



Humane Deterrents/Aversives and Problem Solving Outdoor Free Roaming Cat Issues

For people experiencing unwanted cats and their natural behaviors, it can be very frustrating, but there are humane and effective solutions in deterring them. Here are a variety and range of humane solutions (from simple strategy, various materials and products etc.). We suggest being open to a trial by error process while finding a solution that works best for your unique situation and the cats in your area.

If your concerns are with a neighbor's pet, it's not always easy to discuss neighborhood issues diplomatically. By emphasizing your concern for the cat's safety, instead of the problems it's causing, you have a greater chance of gaining your neighbor's cooperation. If they won't keep their cat indoors, they may be willing to contribute time, energy or make a financial contribution towards deterring their cat from your yard.

If your concern is with feral cats, please learn about Trap Neuter Return (TNR), the only proven effective long term solution in addressing feral cat populations. Eradication does not work as new cats move in from surrounding areas *and* it is not humane. There are many benefits of spay and neuter in addition to controlling reproduction that will help your concerns and there are community resources available to support this.

Scent repellents

Reports on the effectiveness of scent repellants are mixed, sometimes working quite well and in other situations, not at all. Keep in mind that Outdoor substances need to be reapplied regularly due to moisture and quicker dissipation into the air.

Repellants should be sprayed or placed around the edges of the yard, the top of fences and on any favorite digging areas or plants. Cotton balls, rags or washcloths can also be soaked in the "stinky" substance. Wrapping them in cheesecloth allows them to be hung.

Be sure to use naturally-based and never use poisons. Not only is poisoning animals inhumane and illegal, it's not an effective solution to the problem. You'd have no way of knowing or controlling what, or who, might find and ingest the poisonous substance. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has registered over thirty compounds for safe use in repelling domestic cats. Check with any pet supply store or garden suppliers for commercial cat repellents.

Specific substances and scents known to repel cats include:

- ♦ citrus -Try placing citrus peels in areas you are trying to deter cats from such as around the edges of your yard, tops of fences, etc.
- ♦ sprinkle cayenne or black pepper, coffee grounds, pipe tobacco
- ♦ spray vinegar
- ♦ lavender oil, lemon grass oil, citronella oil (Natural insect repellent contain citronella)- check for toxicity – if safe for young children, it's generally safe for animals), eucalyptus oil, tea tree oil [Havahart Dog & Cat Repellents](#) use

capsaicin pepper and oil of mustard as its active ingredients. It repels by both taste and odor, has a lemon scent, lasts 7-10 days and needs to be reapplied after rain or new growth.

- ♦ Plantings - a garden plant has been developed called *Coleus Canina* (also known as as the "pee-off plant" or the "scaredy cat" coleus) that many animals, including cats will avoid because it emits a strong odor offensive to cats and deters their presence. Humans can only smell it when touched. This plant has excellent foliage and small, attractive spikes of blue flowers in the summer. Plants need to be established before the smell is released. They do well in drier soil and planted every 1-2 yards/3 feet apart. There are many varieties of Coleus plants, so make sure you get the correct one - Coleus Canina. You could also try planting fresh (or sprinkling dried) *Rue*, an herb which cats dislike the scent of.

"Surprise" Devices

When a cat naps on the hood of your car or in the center of your flowerbed, it's simply sunning in a warm spot. Cats won't connect your negative reaction with the place where they nap, and although they may learn to avoid you, they won't avoid the place or the activity. To teach cast to avoid a specific area, you must make that area unattractive to them. The best method is to surprise the cat "in the act," but the villain should be the area itself, not you.

Low cost methods include:

Sound & Movement: Scatter dry beans, macaroni or birdseed on a metal tray (disposable pie pans or cookie sheets work great and are inexpensive). Balance several trays along the fence, porch or deck railing, the windowsill, or around the edge of any vehicle where the cat jumps onto the surface. Birds can still land safely if the trays are balanced properly, but the weight of a cat leaping onto the surface will upset the tray. The cat will be startled by the noise and by the unsteady, collapsing perch.

Light Reflection: Create some flickering random light reflections as a deterrent. String some unwanted CD's together with knots in between to keep them apart. These cat distracters can then be hung across flower beds and gardens or hung from trees. This is also known to deter pigeons.

Texture: To keep a cat from jumping onto flat surfaces (railings, vehicles or decks), criss-cross double-sided tape onto a piece of sturdy plastic - either a heavy, plastic drop cloth or a vinyl tablecloth would work well. Drape the plastic over the surface, and secure it with cord, or at least one weighted object, to keep it in position. The sticky tape on the cat's paws is annoying (without causing pain or panic), and the slick plastic rattles and offers no foothold.

Products for purchase include:

Motion-activated Sprinklers: Motion activated sprinklers use infra-red to detect when an animal enters a defined territory. When a cat enters the infra-red field, the sprinkler shoots out a burst of water for a few seconds in the general direction of the animal. The effect is to frighten the cats rather than soak them, but they quickly learn not to enter the area. After a while, the sprinkler becomes unnecessary.

Popular tried and tested brands include: *The Scarecrow*, made by Contech, ***Spray Away*** made by Havahart attaches to a garden hose and their ***Spray Away Elite*** which has its own water reservoir so it's hose-free and portable.

Ultrasonic devices: *CatStop* contains a motion sensor and, upon being triggered, emits a high-frequency alarm imperceptible to humans but highly annoying and startling to cats. The key with *CatStop* and other ultrasonic devices is

to make sure you have enough of them for the size of the area you're trying to exclude the cats from. **CatStop** monitors 280 square feet.

The respected feral cat group **IndyFeral** swears by **CatStop** which, like the Scarecrow, is manufactured by Contech. IndyFeral has come up with some creative uses for the device, such as using two of them to guard a property line. One device is placed at each end of the property line and then positioned so that their motion sensors face each other. Whenever a cat crosses the line, one of the devices goes off. CatStop can also be mounted high up off the ground and positioned to "cover" a car parked below, keeping cats off the vehicle.

Bird-X YG Yard Gard from Bird-X, Inc. is another device that uses ultrasonic sound waves (silent to humans) to harmlessly repel cats and other animals. Bird-X is motion activated and is triggered when an animal moves into its coverage zone.

*Research these products on amazon.com and search for best prices.

Barrier/Fencing Modification

There are many companies that sell systems to modify your existing fencing/walls of yard of any material to keep your own cats in *as well as keep cats out*. There are also how to videos online. Check out www.catfencein.com to see how it works

Specific Areas of Concern:

Digging and Eliminating in Gardens & Planted Area & Loose Dirt

Cats warm soil in cool weather and irrigated soil in hot weather. They also like to dig and eliminate in loose dirt.

- ◆ Try placing unpolished pebbles and gravel over loose dirt in unplanted areas.
- ◆ Arrange larger or irregular or sharp rocks, firmly set into dirt.
- ◆ Mulching planted areas with straw is not only great for your plants and water usage, it also deters cats.
- ◆ Netting can be placed over areas with loose dirt or set chicken wire firmly into the dirt with sharp edges rolled under.
- ◆ Try embedding wood chopsticks, pinecones, or sticks with dull points deep into the soil with the tops exposed eight inches apart. Try plastic carpet runners spike-side up, covered lightly in soil.
- ◆ Arrange branches in a lattice-type pattern or wooden or plastic lattice fencing material over soil. You can disguise these by planting flowers and seeds in the openings.
- ◆ Lay lattice fencing on the ground prior to planting, then plant flowers and seeds in the openings.
- ◆ Purchase **Cat Scat**, a nonchemical cat and wildlife repellent consisting of plastic mats that are cut into smaller pieces and pressed into the soil. Each mat has flexible plastic spikes that are harmless to cats and other animals, but discourage digging.
- ◆ Make a cover for your child's sandbox which will keep out cats as well as other debris!
- ◆ Consider providing an acceptable place that encourages redirected digging or elimination: Take a very large Rubbermaid plastic container and fill it with a few inches of regular "kiddie sand box" sand. Cut a door in one of the sides, approximately 8 x 8 inches above sand level and keep the container covered. If you can, put a couple of pieces of the cats' poop in it to attract them. Scoop occasionally and once a month or so, dump and replace

the sand. You can also take the Rubbermaid storage container, turn it upside down with a hole in the side and place a normal litter box with regular litter inside the container.

- ◆ Another method described by of the **Rocky Mountain Alley Cat Alliance**: "For caretakers in the right circumstances, cats love a pile of peat moss (4 feet square, 8 inches deep) in a corner of the yard, replaced once a month or so. It's very cheap, easy to handle and dispose of, keeps the smell down, and is far more attractive than the neighbor's garden."

Birds, Bird Feeders and Trees

Cats *can* prey upon birds, however, humans and their impact are the far greatest threat to birds (<http://www.alleycat.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=1593>). Birds have developed survival techniques and it's unusual for a cat to catch a healthy, mature bird.

- ◆ Hang bird feeders high enough or in locations that cats cannot reach like the overhang of your roof.
- ◆ If your bird feeder or birdhouse is mounted on a post or a tree, affix a galvanized metal guard in the shape of an inverted cone to the post to protect the platform. This will prevent a cat from climbing up it. Visit www.catfencein.com to see their two models of tree guards.
- ◆ Vaseline or other similar grease applied to the pole of the bird feeder might also help (assuming the pole is smooth)
- ◆ Place clippings from (or planting) thorny or spiky plants under bird feeders, to prevent cats from using these areas.
- ◆ For neighbors, encourage them to put a bell on their cat's collar (quick release collars or ones that stretch only). This will alert the birds to their presence.

Under or on Porches, Sheds, Mobile Homes, In Crawl Spaces, Etc.

- ◆ Once you are certain that cats or kittens are no longer in these locations, physically block or seal the place they are entering with chicken wire or lattice. Be sure to search for kittens before confirming that the cats have left—especially during spring and summer, prime kitten season.
- ◆ Provide a shelter (similar to a small doghouse). Or, if they're feral and part of a nearby managed colony, ask the caregiver to provide a shelter for the cats. Shelters should be hidden to keep the cats safe, and placing them in secluded areas can help guide the cats away from unwanted areas.
- ◆ If a roaming cat approaches your window or patio door and challenges your animals through the glass with blatant body language and/or vocal insults, the best way to relieve your pet from this type of situation, is to keep the outside cat away from the areas that your pet can see. (See previous deterrent options)

Free roaming cats are protected by anti-cruelty laws.

Information compiled from the following sources: "Keep Cats Out of Yard." Cat World, "DIY Cat Deterrents." The Cat Repellant Website,3. "How To Live With Cats In Your Neighborhood." Alley Cat Allies, "Keeping Cats Out of Yards and Gardens", Neighborhood Cats