no matter how difficult the circumstances.



Give cats their best life



All cats in the UK should have the best start and go on to be well cared for throughout their life. Pedigree cats are becoming more popular, so more people are trying to find ways to make a profit at the expense of the welfare of cats and kittens. Sometimes, even people with good intentions can harm cats by housing them inappropriately. Cats Protection is calling for changes to the law to give cats their best possible life.

- **Introduce cat breeding regulations** to protect the welfare of cats and kittens
- **Ban the breeding of cats with extreme characteristics** which cause pain and suffering
- **Take steps to prevent kitten smuggling** through new rules on how cats can be brought into the UK
- **Regulate animal welfare establishments** to protect the animals in their care
- **Tackle activities that are harmful to cats** such as cat cafés, cat yoga and cat daycare. These are rising in popularity and must be subjected to restrictions

Give cats their best life

1. License cat breeding

The issue

Cats are being bred without adequate safeguards. Female cats in ill health may be overbred, giving birth to repeated litters in poor conditions and producing kittens that are sick and diseased. Male stud cats can also experience poor welfare, by being kept in inadequate accommodation with a lack of essential items, such as litter trays and food bowls, and opportunities to express their natural instincts and behaviours.

Why it matters

Unfortunately, some people seeking to profit from breeding cats care more about how much money they can make than they do about the welfare of the cats they breed. Cats Protection is concerned that this is becoming increasingly common, given that kittens can potentially be sold for thousands of pounds especially if they are pedigree.

What needs to change?

To give cats their best life Cats Protection is calling on the government to regulate cat breeding as a licensable activity so that a licence is required for anyone breeding two or more litters per year (be it from a single cat or multiple cats in the same premises).

Conditions of the licence will require that:

- a single cat should have no more than six litters in their lifetime and a maximum of three litters within a two-year period
- a female cat should not be bred after six years of age due to the increased risk of difficulty during labour, birth defects in the kittens and physiological stress

There has been a significant increase in purebred and pedigree cats: of the cats obtained in the last 12 months, 42% of them were pedigree/purebred cats compared to 17% of those obtained more than five years ago¹.

Cats Protection, alongside cat and vet organisations, has produced a kitten checklist to help potential owners to ensure they choose a happy and healthy kitten. View the [kitten checklist](#).

Case study: Cats Protection Epsom

Cats Protection Epsom were made aware of a cat who had 11 litters of kittens in just four years and the kittens were seen repeatedly advertised online for sale. Overall the cat had over 45 kittens, some of which sadly died and the cat herself was also seen to be in a poor condition at times.

Give cats their best life

2. Ban the breeding of cats with extreme characteristics

The issue

Over the last 200 years, cats have increasingly been bred with distinctive characteristics to make them look a certain way. Unfortunately, these distinctive physical characteristics are increasingly becoming extreme and over-exaggerated. Extreme physical characteristics can cause serious health and welfare issues.

Why it matters

Breeds with extreme characteristics are often seen as particularly desirable and breeders can sell them for very large sums of money. Certain extreme characteristics of concern are being popularised by celebrities and social media; unfortunately, the public aren't always aware of the health and welfare conditions of these cats and the pain they may be suffering.

What needs to change?

To give cats their best life, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- introduce cat breeding regulations to ban the breeding of cats with extreme characteristics which could have a detrimental effect on their health or welfare or that of their offspring
- work with animal welfare organisations, including Cats Protection, to raise public awareness of the welfare and behavioural issues of certain extreme breeds and wildcat hybrids

Cats with extreme characteristics

Scottish Folds are known for their folded ears and 'round' appearance. However, the mutation causing the folded ear affects the whole body and causes Scottish Folds to have serious health problems causing continuous and debilitating pain in all cats of this breed.

Scottish Folds are not recognised by the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) for pedigree registration due to these welfare concerns.



Some people think Scottish Folds are calm and 'laid back' but this is likely to be because they are in pain when they move, jump or play.

Extreme flat-faced Persians have brachycephalic features (this is when the cats have been bred to have a very short muzzle length and a 'squashed' appearance to their face) which cause difficulty breathing.

They also:

- have protruding eyes which are more susceptible to injury and infection
- are more likely to have dermatitis from facial skin folds
- have a deformed jaw making them more prone to dental disease. This can make eating and grooming painful



Wildcat hybrids are a cross between domestic cats and exotic wildcats. The mating and birthing process often represents a real danger for the domestic cat (the female). Offspring are often poorly suited temperamentally to life in a domestic environment, exhibiting territorial behaviour and are stressed when kept as pets within the home. These are essentially wild cats. They also represent a threat to neighbourhood cats if let outside to roam free. The price of hybrid kittens can reach thousands of pounds, fuelling demand for hybrid cat breeding and risking the illegal importation of exotic wildcats for breeding purposes.



Munchkin cats have a form of dwarfism and suffer from joint deformities which can reduce their mobility and ability to exhibit normal cat behaviour. They frequently have spinal problems and early onset arthritis, causing pain and distress.



How you can help

You can help Cats Protection by [signing our petition](#) calling for a ban on the breeding of cats with extreme characteristics.

Give cats their best life

3. Prevent kitten smuggling

The issue

Smuggling cats into the UK poses significant risks for a cat's welfare as well as to the health of people and cats in the UK.

Why it matters

Pet smuggling poses a number of risks to both humans and animals. Smuggled animals may carry transmissible diseases (such as rabies and tapeworm) which they will then bring into the UK, putting both humans and our cats at risk. It also puts vulnerable cats and kittens at risk by exposing them to long journeys in cramped conditions. Cats are known to be particularly susceptible to stress which can often cause serious health issues. It risks creating a market of sick cats. Smuggled animals may not have had veterinary treatment including vaccines and are often sold on when they are too young or sick and/or into situations where they will be used for intensive breeding.

The CATS Report 2023 found that 3% of the cats that were obtained in the 12 months preceding the survey were from abroad. This equates to an astonishing 50,000 cats and it is unclear what conditions those cats or kittens were subjected to during travel.

What needs to change?

To give cats their best life, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- ban the importation of cats under six months of age. Increasing the minimum age will make it more obvious if pet smugglers do try and bring across kittens under this age
- ban the importation of pregnant cats in the last half of their pregnancy. Long journeys are very stressful for cats, especially when pregnant, which can affect the welfare of the kittens
- ban the importation of cats with mutilations, specifically cats which have been declawed. Declawing is an extremely painful and distressing procedure that prevents cats from exhibiting normal scratching behaviour. The procedure is the equivalent of amputating a human fingertip at the first knuckle. It is already illegal for cats to be declawed in the UK
- reduce the number of cats allowed to enter the country via the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) from five per person to three per vehicle. The CATS Report 2023 finds that the average number of cats per household is 1.5. Therefore, a reduction to three per motor vehicle would not adversely impact the vast majority of UK cat owners and would help to curb kitten smuggling



Give cats their best life

4. Regulate animal welfare establishments

The issue

Animal welfare establishments include individuals or organisations that take in vulnerable companion animals on a regular basis, with the intention of rehabilitating, rehoming or providing long-term care. While anyone caring for animals in England and Wales must meet the welfare standards and duty of care set out in the Animal Welfare Act 2006, there is no specific regulation of animal welfare establishments in place.

Why it matters

Those who take animals into their care usually do so with the very best of intentions. But sometimes the standards of animal welfare in such settings can fall short, perhaps due to a lack of training, resources or equipment, or because of a desire to help more animals than the establishment can manage.

What needs to change?

To give cats their best life, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- regulate animal welfare establishments and introduce a minimum set of standards to protect the welfare of those animals. This would need to be properly enforced by inspectors with specialist training
- introduce a publicly accessible national database of licensed animal welfare establishments. This should outline relevant conditions, for example, the number and type of animals permitted, and detail any breach or revocation of licence

- ban cats being transported from abroad for rescue. Such journeys can be stressful for cats, risk the introduction of disease and make it more difficult to rehome the many cats already in need of a home in the UK. A more effective way to help cats in need abroad is to support local charities running neutering and education programmes



Give cats their best life

5. End unsuitable activities involving cats, including cat cafés

The issue

Some activities which allow people to mix with cats in social environments pose significant welfare risks to cats.

Why it matters

Cat cafés can be extremely stressful for cats as they are solitary animals by nature and do not generally choose to live in social groups. This means that the enforced proximity to many other cats, having to share food, water and hiding and sleeping locations can cause stress and anxiety. Cats depend upon a predictable, stable environment. Cat cafés can be unsettling for cats, with different people coming and going and with strange smells and noises encroaching on their sense of security.

Cat yoga is likely to be stressful to cats for the same reasons. Usually, during yoga sessions there are limited hiding places for cats and often their water and litter trays are in a separate area which they cannot access.

Cats Protection believes that people who care about the wellbeing of cats would not want them to be exploited and would therefore not wish to encourage the launch of these establishments.

What needs to change?

To give cats their best life, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- introduce a list of activities unsuitable for animals due to the impact on their welfare. For cats this should include cat cafés, cat yoga and cat daycare



End cruelty to cats



Cats face violence and cruelty far too often. Animal cruelty laws have been made stronger in recent years but deliberate cruelty to cats is still frequent. Cats Protection is calling for stronger laws to protect cats from cruelty.

- **Introduce licensing for air guns** to prevent cats from being subject to air gun attacks
- **Change the law on dangerous dogs attacking cats** to hold owners responsible
- **End sale and use of cruel aversive training devices** like electric shock collars which cause pain, fear and stress

End cruelty to cats

1. License air guns

The issue

In England and Wales anyone aged over 18 can buy, own and use an air gun completely unchecked.

Why it matters

Sadly, the unregulated use of air guns is having a devastating impact on cats.

Over the last 10 years, there have been 1,349 reported cases of cats being shot by air guns across the UK (over 90% of shootings reported in the press are in England and Wales).

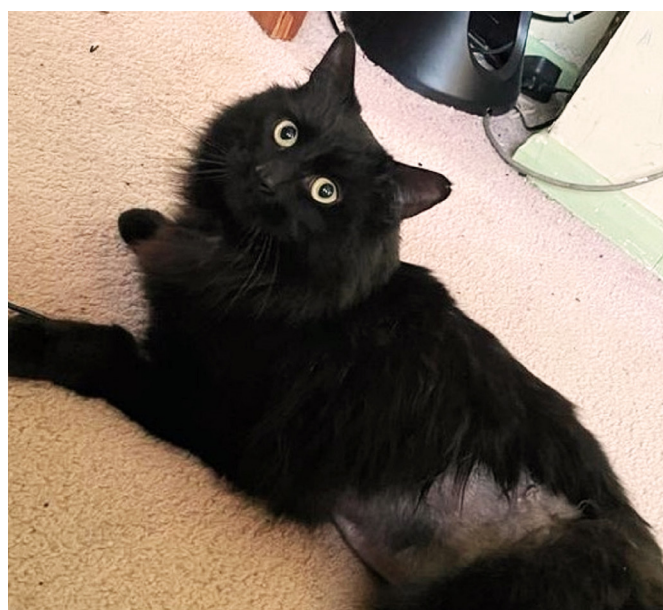
This is likely just the tip of the iceberg, as it requires owners to take their story to the press.

Additionally, many cats won't make it home after being shot and so their owners never find out what happened to them. Whether they are unintended victims or the target of an intentional shooting, air-gun-related injuries and fatalities among cats are devastating and must be stopped.

What needs to change?

To end cruelty to cats, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- license air guns in England and Wales to create a uniform and consistent framework across the UK which protects people and pets



Case study: Wilson

Four-year-old Wilson suffered agonising injuries after being shot by an air gun near his home. He was rushed to a vet who was horrified when an x-ray revealed an air gun pellet imbedded in his abdomen.

Having spent over £3,500 on veterinary bills, his owner said Wilson is finally recovering from surgery.

She said: "The vet was able to remove the pellet and gave it to me, and I felt sick when I saw it. This was not a small pellet, it was one which was designed to cause maximum penetration and damage.

"Whoever did this clearly wanted to cause immense pain without any regard to whether Wilson survived or not. It is so upsetting as Wilson is a very much-loved pet and I'm devastated someone would want to hurt him."

End cruelty to cats

2. Create a specific offence relating to dangerous dogs attacking cats

The issue

Sadly, dog attacks on cats happen all too frequently. The vast majority of dog owners are responsible and keep their dog(s) under control. However, where an owner does fail to control their dog and the dog injures or kills a cat, the law needs strengthening because such an attack can denote a dangerously out-of-control dog.

Why it matters

Dog attacks on cats are a terrifying experience for the cat, their owner and the wider community. Attacks often result in the death of a cat and witnesses can be left with long-lasting trauma. When vicious attacks take place in public, it can be deeply worrying and upsetting for the whole community.

Over the last 10 years, 461 cats have been reported in the press as having been attacked by a dog. Approximately 80% of these attacks are fatal which, of course, has a devastating impact on the cat's family. Cats may not die quickly and many suffer greatly before succumbing to their injuries.

The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 was amended by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which extended the law to cover dog attacks on assistance dogs, but not attacks on other animals.

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 also introduced Community Protection Notices. The government guidance contains specific reference to use of these measures to prevent a dog attacking a cat where the failure to control a dog or dogs is "having a detrimental effect of a persistent or continuing nature on the

quality of life of those in the locality." In 2021, Middlesex University London published a report² which indicated Community Protection Notices are more of a reactive enforcement measure rather than a preventative one.

Cats are being attacked by dogs across the UK and Cats Protection is concerned that the legal framework for holding dog owners responsible is insufficient.

What needs to change?

To end cruelty to cats, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- introduce a specific offence within legislation relating to dangerous dogs to allow prosecution of dog owners whose dogs attack, injure or kill cats



End cruelty to cats

3. Ban the sale and use of cruel training devices

The issue

Aversive training devices such as electric shock collars can legally be used on cats, for example if the cat starts to go somewhere the owner doesn't want them to go.

Why it matters

Aversive training devices cause pain as well as fear and stress. They are also known to lead to behavioural problems and to break down the trust between owner and pet.

All types of devices designed to deliver pain or other unpleasant sensation, have the same impact and are bad for an animal's health and wellbeing.

What needs to change?

To end cruelty to cats, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- ban the sale and use of cruel training devices **such as electric shock collars**



The use of electric shock collars can cause pain, fear and distress. There are several different electronic training devices available to modify an animal's behaviour, including electronic 'scat' mats designed to train the animal to avoid certain areas of the home, and electronic boundary or 'freedom fences', used to keep cats within certain boundaries, such as within a garden.

These devices deliver an unpleasant shock, to force the animal to comply with the owner's desired behaviour. In addition to the pain and distress caused, these devices may cause burns or wounds, can cause negative behaviours such as aggression and toileting problems, and have the potential to malfunction.

Cats Protection is against the sale and use of electronic training devices that deliver an electric shock. We believe that there should be a ban on the sale of electronic training devices. This includes a ban on hand-held remote-controlled electric shock collars, electronic containment fencing, and mats that deliver a shock on contact. Cat owners should consider non-electronic solutions to control where cats can roam, such as non-electronic cat-proof fencing.

**Sarah Elliott, Central Veterinary Officer,
Cats Protection**

Protect cats in the digital world



Many parts of our lives exist in the digital world, and it's no surprise that cats have become a part of this. The internet is full of cats; cat videos, cat jokes, cat photos, cat advice and cats for sale. Sadly, the regulation isn't yet where it needs to be. Cats are being harmed due to a lack of action by social media companies and other websites. These sites allow 'trends' where people are harming their cats. They also allow kittens who are too young and ill to be sold on their platforms. Cats Protection is calling for action to protect cats in the digital world.

- **Tighten up rules on selling cats online** to make sure cats and buyers are protected
- **Encourage advertisers and the media to show cats responsibly**
- **Encourage social media companies to take harmful content seriously.** We're calling for content containing animal abuse to be removed swiftly

Protect cats in the digital world

1. Tighten rules on selling cats online

The issue

Cats are increasingly bought and sold online, leaving the public susceptible to unscrupulous individuals putting profit before welfare.

Why it matters

71% of cats purchased in the last 12 months were found online³.

When finding a pet to buy, potential owners are looking for a family member. From a cute cat photo they become emotionally invested before they've even messaged the seller, which places buyers in a vulnerable position.

In some cases, this might be through direct fraud such as posting photos of a cat that doesn't exist and demanding a deposit. Other times animal welfare is compromised too, with buyers deceived into buying sick or underage kittens. This is called mis-selling.

118% increase in the volume of online shopping and auction fraud crime reports relating to pet scams between 2019 and 2023 (Action Fraud)

In 2001, to tackle this problem and improve the welfare of pets being bought and sold, the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG), of which Cats Protection is a member, was established. PAAG sets out advertising guidelines to improve standards, which some of the top classified websites sign up to.

Not all websites sign up to PAAG's guidelines, nor do social media companies who have become a significant part of the pet trade. Despite social media companies having their own rules limiting pet sales, one out of five purchased cats were found via Facebook in the last year.

What needs to change?

To protect cats in the digital world, Cats Protection is calling for:

- social media companies to close loopholes that allow pet sales from both private individuals and businesses on their platforms
- any platform allowing the sale of pets to sign up to the Pet Advertising Advisory Group's standards
- the government to continue to highlight the steps that need to be taken when buying a pet online
- the government and local authorities to raise awareness of the need for a licence to sell pets, work to make potential pet buyers more aware of these requirements and review the effectiveness of the regulations governing pet sales

Protect cats in the digital world

2. Call on advertisers and the media to show cats responsibly

The issue

The advertising and media industry commonly use cats in their content. If pets are represented irresponsibly, this can lead to the popularisation of breeds with known health conditions or the promotion of behaviour that is harmful to cats.

Why it matters

Animals evoke an emotive response and draw attention to content in a crowded marketplace. But advertisers and media producers should not be risking animal welfare for the sake of 'clicks' or increased 'conversions'.

Some of the common issues include the use of cats with extreme characteristics, perhaps seen as distinctive by advertisers and film makers but which unfortunately suffer significant health and welfare issues. Cats have also been dressed up in clothing or accessories for adverts, something that can restrict a cat's movement and cause stress. They have been depicted in situations that cause stress for cats, reinforcing a misunderstanding of their needs and impeding attempts to raise public awareness around the recognition of stress and negative welfare.

Those using animals in media are hugely influential, it's vital they take responsibility for their actions and don't normalise poor cat welfare.

Cats Protection has created [guidelines for advertisers using cats](#).

What needs to change?

To protect cats in the digital world, Cats Protection is calling for:

- the Advertising Standards Agency to review its guidance and strengthen its position on the promotion of poor welfare or cats with characteristics of concern
- advertisers, film and other content makers using animals to review their own internal standards and work with welfare charities to implement policies to avoid normalising poor welfare or promoting physical characteristics of concern



Protect cats in the digital world

3. Encourage social media companies to take harmful cat content seriously

The issue

Social media promotes content that depicts cats in distress, from content people think of as 'fun', to outright abuse.

Why it matters

33% of cat owners watch funny or cute content online several times a week or more. 24% look at cat-related social media profiles (The CATS Report 2023)

While the internet can be a fantastic source to find information on cat welfare and behaviour, there is also a large amount of cat content that people consider to be 'fun' but is actually causing distress to cats. Trends around this type of content can rise quickly with users challenging each other to involve their cats and share videos.

Even more concerning, is the existence of outright cat abuse online. Cases have been reported of livestreams showing cats being tortured and killed. This not only has tragic consequences for cats, but any person unfortunate enough to come across this content may be left with long-lasting trauma.

What needs to change?

To protect cats in the digital world, Cats Protection is calling on social media companies to:

- swiftly remove any content containing animal abuse and alert any relevant authorities

- strengthen their guidance on, and moderation of, content showing animals to prevent trends developing where cats are put in distressing situations



While there is plenty of great cat content on the internet, there are certain trends that blur the lines between victimless candid moments and very real pet abuse. Cats Protection urges social media users to educate themselves about the signs of animal stress to ensure they are not consuming, or creating, content that is cruel and causes distress to animals.

Nicky Trevorrow, Cats Protection Behaviour Manager

Recognise cats as family



Most cat owners see their cats as part of their family. Cats provide important companionship and support for many people. Becoming separated from their cat when, for example, the cat is lost or stolen, can be devastating. Cats Protection is calling for a recognition of the importance of cats to their families. We support laws which keep cats and their owners together.

- **Create a single point of search for microchip databases** to make the process of looking up details easier
- **Encourage pet-friendly rented housing** and reduce this barrier to pet ownership
- **Include animal welfare on the national curriculum** to help prevent the mistreatment of animals
- **Acknowledge the benefits of cats to people's wellbeing** through further research on loneliness and other social issues

Recognise cats as family

1. Introduce a single point of search for microchip databases

The issue

Cats Protection believes that all owned cats must be microchipped to give them the best chance of being identified and returned to their owner.

Why it matters

Cats Protection is delighted that compulsory microchipping for pet cats has been introduced in England.

If a cat becomes lost, is stolen and sold on or abandoned, microchip details will help to locate owners and enable a reunion. If the cat is found injured and taken to a vet, those details will also enable a vet to contact the owners. In the sad case where a cat is found dead, having up-to-date microchip details will at least enable the owner to get closure.

However, currently there are numerous government-approved microchipping databases operating, along with numerous bogus sites. Since an owner can choose which database to use for their cat, anyone scanning a cat may have to check multiple databases.

What needs to change?

To recognise cats are family, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- introduce a single point of search for relevant authorities scanning microchips. This would make the checking of a chip as swift and efficient as possible



Recognise cats as family

2. Encourage pet-friendly rented housing

The issue

In the UK, having a pet can be a privilege reserved for those who own their own homes. Cats Protection believes that renting your home shouldn't be a barrier to cat ownership.

Why it matters

The CATS Report 2023 revealed that renting a home is often cited as a reason for not owning a cat, with potentially 1 million households impacted across the UK.

In 2023, Cats Protection took in the equivalent of around three cats each day due to landlords not allowing them in their properties.

What needs to change?

To recognise cats are family, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- provide tenants with a right to request a pet, which cannot be refused unreasonably

How you can help

You can [find out more about our landlords' campaign](#) and help change the way we look at cat ownership in rented accommodation.

A 2021 YouGov survey⁴ of landlords found that:

- **33% of private landlords who don't currently allow pets in any or all of their properties say nothing would persuade them to do so**
- **46% of landlords say they will allow pets, however, only 9% of owners say their properties were advertised as pet-friendly**
- **damage to the property is the main reason for not allowing pets, yet 73% of landlords who have allowed pets have reported no problems**
- **94% of tenants say their cat has some form of positive impact on their life**



Recognise cats as family

3. Include animal welfare in the national curriculum

The issue

Children are the pet owners of the future and it is essential they leave school with a basic understanding of how to respect and care for animals.

Why it matters

Educating children about how to look after pets would also benefit a child's emotional development; enabling greater discussion and understanding about caring for others, empathy and responsibility.

Helping children understand how to care responsibly for pets will also help to reduce acts of animal cruelty and abandonment in the future. Research on the effectiveness of animal welfare programmes shows wide-ranging benefits to the personal development of young people, including:

- increasing animal welfare knowledge
- improving attitudes towards animals
- improving pro-social behaviours and empathy
- in children as young as three, discussing animals enabled them to develop their capacity for empathy, increasing their ability to relate the needs of animals to the needs of people
- in older children (nine to 11 years), teachers reported a significant increase in pro-social behaviours such as friendliness and showing empathy and compassion for the feelings of others

What needs to change?

To recognise cats are family, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- include animal welfare education in the national curriculum for all children
- commission research into the links between animal welfare education and preventing problems of animal cruelty and neglect, and reducing the incidence of anti-social behaviour in adults
- consult with animal welfare charities including Cats Protection on how to include issues relating to responsible pet welfare within the curriculum

Cats Protection provides talks to children in schools, youth organisations and community groups to help them learn how to care for cats. Our dedicated website at education.cats.org.uk is packed full of resources for teachers and fun, educational activities for children.

“Our talks can be delivered online or in person. They outline the five welfare needs of cats and through interactive activities promote responsible cat ownership. The children love finding out how the five welfare needs apply to both humans and animals. They also appreciate the Cats Protection goodies including posters on the five welfare needs and ‘what your cat is saying’. The regular feedback shows that both teachers and pupils enjoy the talks. The education website has additional free resources.”

Jenny, Cats Protection volunteer

Recognise cats as family

4. Acknowledge the benefits of cats to people's wellbeing

The issue

Cats are sentient creatures and it is important to consider their welfare alongside that of their owner. However, it is clear that the cat-owner bond can be of great benefit to both. Cat ownership or interaction can be part of a range of interventions in society which can tackle feelings of isolation.

Cats Protection believes that cats can provide hugely valuable companionship and the wide-ranging benefits of this to their owners must be recognised in all relevant policy decisions.

Why it matters

There are around 11 million owned cats in the UK with just over one in four households (26%) owning a cat. The bond between cat and owner can have huge benefits to mental health and in combatting loneliness.

The CATS Report 2023 has found that personal wellbeing is a huge driver for cat ownership, **with companionship, reducing loneliness and stress** being collectively the top reasons that people choose to own a cat (55%).

There is a wide-ranging body of research highlighting the benefits of cats to people's wellbeing. Indeed, the Mental Health Foundation highlight how a pet can be a **great source of comfort and motivation**.

Additionally, the Children's Society highlights that pets are known to **help reduce anxiety by offering companionship** to their owners, particularly for young people.

What needs to change?

To recognise cats as family, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- commission further research on how pet ownership can help combat loneliness so that the benefits of pets can be properly understood
- encourage health and social care workers to consider the role of pets in social prescribing. This can include volunteering with an animal welfare charity
- work closely with animal welfare charities to encourage more care homes and retirement complexes to allow new residents to have cats



Keep cats safe and secure



Cats are sometimes put in danger by parts of life that we may not realise impact them. They can accidentally be harmed by things many find delightful like fireworks displays and certain flowers. Cats can also become unintended victims of traps such as snares. Cats Protection is calling for action to keep cats safe and secure.

- **Retailers to improve the labelling of products toxic to cats, such as lilies** to help prevent accidental poisonings
- **Restrict the use of fireworks** to prevent the distress they can cause to humans and animals
- **Ban the sale and use of snares** as they cause suffering and pain

Keep cats safe and secure

1. Promote better labelling of toxic products like lilies

The issue

Lilies are extremely toxic to cats.

53% of cat owners are unaware of the danger that bringing lilies into their home will pose to their much-loved cat⁵.

Why it matters

All parts of the lily are toxic to cats if ingested, from the pollen, leaves and stem to the water in the vase where the lilies have stood. The most common route of poisoning is caused by cats getting pollen on their fur and consuming this pollen when grooming. Pollen-free lilies have been marketed as 'cat-safe', but this is not the case, the rest of the plant is still just as deadly if consumed. All plants in the Liliaceae (true lily) family are potentially lethal for cats, causing kidney damage which, if left untreated, can lead to kidney failure and death.

The early signs of poisoning can be difficult to spot, and so cats with lily poisoning often do not get the urgent and life-saving treatment they need. Unfortunately, all too often bouquets containing lilies, and lily plants, do not contain a warning or, where they do, it is buried on the back of the label.

Many online flower retailers do not include warnings next to images of bouquets including lilies and some even list lilies without pollen as 'pet-friendly'.

What needs to change?

To keep cats safe and secure, Cats Protection is calling on retailers to:

- ensure all bouquets containing lilies have clear labels which warn consumers of the risk to pets. The warning should be obvious and not easily removable (for example, not on the price tag) to ensure that those receiving the flowers as a gift are aware of the danger to cats
- ensure the listing of lilies online includes a clear note, reiterated at checkout, to warn a customer if a bouquet contains lilies so that they are aware of the risks



Case study: Nova

Eighteen-month-old cat Nova tragically died after she brushed against a lily plant at home and groomed the pollen from her fur. Her owner had bought the plant to bring some joy during the festive period, but she was sadly not aware of the dangers of lilies to cats.

Keep cats safe and secure

2. Restrict the use of fireworks

The issue

Most cat owners know that pets can become very alarmed and distressed by fireworks. The CATS Report 2023 found that 64% of those who have witnessed their cat experience fireworks, say that the cat expressed at least one sign of stress.

Why it matters

Cats associate sudden loud noises and flashes of light with danger and an imminent threat to their physical safety, so their natural response is to vacate the area quickly. However, because it is impossible for them to understand the source of the noise, they will often bolt in an unfavourable direction which may well lead them to becoming lost or injured (for example by running into traffic).

Even when kept indoors during periods when fireworks are in use, cats often feel stressed and anxious due to the noise itself and its unpredictable nature.

Currently, it is legal for any adult to use fireworks between 7am and 11pm on any day of the year, except for Bonfire Night, when the cut off is extended until midnight and New Year's Eve, Diwali and Chinese New Year, when the cut off is extended to 1am.

What needs to change?

To keep cats safe and secure, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- restrict the unplanned use of fireworks. Planned fireworks should only be used during certain periods with advance notice so that pet owners can take action to keep their cats safe
- reduce the maximum permitted noise level of fireworks in order to help ease the stress to cats, other animals and indeed many humans



Keep cats safe and secure

3. Ban the sale and use of snares

The issue

Snares are commonly used by gamekeepers to protect game birds from predatory animals and by farmers and other landholders to prevent animals from causing damage. Snares are targeted at foxes and rabbits. However, snares are unable to discriminate between species and many other animals are often the victims, including cats.

Why it matters

Some types of snares are already illegal across the UK but, partly due to confusion about which types are legal and which are not, illegal types are still in use. However, all snares cause pain and suffering and, where the animal is not released, eventual slow and painful death.

Cats Protection is concerned that the current code of practice on the use of snares is not working, with snares frequently left unchecked, and poor compliance by landowners.

Unfortunately, regardless of whether they capture target or non-target animals, snares are outdated and inhumane.

A report⁶ by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on snares found that almost 30% of rabbit snare operators had caught a cat.

What needs to change?

To keep cats safe and secure, Cats Protection is calling on the government to:

- introduce a total ban on the sale and use of all snares. This would avoid the confusion about which snares are legal and which are not and help avoid abuse of the existing law to protect animal welfare



Case study: Jacob

Two-year-old Jacob was found in Bedworth with a severe injury to his back foot which vets believe was caused during a frantic struggle to free himself from a snare.

After being cared for by volunteers while he adapted to life on three legs, Jacob is now settling in to his new home.

Cats Protection Coventry Co-ordinator Wendy Harris said: "The vet told us Jacob's injuries were consistent with having struggled free from a snare. Many animals can never free themselves, and will suffer painful deaths as a result."

Making a better life for cats, because life is better with cats.

To find out more please visit cats.org.uk/manifesto

[Find your local Cats Protection.](#)

For any further information please email advocacy@cats.org.uk

