



If your cat is using your neighbour's garden to do his 'business', you can try encouraging him to toilet in your garden rather than your neighbour's by providing him with his own toilet area, in a secluded, sheltered area. Cats like somewhere soft to bury their faeces and will be drawn to newly-dug soil, sand or gravel, in a private place, to the edge of the area your cat perceives to be his core area. Make sure it's dug over regularly to remain hygienic and allow the soiled material to decompose naturally.

Make sure your cat has some form of identification for example, a collar with a quick release or a microchip, in case he cannot find his way back home.

The bad

Unfortunately, it can be the case that there is a combination of factors influencing your cat's behaviour. We now come to the good-intentioned neighbour that is often unaware that they may be having a bad effect upon your cat.

Feeding a cat that is not your own is not advisable for several reasons. The cat may be on a special, vet recommended, diet or medication, he may become unhealthy or overweight, or he may become confused as to where is home and consequently *all* of his resources can be found. In addition, your own cat is very likely to be made anxious by the presence of another cat and feel that their territory has been invaded. Try to discourage other cats from coming into, or looking down on your garden – sheds and walls are favoured areas – as this can be very threatening for anxious cats.

Try talking with your neighbour to explain your concerns, and particularly any concerns that you may have over your cat's diet, and see whether they are prepared to interact with him differently, or not offer him food. If they understand the importance of not letting him in and not feeding him they may be more inclined to stop. If your cat is on a specific diet or medication explain the importance of this to your neighbours.

As long as your neighbour cooperates, your cat should soon learn that he has an excellent home and good neighbours!

If a neighbour continue to feed your cat and worse starts letting your cat indoors and keeping them there then there is very little to stop your cat from perceiving that it is in fact his home.

Your cat may be powerless to resist your neighbour's enticements however, you are not. Cats are regarded in law as the 'property' of their owner and they remain the property of the owner even if the cat strays (long or short distances) or is fed elsewhere. Someone who refuses to hand back another person's cat, when asked to do so, could potentially be guilty of an offence under the Theft Act (1968).

The ugly

Although we at Cats Protection are passionate about the care and welfare of cats, we recognise that not everyone is a fan of our feline friends.

If your neighbour has made it clear that they do not want cats entering their garden then you may like to talk to them about the many ways they can humanely deter a cat.

Cats Protection recommends a number of humane deterrents, which are far more effective than many of the products on the market. A short jet of cold water for example, will often do the trick. Pacing the garden armed with the latest turbo, multi-jet water pistol while very amusing, is more likely to put the cat off you rather than your garden. Motion-activated animal deterrents such as Scarecrows are also an option to consider as they will fire the water for you – using heat and movement sensors.

There are other humane cat deterrents available that you can discuss with your neighbour, some are better than others but with any of these persistence is the key otherwise the cat will simply come back as soon as the deterrent has been removed.

We hope this article will help both you and your cat to live in harmony with your neighbours but if all else fails and you find that your cat continues to roam in a manner that is detrimental to his health and welfare, then invest in very tall, close-boarded and sturdy fences or special cat-proof fencing ●

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 repealed the Protection of Animals Act 1911 (and other acts). Cats, including ferals, are now considered "protected animals" in England, Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland under each jurisdiction's animal welfare legislation. They are protected from being subjected to unnecessary suffering but their owners are also subject to the duty of care to provide for the animal's welfare (access to food, vet care, shelter etc).