

The Cat Manifesto

Scotland



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 Scotland 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.

- **Review regulations on cat breeding** to protect the welfare of cats and kittens
- **Ban the breeding of cats with extreme characteristics** which cause pain and suffering
- **Review the animal welfare establishments and rehoming regulations** to enhance protections for animals in 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
- **Regulate those who provide activities involving cats**, such as cat groomers and cat sitters, and update cattery regulations



1. Review regulations on cat breeding

The issue

Scotland became the first country in the UK to regulate cat breeding in 2021. Although this was a breakthrough for cat welfare, cats are still being bred by unscrupulous breeders. Under current legislation, anyone breeding three or more litters of kittens in any 12-month period must be licensed. Cats being bred by individuals who do not reach this threshold are excluded from the enhanced protections created by cat breeding licensing.

Female cats in ill health may continue to be bred, 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

A 2025 freedom of information request carried out by Cats Protection found just 28 cat breeders had been granted licences in Scotland, compared to 468 dog breeders. Cats Protection is concerned that cat breeders are not being incentivised to apply for cat breeding licences. This could be a result of a lack of awareness of the licensing system or ineffective enforcement.

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. Buying cats is the most popular way cat owners in Scotland acquire their pets¹. This makes cats increasingly popular targets for unscrupulous breeders looking to make a quick profit, given that kittens can potentially be sold for thousands of pounds, especially if they are pedigree.

¹ Cats Protection Cats and Their Stats (CATS) Scotland 2025 Report

What needs to change?

To give cats their best life, Cats Protection is calling on the government to review cat breeding licensing in the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021. The threshold for licensing should be lowered so that a cat breeding 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 license could be enhanced by requiring:

- a single cat should have no more than six litters in their lifetime and a maximum of three litters within a two-year period (currently eight litters)
- 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 kittens and physiological stress

The review of cat breeding licensing should also consider:

- a public awareness campaign ensuring everyone who needs a licence is aware and is applying for a cat breeding licence
- a system that allows the public to report cat breeders acting outside of the law
- effective enforcement where councils act if they have anyone in their area breeding above the threshold without a licence
- adequate training, funding and support to local councils to identify cat breeders that need to be licensed including processing applications
- the introduction of a publicly accessible register of all licensed cat breeders

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.

The Scottish Government recognised the negative effect of breeding cats with extreme characteristics in the 2021 cat breeding regulations through prohibiting licence holders from breeding a cat with a 'genotype, conformation, behaviour or state of health' that would have 'a detrimental effect on its health or welfare or the health or welfare of its offspring'². However, not all types of cats with extreme characteristics are explicitly mentioned in the accompanying guidance.

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.

In guidance, the Scottish Government identified the Munchkin and the Scottish Fold as two breeds that would 'likely represent a breach' of cat breeding licence conditions³.

What needs to change?

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

- update guidance on cat breeders to include more breeds of concern, such as exotic wildcat hybrids
- work with the animal welfare sector to create an Innate Health Assessment tool for cats to help measure extreme characteristics
- support council inspectors to spot breeds of concern or cats with extreme characteristics
- work with animal welfare organisations, including Cats Protection, to raise public awareness of the welfare and behavioural issues of certain extreme breeds and exotic wildcat hybrids



^{2, 3} Scottish Government, The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 Guidance for Cat Breeders

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.

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.



XL Bully cats (also known as ‘Dwelf’ cats) are a concerning new cat breed. These cats are created by crossing the Sphynx, American Curl and Munchkin to produce a cat which resembles the XL Bully dog. These cats suffer from physical deformities, including shortened legs, hairlessness, excessively wrinkled skin and curled ears. They are likely to suffer from painful skin conditions and severe joint problems, causing continuous and debilitating pain. These cats are prevented from carrying out normal behaviours essential for their welfare, affecting their ability to live a good quality of life.



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.

Breeding for deformity is unethical and causes unacceptable pain and suffering. The XL Bully cat, Scottish Fold and Munchkin are not recognised by the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF) for pedigree registration due to these welfare concerns. These cats should not be promoted in any way, for example, through social media or by their presence at cat shows. The public should not buy these cats under any circumstances; doing so is irresponsible, as it promotes popularity and leads to more cats with these issues being born to suffer.

3. Review animal welfare establishment and rehoming activities licences

The issue

Regulation of animal rehoming and rescue was introduced in 2021. Scotland became the first place in the UK to create a minimum set of standards for individuals and organisations that take in vulnerable companion animals on a regular basis, with the intention of rehabilitating, rehoming or providing long-term care.

A 2025 freedom of information request carried out by Cats Protection found 31% of councils had not issued licences for animal welfare establishments. Additionally, 34% of councils had not issued licences for animal rehoming activities. The reasons stated for not issuing licences were not enough interest from the public in applying for animal welfare establishment/animal rehoming activities licences, and one council said they did not have enough understanding of the new licensing laws.

Unfortunately, there has been an inconsistency with the rollout of licensing. Only seven councils always use vets to help with the licensing inspections. While most councils do use Animal Health Officers/Animal Welfare Officers to carry out their licensing inspections (41%), inspections are being carried out by inspectors who might not have the technical knowledge and expertise to spot animal welfare concerns.

Councils are under an obligation to publish a public register on their website for the licences they have issued. Five councils that issue licences do not have a publicly accessible register on their website. One council has a public licence register which includes breeding and boarding licences, but does not include the active rehoming activities licence they have issued.



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:

- review the effectiveness of the animal welfare establishment and animal rehoming licences under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021, including consideration of organisations outside of Scotland applying to the Scottish Ministers to obtain an animal rehoming activities licence to supply pets to people in Scotland

- ensure every council has a publicly accessible register of all licenced rehoming organisations and rescues
- provide effective enforcement to ensure any individual or organisation who needs a licence gets one. Offering support and training to council inspectors will help with the consistent rollout of regulations and could help stop individuals and organisations operating without a licence
- work with other governments in the UK to 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



4. 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 and 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

“Cats are a species that relies heavily on routine, stability and predictability. They value freedom of choice and control over their environment. In settings such as cat cafés or cat yoga sessions, these fundamental needs are often compromised or disregarded. Cats are a solitary species by nature. Being forced into close contact with other cats and unfamiliar people can lead to chronic stress.

“Stress in cats doesn’t only impact their mental state but is linked to a wide range of health and behavioural issues such as urinary conditions, gastrointestinal issues, aggressive behaviours towards other cats or to humans, self-mutilation and fearful behaviours, to name a few. Environments with constant changes in smells, varying levels of noise and unfamiliar people will cause distress for a lot of cats. These spaces often don’t allow cats to retreat to safe spaces, which is essential for good cat welfare.

“Although it’s admirable that some use cat cafés as a way to advertise cats for rehoming, the constant changing of cats within the environment means there isn’t a stable social grouping, and this will cause distress, especially during introductions. While these activities may be designed for human enjoyment, they are rarely compatible with what a cat needs to thrive.”

Sammie Ravenscroft,
Regional Community Behaviourist

5. Regulate activities involving cats, including cat grooming and cat boarding

The issue

As a popular pet, there are several services and businesses that have sprung up to cater to cats and their owners. Many dog groomers now offer cat grooming services, with high demand leading to some cat-only grooming businesses. Cat owners often use cat sitters or catteries to look after their pets when away. Although catteries are regulated under the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963, the rest of these activities remain largely unregulated.

Why it matters

Cats are very clean animals and like to groom themselves, but sometimes they may need a little help. For some cats, if they are not regularly groomed, their fur can become matted and uncomfortable. Competent groomers can help to avoid the development of problems and prevent mats needing to be removed under anaesthetic by a vet.

Unfortunately, there is no regulation of groomers in Scotland and no minimum qualification to become a groomer. This poses risks to cats’ physical and psychological welfare. There are also concerns around groomers offering anaesthesia-free dental cleaning for cats.

Many cat owners rely on trusted friends, family or neighbours to care for their beloved pets while they’re away. These informal arrangements are often based on personal relationships and a deep understanding of the cat’s individual needs. However, hiring a commercial cat sitter introduces certain risks. These businesses often serve multiple clients, and there is no guarantee that these individuals have the necessary training, experience, or knowledge about feline welfare.

What needs to change?

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

- regulate cat grooming. Conditions should require all cat groomers to hold a minimum qualification that ensures they meet minimum standards of cat-friendly cat handling. Inspections should be carried out to ensure groomers are not breaching the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 by offering sedation for grooming or invasive dental cleaning
- update the legislation on animal boarding. Cats Protection recommends bringing animal boarding legislation under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021. This would allow greater consistency between the licensing of animal welfare establishments and animal boarding establishments
- regulate commercial cat sitting. Conditions should require all commercial cat sitters to complete a recognised training course, demonstrating their knowledge of cat welfare and care in line with the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 and the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Cats



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.

- **Change the law on dogs attacking cats** to hold owners responsible
- **End the sale and use of cruel aversive training devices like electronic shock collars**, which cause pain, fear and stress
- **Make cat theft a specific offence** to protect owners and cats from the stress and suffering caused by this crime

1. 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.

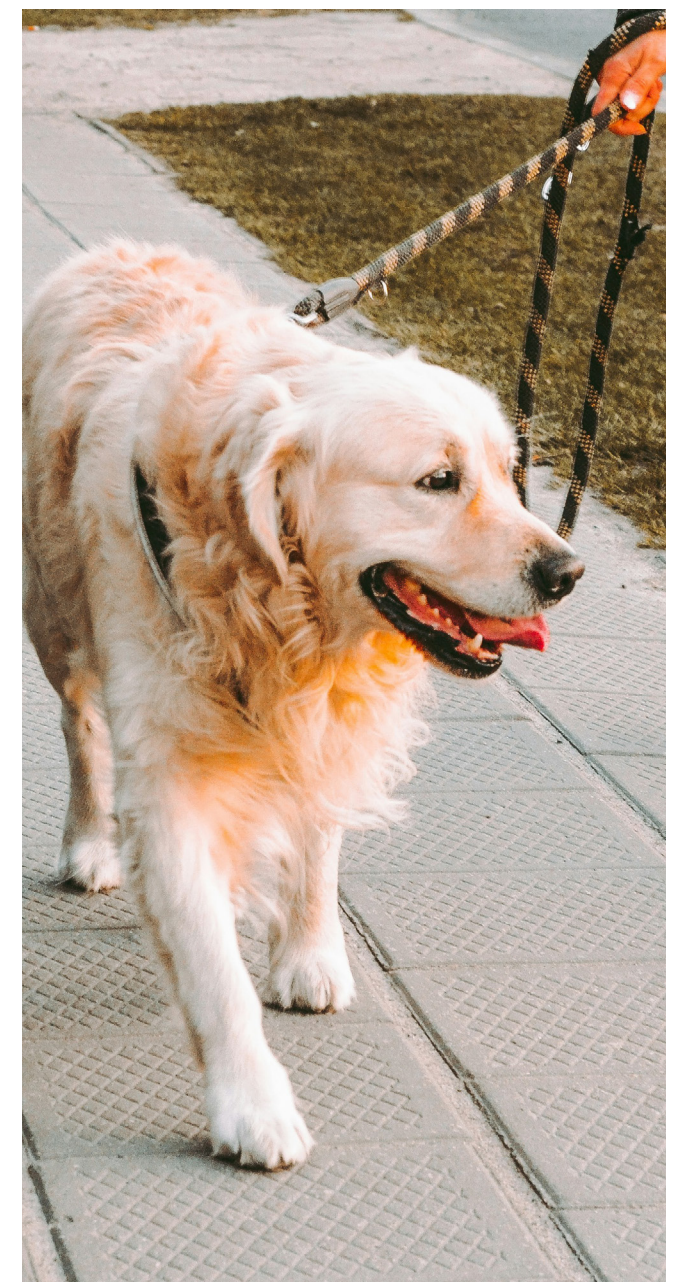
Over the last 10 years in the UK, 425 cats have been reported in the press as having been attacked by a dog. At least 83% of these attacks are fatal, which, of course, has a devastating impact on the cat's family. Cats may not die quickly, and many suffer greatly before succumbing to their injuries.

The Dangerous Dogs (Scotland) Act 1991 was amended to cover dog attacks on assistance dogs but not attacks on other animals. The Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced Dog Control Notices (DCNs) which can be given by dog wardens and the police to dogs seen as out of control. This could include dogs that have attacked cats. Cats Protection is concerned that the legal framework for holding dog owners responsible is insufficient.

What needs to change?

To give cats their best life, 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



2. Ban the sale and use of cruel training devices

The issue

Aversive training devices such as electronic 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 electronic shock collars. **The use of electronic 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 electronic 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.”

Alison Richards, Chief Veterinary Officer, Cats Protection

3. Make cat theft a specific offence

The issue

The true scale of cat theft in Scotland is unknown, as Police Scotland does not keep data on this issue. However, a report by Pet Theft Awareness⁴ found that in 2021 police in other areas of the UK recorded cat theft increased by 40% compared to the previous year and has more than quadrupled since 2015. This is likely to be the tip of the iceberg as most police forces simply record pet theft as property theft.

Why it matters

High-value pedigree cats are increasingly popular, making theft of cats more tempting to criminals. According to the *CATS Report Scotland 2025*, of the cats obtained in the last 12 months, 59% of them were pedigree cats compared to 31% obtained in the previous year. Exploitative criminals know they can make money through theft and resale or, where a cat is unneutered, from breeding.

The *CATS Report Scotland 2025* also showed that 92% of owners consider their cat part of the family, highlighting the impact that this crime has on cat owners.

The theft of a much-loved pet is devastating for the pet and their owner(s). That's why Cats Protection believes it cannot be right that the theft of a cat is treated in law in the same way as theft of a mobile phone; as though they were an object, something replaceable. We believe that the law must recognise the unique bond between cat and family and treat such theft accordingly.

Currently, there is a lack of reliable data available regarding pet theft because police records do not differentiate between objects and pets.

What needs to change?

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

- make pet theft a specific offence to recognise the emotional impact on the owners and the welfare impact on the cat. A specific offence of cat theft would also enable Police Scotland to help gather data on the crime and prevent future incidents



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

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

67% of cats purchased in the last 12 months were found online⁵.

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.

Action Fraud reported more than 14,000 crime reports relating to pet fraud between 2019 and 2025, amounting to over £7 million being lost in pet scams.

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, which have become a significant part of the pet trade. Despite social media companies having their own rules limiting pet sales, 17% of purchased cats in the UK were found via Facebook⁶.

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
- PAAG's Advertising Standards to be implemented in law to improve the standard of all pet adverts
- 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



^{5, 6} Cats Protection Cats and Their Stats (Cats) 2025 Report

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

The issue

The advertising and media industries’ 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. Scan the QR code:



Or go to:
cats.org.uk/advertising-advice

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



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

80% of cat owners in Scotland say that they look at funny or cute pictures or videos of cats online at least once a month. 32% look at cat-related social media profiles⁷.

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.

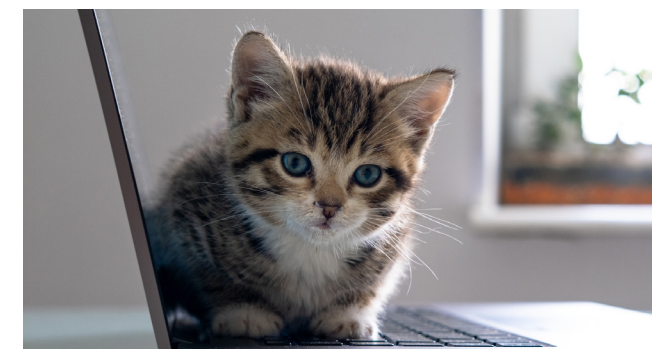
Even more concerning, is the existence of outright cat abuse online. Cases have been reported of livestreams showing cats being tortured and killed. This not only has tragic consequences for cats, but any person unfortunate enough to come across this content may be left with long-lasting trauma.

Cats Protection is a member of Social Media Animal Cruelty Coalition (SMACC). We discourage anyone from watching or sharing cruelty content; instead, we advise them to report it.

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



“The internet is full of sweet and funny cat videos. Sadly, there can be a dark side to online cat content. Some viral ‘trends’ can depict cat owners unknowingly causing their cats harm or distress. We’ve seen content which contains misinformation about cats, which could lead to poor welfare. At the more extreme end, videos containing cat abuse have appeared on multiple social media platforms. Cats Protection is a member of Social Media Animal Cruelty Coalition (SMACC) to help combat this content. SMACC is a coalition designed to end the proliferation of animal cruelty content on social media by collaborating with the platforms to end the availability, spread and profitability of this content.

“If you come across any cat cruelty content online, make sure to follow SMACC’s ‘five steps to stop online cruelty’: be aware of what is cruel, do not watch, do not engage, do not share and report to the platform.”

Jade Emery-Temprano,
Campaigns & Advocacy Officer

⁷ Cats Protection Cats and Their Stats (Cats) 2025 Report

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 must be given up due to lack of pet-friendly housing, 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.

- **Introduce compulsory microchipping of pet cats and create a single point of search for microchip databases** to help reunite cats with their families and 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
- **Raise awareness of the welfare issues of cat hoarding and multi-cat households** to improve the welfare of both cats and people



1. Introduce compulsory cat microchipping with a single searchable database

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

The best way to reunite lost, stolen or abandoned cats with their owners is through microchip details. If the cat is found injured and taken to a vet, those details will 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.

Stray cats without a microchip consistently remains one of the top reasons cats come into our care. We encourage owners to microchip their cats and keep their details up to date. This stops cats from being needlessly rehomed and frees up pens for the cats that need them the most.

It can be difficult for approved authorities to locate a cat's owner, as there are numerous government-approved microchipping databases operating, along with some bogus sites. The process of looking up an owner's details should be as easy as possible, while also protecting individuals' personal data.

What needs to change?

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

- introduce compulsory microchipping of pet cats over 20 weeks old
- work with other UK governments to create a single point of search for relevant authorities scanning microchips. This would make the checking of a chip as swift and efficient as possible



2. Encourage pet-friendly rented housing

The issue

In Scotland, 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

Cats Protection welcomes the Housing (Scotland) Bill 2025, which brings an end to blanket no-pet policies. For too long, tenants have been denied the companionship and joy of having a cat simply because their tenancy does not allow pets. It can be heartbreaking when someone must choose between their beloved pet and a home.

The new Bill also includes vital provisions to support victim-survivors of domestic abuse. Cats Protection Lifeline provides free and confidential, temporary foster care for pets, supporting victim-survivors to flee from abuse.

A Cats Protection survey found 93% of domestic abuse professionals in Scotland said in their professional experience, owning a pet had been a barrier for someone getting to safety⁹.

Pets can often be a barrier to someone seeking safety from domestic abuse, with many owners unable to leave due to the fear of what may happen to their beloved pet if left behind. Almost half (48%) of domestic abuse professionals have supported clients where the perpetrator had killed cats within the home⁸. Many refuge/emergency accommodations are unable to accept animals, so it is important that both victim-survivors and their pets can reach safety.

What needs to change?

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

- continue to engage with organisations like Cats Protection to ensure responsible pet owners are not unreasonably refused the right to keep a pet
- work with the rental sector to encourage landlords to accept new tenants with pets
- embed pet welfare into domestic abuse policies to help victim-survivors to flee from abuse by signposting to services like Lifeline and ensuring victim-survivors can be reunited with their beloved pets in permanent pet-friendly accommodation

A 2021 YouGov survey¹⁰ of landlords found that:

- 68% of private Scottish landlords who don't currently allow pets in any/all of their properties say nothing would persuade them to do so
- 39% of Scottish 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 UK landlords who have allowed pets have reported no problems
- 95% of Scottish tenants say their cat has some form of positive impact on their life
- 73% of UK landlords did not find any damage at the end of the tenancy

^{8, 10} A 2021 survey of landlords, letting agents and tenants on pets and rental properties, conducted by YouGov on behalf of Cats Protection and Dogs Trust

⁹ Cats Protection Domestic Abuse and Cat Ownership Professionals Survey 2023

3. Include animal welfare in the 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 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 cats.org.uk/education is packed full of resources for teachers and fun, educational activities for children.

“Through the Cats Protection education programme in Scotland, I help children understand the five welfare needs of cats through fun, interactive sessions. It’s inspiring to see them connect animal care with empathy and kindness. Teachers often tell me how much the pupils enjoy making the link between how we care for animals and how we treat one another.

“My hope is that by teaching children about responsible pet ownership and the importance of compassion, we can influence not just the next generation of cat owners but society as a whole. The way we treat animals shapes the way we treat each other, and giving young people these tools early on can help create a more caring and respectful future.”

Aileen, Cats Protection volunteer

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 840,000 owned cats in Scotland, with one in five households (20%) owning a cat¹¹. The bond between cat and owner can have huge benefits to mental health and in combatting loneliness.

The CATS Scotland Report 2025 has found that the wellbeing benefits of cat ownership are the main driving force behind having a cat, with companionship, reducing loneliness and reducing stress being collectively the top reasons that people choose to own a cat (56%).

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



¹¹ Cats Protection Cats and Their Stats (Cats) Scotland 2025 Report

5. Raise awareness of the welfare issues of cat hoarding and multi-cat households

The issue

An animal hoarder is an individual who has accumulated a large number of animals that they are unable to properly care for. Animals may lack proper food, shelter, veterinary care and clean environments. Incidents of animal hoarding can lead to risks to both the animals and the hoarder.

Hoarding affects an estimated 2 to 5% of the UK population, with Animal Hoarding Disorder/ Noah's Syndrome being recognised as a distinct subset of hoarding disorder¹².

Why it matters

There are many complex reasons why someone might begin hoarding cats, which can include collecting animals after a traumatic event or loss, or when a kind-hearted person 'rescues' too many animals from life on the street. On average, the number of animals kept by hoarders is around 44 to 64 per case¹³. Sadly, whatever the motivation, cat hoarding presents cat and human welfare problems.

Cat hoarding is often complex and must be dealt with compassionately. Many may feel embarrassed to seek help for fear of judgement or reprisal. Because animal hoarding is considered a mental health disorder, individuals often fail to provide adequate food, water, sanitation and veterinary care for the animals in their care. They may also be in denial about their inability to meet these basic needs, which can further complicate intervention efforts.



¹² The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss) Effects of Clutter or Hoarding on people affected by it and Nadal Z, Ferrari M, Lora J, Revollo A, Nicolas F, Astegiano S, et al. Noah's Syndrome: Systematic Review of Animal Hoarding Disorder

¹³ Wilkinson J, Schoultz M, King HM, Neave N, Bailey C. Animal hoarding cases in England: Implications for public health services. Front Public Health and Nadal Z, Ferrari M, Lora J, Revollo A, Nicolas F, Astegiano S, et al. Noah's Syndrome: Systematic Review of Animal Hoarding Disorder

Cat hoarding causes a range of health and welfare implications for both cats and humans, including:

- **starvation and dehydration** due to insufficient food and water. A lack of resources can also lead to poor nutrition and ill health in cats, such as dental disease
- **overcrowding and poor sanitation**, which result in the spread of infectious diseases and parasites such as cat flu and ringworm
- **inter-cat aggression and stress-related behaviours** such as urine spraying, inappropriate urination/defecation, and fighting, often caused by social overcrowding and competition for limited resources
- **repeated pregnancies in female cats**, adding to the number of cats and adding further strain on resources
- **genetic diseases from inter-breeding**, which may result in congenital defects and poor health
- **confinement and lack of socialisation**, and constant stress of living in poor conditions, causes psychological distress and adds to a reduced quality of life. Animals may develop long-term behavioural problems such as fearfulness, aggression or anxiety
- **high prevalence of fleas, worms and other parasites**, which can affect both animals and humans
- **environmental health hazards**, such as excessive urine and faeces, strong odours, and contamination of living spaces
- **public health risks**, unsanitary conditions and close proximity between animals and humans increases the risk of zoonotic disease transfer

Sadly, dead animals are often mixed in with ill and healthier animals. A 2022 study found 53% of animal hoarding cases involve dead animals or animals requiring euthanasia, and there are dead animals in 32.9% of cases¹⁴.

What needs to change?

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

- raise awareness with the public about the welfare issues of cat hoarding and its consequences
- identify or create a service responsible for monitoring and responding to incidents of animal hoarding. This would create a robust system of reporting and could create a better-funded system to support intervention efforts
- fund research to better understand animal hoarding as a mental health condition and what interventions work to prevent future hoarding
- provide education to housing associations, local authorities and mental health professionals about cat hoarding and how to spot the warning signs and offer support and work to stop future hoarding



¹⁴ Wilkinson J, Schoultz M, King HM, Neave N, Bailey C. Animal hoarding cases in England: Implications for public health services. Front Public Health

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 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



1. Promote better labelling of toxic products like lillies

The issue

Lilies are extremely toxic to cats.

56% of cat owners are unaware of the danger that bringing lilies into their home will pose to their much-loved cat¹⁵.

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.

¹⁵ Cats Protection Cats and Their Stats (CATS) Scotland 2025 Report

2. Restrict the use of fireworks

The issue

Most cat owners know that pets can become very alarmed and distressed by fireworks.

59% of cat owners say that their cat has been affected by fireworks¹⁶.

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 become 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.

What needs to change?

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

- fully implement the provisions in the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Act 2022, including creating a licensing system for those wishing to use fireworks and restricting the days on which fireworks can be supplied and used 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



¹⁶ Cats Protection Cats and Their Stats (CATS) Scotland 2025 Report

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





To find out more please visit: [**cats.org.uk/manifesto-scot**](https://cats.org.uk/manifesto-scot)

Find your local Cats Protection: [**cats.org.uk/find-us**](https://cats.org.uk/find-us)

For any further information please email: [**advocacy@cats.org.uk**](mailto:advocacy@cats.org.uk)