



LEE COUNTY DOMESTIC ANIMAL SERVICES  
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## **COMMON OUTDOOR CAT NUISANCE SOLUTIONS**

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The following are common outdoor cat nuisance problems with quick solutions for resolution. However, with spaying and neutering of a feral cat colony these nuisance behaviors will be greatly reduced if not eliminated completely.

### **Cats Digging in Gardens**

It is a cat's natural instinct to dig and deposit in soft or loose soil, moss, mulch or sand.

Solution:

- Scatter fresh orange and lemon peels or spray with citrus-scented fragrances, coffee grounds and pipe tobacco that deter cats.
- Plant the herb rue or sprinkle dried rue over the garden.
- Obtain a non-chemical cat and wildlife repellent consisting of plastic mats that you cut into smaller pieces and press into the soil. Each mat has flexible plastic spikes that are harmless to cats and other animals but discourage digging. Products are available online.
- Plastic Carpet Runners which can be found at local hardware or office supply stores can also be used when placed spike-side up and covered lightly in soil. Or, set chicken wire firmly into the dirt with sharp edges rolled under.
- Cover exposed ground in flower beds with large, attractive river rock to prevent cats from digging.

### **Cats Sleeping Under a Porch or Shed**

The cats are looking for dry, warm shelter away from the elements.

Quick Solution:

- Physically block or seal the location the cats are entering with chicken wire or lattice once you are certain the cats are not inside. Be sure to search for kittens before confirming that the cats have left especially during kitten season (April through October).
- Provide a shelter (similar to a dog house) or ask the caregiver of the cat colony to provide a shelter for the cats. Shelters should be hidden to keep the cats safe and placing them well can help guide the cats away from unwanted areas.

### **Cats Getting Into the Trash**

Cats are scavengers and are searching for food.

Quick Solution:

- Place a tight lid on your trash can. Exposed trash bags will attract wildlife as well.

- Find out if neighbors are feeding the cats. If they are, make sure they are doing it on a regular basis.
- If you find no regular feeder, start feeding the cats yourself at a set time during daylight hours in an out of the way place. Feeding cats regularly and in reasonable quantities will help ensure they do not get so hungry that they will go through the trash.

### **Cats Leaving Paw Prints on Vehicles**

Cats like to perch on high ground.

Quick Solution:

- Discourage cats from climbing on cars or other private property by gradually moving their shelters and feeding stations away from such areas into more secluded places.
- Purchase an appropriate cover for the car.

### **The Smell of Cat Urine**

Male cats spray to mark their territory as part of their mating behaviors.

Quick Solution:

- Spray the area thoroughly with white vinegar or with non-toxic products available at pet supply stores.
- The permanent solution is to ensure male cats are neutered which will reduce their urge to mark territory and make their urine less pungent.

### **Feeding the Cats Attract Insects and Wildlife**

Cats need to be fed under proper guidelines. Leaving food out can attract unwanted animals.

Quick Solution:

- Keeping the feeding area neat and free of leftover food and trash is of utmost importance.
- Cats should be fed only at a designated time during daylight hours. The cats should only be given enough food for them to finish in one setting. All remaining food should be removed. If another person is feeding, ask them to follow these guidelines as well.

### **Cats are Lounging on Porches or Yards**

Cats are territorial and will remain close to their food source. Ensuring that cats are neutered will dramatically reduce their tendency to roam and keep them from unwanted areas.

Quick Solution:

- Apply cat repellent liberally around the edges of the yard, the tops of fences and on any favorite digging areas or plants. Cat repellent is available for purchase at pet supply stores and on-line.
- Install an ultrasonic animal repellent or a motion-activated water sprinkler available online.

### **Cats are Yowling, Fighting and Breeding Out of Control**

These are all mating behaviors displayed by cats that have not been spayed or neutered and they will breed prolifically.

Quick Solution:

- Spaying or neutering and vaccinating the cats will reduce the sex drive hormones causing these behaviors. Male cats will stop competing and fighting, spraying and roaming. Females will stop yowling and producing kittens. After sterilization, hormones leave their system within three weeks and the behaviors usually stop entirely.

### **TRAP AND ERADICATE TO TRAP, NEUTER AND RETURN**

Feral cats are members of the domestic cat species, but are not socialized to humans and are therefore not adoptable. Feral cats choose to reside in locations where there is a food source (whether intended or unintended) and there is shelter.

Trapping and destroying feral cats was Animal Services' original approach to solving the feral cat overpopulation problem in Lee County. Removing feral cats from an area may temporarily reduce the number of feral cats in that given area; however, un-sterilized survivors continue to breed prolifically and other cats move in to take advantage of resources quickly forming a new colony. This is known as the "vacuum effect."

Today Animal Services actively promotes and endorses the Trap, Neuter and Return (TNR) Program. This program involves actively humanely trapping, spaying or neutering, vaccinating, microchipping and returning the cats to their outdoor homes. There are no more kittens as the population stabilizes and the returned sterilized cats' lives are dramatically improved. Behaviors and stresses associated with pregnancy and mating such as yowling or fighting no longer exist.

Traps and veterinary services are available and offered by Services to reduce the outdoor stray cat overpopulation problem. To learn more about this program please contact Animal Services at (239) 533-7387. Monetary funds support this program through private tax-deductible donations and as well as county pet licensing fees. Thank you for your support to ensure a safe and compassionate community.