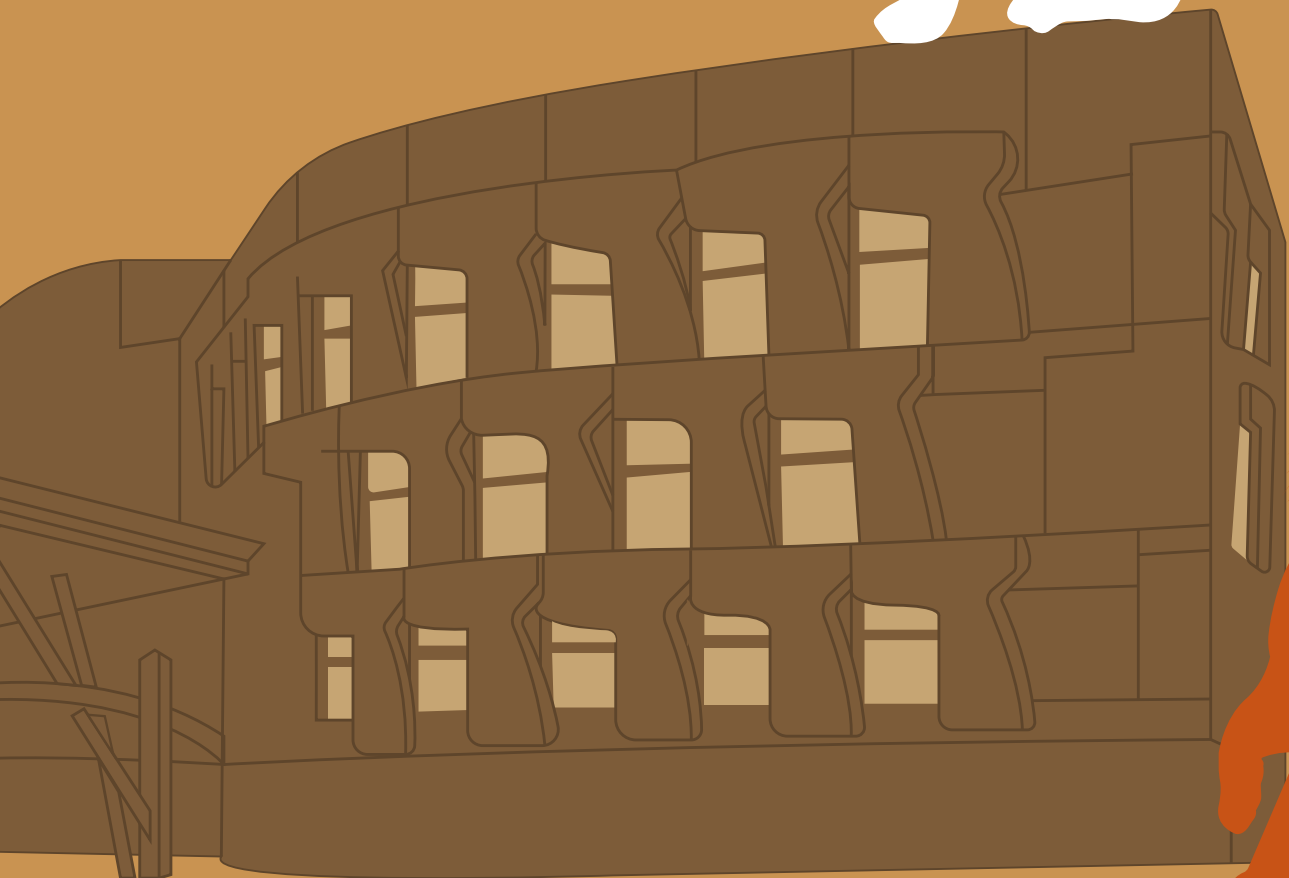
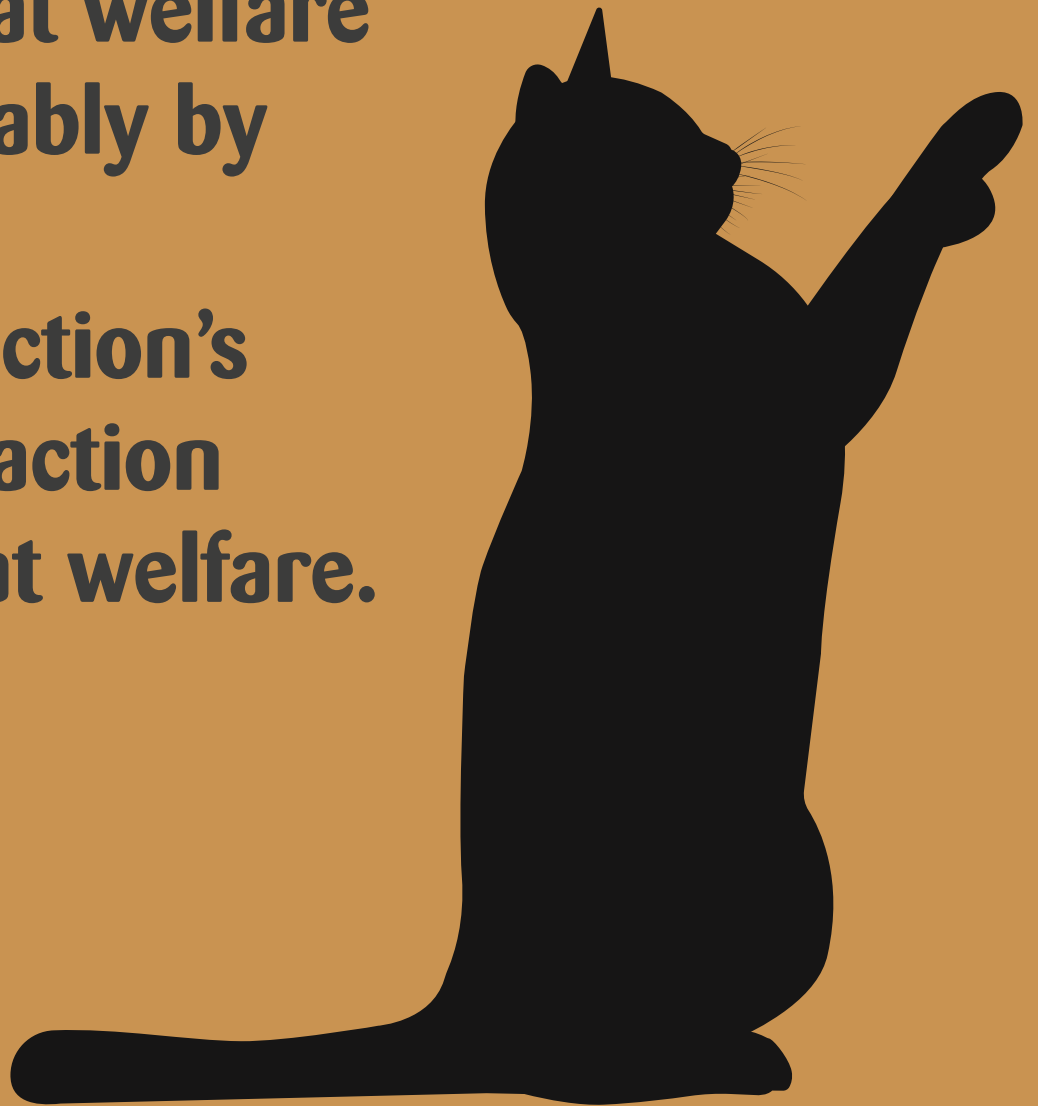


The Time is Meow

A cat welfare action
plan for the Scottish
Government



**Cats are not
political – they
come in all colours:
black, white, ginger
and many more
– yet politicians
from all parties can
improve cat welfare
immeasurably by
delivering
Cats Protection’s
five point action
plan for cat welfare.**



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Compulsory microchipping of owned cats | 4 |
| Cats and rented housing | 6 |
| Kitten breeding, selling and improving welfare | 8 |
| Banning snares | 10 |
| Animal welfare in the curriculum | 12 |

Cats Protection's Scottish network includes 21 volunteer-run branches, four adoption centres, as well as 9 charity shops which also offer advice on cat care. In 2019 the charity rehomed 4,000 cats in Scotland and helped neuter 14,000 cats.



Compulsory microchipping of owned cats

Why it matters

29% of owned cats in Scotland are still not microchipped, leaving them without any permanent form of identification – that’s 227,000 cats¹.

Cats are known for their inquisitive nature and can become lost or injured – even those that live indoors can slip outside unnoticed. It is heart-breaking for an owner when a cat goes missing, and without a microchip they may never be reunited or informed if their pet is killed on the roads.

Microchipping owned cats in Scotland would help with the identification of domestic cats and support the work in protecting the critically endangered Scottish wildcat.

What the Scottish Government can do

- Introduce regulations to make microchipping of pet cats compulsory in Scotland to give cats the same level of protection as their canine counterparts
- Commission research into why cat owners in Scotland do not microchip their pet cats and how cat owners’ behaviour can be changed to encourage more to chip their cats



Awareness-raising on its own is not enough, and regulation is the most effective way to drive up the number of pet cats that are microchipped. We know it works – since compulsory microchipping was introduced for dogs in 2016, over 89%² of pet dogs are now microchipped in Scotland, while the figure for pet cats is only 68%³.



Benefits for cats

- Increase the number of lost cats reunited with their owners
- Prevent much-loved pet cats being needlessly rehomed because an owner can't be traced
- Enable vets and animal rescuers to quickly alert an owner if their cat is injured
- Simplify access of medical records for vets
- Enable owners to be informed of a fatal traffic accident if their cat is picked up by a local authority
- Help resolve instances of cat theft and ownership disputes

Microchipping is part of responsible pet ownership: If microchipping of owned cats became compulsory it would be the responsibility of the cat owner to get their cat microchipped.



Much-loved family cat Freddo was reunited with his delighted owners after going missing for three years, thanks to his microchip.

The nine-year-old puss went missing in March 2017 after moving to a new home in Glasgow with owners Nicola and Gary McGrattan, and their son Dominic. Despite months of searching with posters and posts on social media, no trace was found until he was handed in as a stray to Cats Protection's Glasgow Adoption Centre three years later. As with all strays, Freddo was scanned for a microchip, making it quick and easy to trace his owners.

Cats and rented housing

Why it matters

Increasing numbers of people now rent their homes in Scotland. Yet many Scottish tenants are denied the chance to own a cat, simply because their landlord will not allow pets. Worse still, cat-friendly housing is in such short supply that many owners have to make the heart-breaking decision to rehome their much-loved pet if they move into rented accommodation. 'No pets' policies are especially unfair on vulnerable people and those who rent alone, whose cat may be a great source of companionship.

Sadly, few private landlords in Scotland currently allow tenants to keep cats, with just 10% explicitly allowing cats, and only a further 25% with a tenancy allowing pets but not specifying the pet type⁴.

What the Scottish Government can do

- Update the Scottish Government model agreement clauses on pets for assured short-hold tenancies in Scotland to encourage more landlords to allow well-behaved pets
- Raise awareness with organisations such as landlord and letting agent associations to encourage use of new pet-friendly model clauses
- Hold a Scottish Government round table with stakeholders in the private rented sector to share best practice and ensure pet-friendly policies work for both landlords and tenants
- Signpost tenants to tools and information which will help prove they will be responsible cat owners and reliable tenants – for example, Cats Protection has a template Pet CV that tenants can use:
www.cats.org.uk/private-tenants



Landlords want to protect their investment, and research shows cats rarely cause any issues. 83% of cat-friendly private landlords in Scotland report no problems at all from cats in their properties⁵.

Landlords not allowing pets is one of the main reasons cats are given to Cats Protection for rehoming in Scotland.



Benefits for landlords, tenants and cats

73% of private tenants in Scotland that are able to own cats report their cat has a positive effect on their life such as making them happy, providing company and affection, or improving mental health. Allowing cats into rented properties need not place any additional burden on landlords, and in fact would open up a huge new market of potential tenants. 15% of private renters aged 16-34 do not have a cat but would like one⁶. By becoming cat-friendly, landlords can attract those seeking a long-term home for themselves and their feline family member.

Landlords who allow cats report that such tenants are often much more likely to settle, stay for longer and be reliable payers. Having longer term tenants avoids additional tenant search fees or losing income while a property is vacant.

Mum-of-two Stephanie was forced to give up the family's much-loved cat Whoopie after struggling to find a new pet-friendly home.

The heart-breaking decision, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, came at a particularly stressful time for Stephanie, who works as a clinical healthcare assistant in two NHS hospitals. It meant her daughters – aged six and one – faced lockdown without their beloved pet, and denied Stephanie the comforting and calming presence of a pet.



Kitten breeding, selling and improving welfare

Why it matters

For too long, unscrupulous sellers motivated purely by money have been breeding and selling kittens that are sick, diseased and too young to be sold. This is especially the case online, where classified sites make it easy and cheap to advertise pets for sale, often with misleading descriptions. Those looking to buy a kitten need to be more aware of these unethical sellers and follow advice to ensure they purchase a healthy cat or kitten. A recent survey of the Scottish public found that 84% supported strengthening the regulation and enforcement of welfare standards in the pet trade⁷.

Current regulations

Cats Protection welcomes the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021, which:

- prohibit the commercial sale of kittens under eight weeks old
- close loopholes, ensuring that those selling kittens in the course of a business from home require a licence
- prohibit the commercial sale of kittens which were not bred by the licence holder. This effectively ends the sale of kittens in pet shops and by dealers
- ensure that purchasers are provided with information on the appropriate care of the animal by licensed sellers
- license commercial cat breeding





What the Scottish Government can do

- Collaborate with charities like Cats Protection and members of the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG): www.paag.org.uk
- Continue to raise awareness of the new laws governing pet sales
- Continue to promote widespread use of the expert approved Kitten Checklist which guides those seeking to purchase a kitten, especially online
- To work with local authority licensing teams to review the effectiveness of the new regulations governing pet breeding and sales

Cookie was just three weeks old when he was sold by an unscrupulous breeder using an online selling site.

As well as being emaciated, Cookie's eyes were puffy and scabbed over and his fur was matted with pus. Cookie was handed over to Cats Protection's Glasgow Adoption Centre. Despite being nursed back to health, Cookie's sight couldn't be saved and he was left blind. However, Cookie has been adopted by a loving family and is now living life to the full despite his traumatic start in life.



Banning snares

Why it matters

Snares are inhumane and cruel, causing agonising injuries to cats and other domestic and wild animals. Because of their free-roaming nature, cats are particularly likely to step into and become trapped in snares. Cats not only suffer horrible injuries from being caught in a snare but a long, painful death if they do not manage to get free, or are trapped and not discovered.

In Scotland today, snares are mainly used to target foxes on or near grouse moors, due to the species' perceived threat to the grouse. They may also be used to target rabbits and hares. However, non-target species can also be caught in snares and cats are extremely common victims, often dying as a result or suffering injuries that lead to amputations if the animal gets free.

The current code of practice on the use of snares is not working, with snares frequently left unchecked, and poor compliance by landowners. Changes to the code will not solve this problem, or prevent unintended species such as cats becoming trapped.





What the Scottish Government can do

- Review the effectiveness of current legislation and the Scottish Snaring Code of Practice (Scottish Natural Heritage)
- Fund an independent review of the welfare implications of all traps, conducted by animal welfare scientists
- Introduce an outright ban on snares. This is the only way to prevent them causing unnecessary suffering to cats and other animals. Regardless of whether they capture target or non-target animals, snares are outdated and inhumane. Specialised fencing is a more modern deterrent for rabbits and foxes

Snares: the painful truth

- Scotland is behind many countries in the protection afforded to wild animals. The UK is one of the few places in Europe where snaring is still generally permitted and used⁸
- A recent survey of the Scottish public found that 76% supported a ban on the use and sale of snares⁹
- Over the five years from 2015 to 2019, there have been 15 reports in the media of cats being caught in snares in Scotland. Press reports are likely to show just a fraction of the real number of cat victims, with most snarings going undetected and/or unreported



Animal welfare in the curriculum

Why it matters

Children are the pet owners of tomorrow and it's essential they leave school with a basic understanding of how to respect and care for animals. This can be achieved by including animal welfare as a mainstream topic in the National Curriculum. Such teaching would have additional benefits to a child's emotional development, enabling greater discussion and understanding about caring for others, empathy and responsibility. In a recent survey of the Scottish public 63% supported including lessons about animal welfare and behaviour in the Scottish National Curriculum¹⁰.

What the Scottish Government can do

- Commission research into the links between animal welfare education and preventing problems of animal cruelty and neglect, and reducing anti-social behaviour in adults
- Collaborate with professional bodies to endorse voluntary sector education resources
- Include animal welfare in the National Curriculum for all children



Abigail Christie, Cats Protection's Community Education Officer for Scotland, Northern England & Northern Ireland said:
"Our education talks help children learn about cats and their needs in a fun and engaging way. Children naturally enjoy learning about animals and helping them understand basic welfare needs is a life skill which will stay with them forever. Learning about looking after animals gives children the chance to think about how we take care of others, whether they're people or pets, and will help them become responsible pet owners in the future."



Cats Protection's commitment to animal welfare education

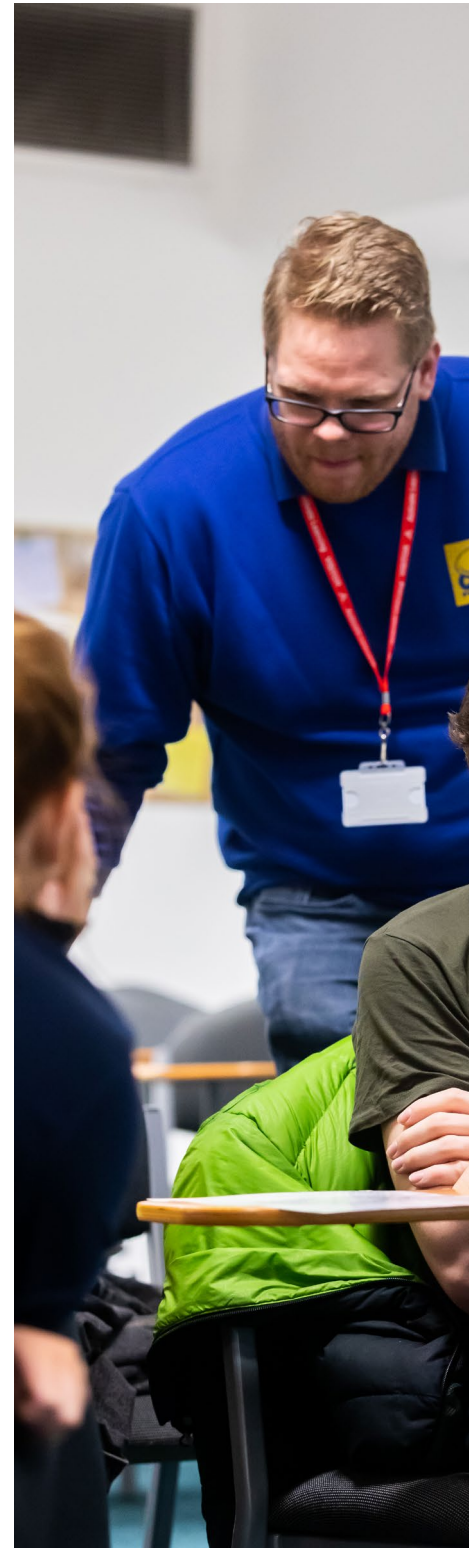
Across Scotland, Cats Protection volunteers provide talks to children in schools, youth organisations and community groups to help them learn how to care for cats.

Our dedicated website at www.education.cats.org.uk is packed full of resources for teachers and fun, educational activities for children.

Proven benefits of animal welfare education

Helping children understand responsible pet ownership would improve some of the biggest animal welfare issues impacting on society. This includes the increasing number of abandoned and unwanted cats, as well as cases of cruelty. Research on the effectiveness of animal welfare programmes shows wide-ranging benefits to the personal development of young people, including:

- increasing animal welfare knowledge^{11,13-17} and improving attitudes towards animals^{12,17,19}
- improving pro-social behaviours and empathy^{12,18,19}. 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 people²⁰
- in older children (9-11 years), teachers reported a significant increase in prosocial behaviours such as friendliness and showing empathy and compassion for the feelings of others¹⁹





Cats Protection's employees and volunteers work tirelessly the length and breadth of Scotland rescuing stray and abandoned cats, finding them new loving homes and promoting neutering to prevent unwanted kittens. However, animal welfare is a devolved issue and it's also vital that our elected representatives ensure that cat welfare is protected through appropriate legislation and policies. We are committed to working with MSPs and the Scottish Government to continue to protect cats from harm.

^{1 & 3} CATS (Cats and Their Stats) 2020 Scotland.

² PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2018 Scotland.

⁴⁻⁶ The Status of Cat Ownership in the UK Rental Market, YouGov March 2018.

⁷ YouGov/OneKind survey Nov 2020.

⁸ Revive Untold Suffering 2019.

⁹⁻¹⁰ YouGov/OneKind survey Nov 2020.

¹¹ Aguirre, V, & Orihuela, A (2010). Early Childhood Education Journal, 38(1), 27-31.

¹² Arbour, R, Signal, T, & Taylor, N (2009). Society and Animals, 17(2), 136-148.

¹³ Coleman, GJ, Hall, MJ, & Hay, M (2008). Anthrozoos, 21(3), 271-284.

¹⁴ Hawkins, RD, & Williams, JM (2017). Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, 20(3), 240-256.

¹⁵ Jamieson, J, Reiss, MJ, Allen, D, Asher, L, Wathes, CM, & Abeyesinghe, SM (2012). Animal Welfare, 21(1), 65-75.

¹⁶ Mariti, C, Papi, F, Mengoli, M, Moretti, G, Martelli, F, & Gazzano, A (2011). Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications and Research, 6(1), 12-20.

¹⁷ Orihuela, A, Aguirre, V, & Lakestani, N (2015). Society and Animals, 23(4), 363-378.

¹⁸ Samuels, WE (2018). International Journal of Educational Research, 91(January), 49-64.

¹⁹ Samuels, WE, Meers, LL, & Normando, S (2016). Anthrozoos, 29(4), 597-610.

²⁰ Svensson, AS (2013). Preschool Children Development Empathy Through Individualized Materials Problems of Education in the 21st Century.

²¹ Tardif-Williams, CY, & Bosacki, SL (2015). Anthrozoos, 28(4), 587-600.



To find out more about our work and to discuss this action plan:

Visit www.cats.org.uk/timeismeow-scotland

Email advocacy@cats.org.uk

Phone 01825 741 996

Twitter @CPadvocacy

#TimeIsMeowScotland #HereForTheCats

Reg Charity 203644 (England and Wales)
and SC037711 (Scotland)

2021 | COM_6813

