

FAQ's on cats

Q. Why are changes to the bylaw proposed?

Currently there are no guidelines on cat ownership in Wellington. There is community desire to encourage responsible ownership of cats which will enable the cat's welfare to be protected. Changes also aim to minimise some instances of nuisances caused by cats.

Q. What changes are being proposed for cats?

The Council is consulting on the following two proposals to manage cats:

- Requiring permission to keep more than three cats, over the age of six months. Exceptions are proposed for catteries and registered breeders. A strict limit to numbers of cat that may be kept is not proposed.
- All domestic cats must be microchipped and registered with a recognised microchip registry.

We are also asking for the public's views on whether people living near wildlife sensitive areas (such as Zealandia) should keep fewer than three cats.

Details on implementation of the two proposed changes have not been finalised. For example, it is expected that the Public Health Team would run any administration, but this has yet to be formally decided.

It has been suggested by Councillors that there could be a transition period if there are any new rules on cats under the bylaw. No decision has been made on this as yet. This will be looked at after hearing from the public.

No final decisions have been made regarding cat management. Any changes would only be made after Councillors consider public submissions.

Q. Will I be allowed to have more than three cats?

Yes – provided you meet the criteria for registration. We are not proposing a strict limit on the number of cats a household may keep provided they meet these criteria. The Council's proposal is that you should be registered to keep more than a set number of cats, in this case more than three.

If a household has more than three cats, permission could be required through a simple registration process. The proposed criteria we are consulting on to assess whether a household could keep more than three cats are:

- a) the number of cats at the premises;
- b) whether all the cats at the premises are microchipped and neutered;
- c) provision for the cats' hygiene, control, and confinement; and
- d) provision for the protection of other persons or property from being affected in any way by the cats.

We would expect that most cat owners would meet these criteria, and are seeking feedback on these criteria.

No decisions have been made on what would happen to cats if their household was deemed not allowed to keep more than three (or another set number) of cats because they don't meet these criteria.

If a household does not meet these criteria then it is expected that the Council would work with relevant animal agencies (such as the SPCA) to ensure cats are suitably cared for. Under situations of animal welfare concern and under the Animal Welfare Act cats must be passed to an approved organisation such as the SPCA who deals with them appropriately.

Currently nine Councils across the country have similar restrictions currently in place.

Q. How would these changes be enforced?

Any changes to the Animals Bylaw would be enforced similarly to other bylaws – they would be enforced reactively. If problems were to arise and the matter was brought to the Council's attention, owners would receive reasonable notice to remedy any issues.

There are currently no plans to issue financial penalties to the owners whose cats have breached the bylaw conditions.

Q. Will I have to microchip my cat?

The Council is consulting on microchipping. Identification of your cat is the key issue and microchipping is recommended as best practice for cat identification as per the Companion Cats Code of Welfare. Collars can sometimes fall off and get lost.

Microchipping doesn't hurt cats. It benefits owners, as it enables their cats to be returned to them if lost or injured. Portable scanners are available to use to easily determine whether or not a cat is microchipped.

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Q. Isn't microchipping expensive? How can I microchip my cat?

Microchipping your cat can be done by your local vet. Microchipping tends to cost between \$15-\$20, plus vet fees. An option to minimise costs is to chipping done at the same time as vaccinations or combine it with a check-up.

The SPCA also provides subsidised microchipping, and occasionally runs free microchipping days. For more information on this, please contact the Wellington SPCA.

Q. What about feral and stray cats?

Sometimes cats are live-trapped within reserve areas when complaints have been received from members of the public. The work is currently carried out by Wellington City Council staff in conjunction with staff from Greater Wellington Regional Council, Wellington SPCA and local veterinary clinics.

The Animal Welfare (Companion Cats) Code of Welfare 2007 sets out what must be done with any cats that are caught in this way.

Cats that are able to be identified are returned to their owners. Other cats that are friendly are rehomed through organisations such as the SPCA. In some circumstances cats that do not have identification, exhibit feral characteristics and that are assessed to be unsuitable to rehome may be euthanized.

This is in line with the Council's *Our Natural Capital – Wellington's Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan* and Greater Wellington Regional Council's the *Regional Pest Management Strategy*.

Any changes to current practice would be made in accordance with due process.

Q. Will I have to tattoo my cat?

The Council is not consulting on tattooing of cats. We are consulting on whether cats should be able to be identified as owned.

Tattooing has been used in past by organisations such as the SPCA to identify cats that have been neutered.

Q. How can I have my say?

Consultation will take place from 1 April – 2 May 2016.

You can make a submission online at wellington.govt.nz/haveyoursay, email your submission to policy.submission@wcc.govt.nz or complete a submission form and send it to Animals Bylaw, Freepost, Wellington City Council, PO Box 2199, Wellington.