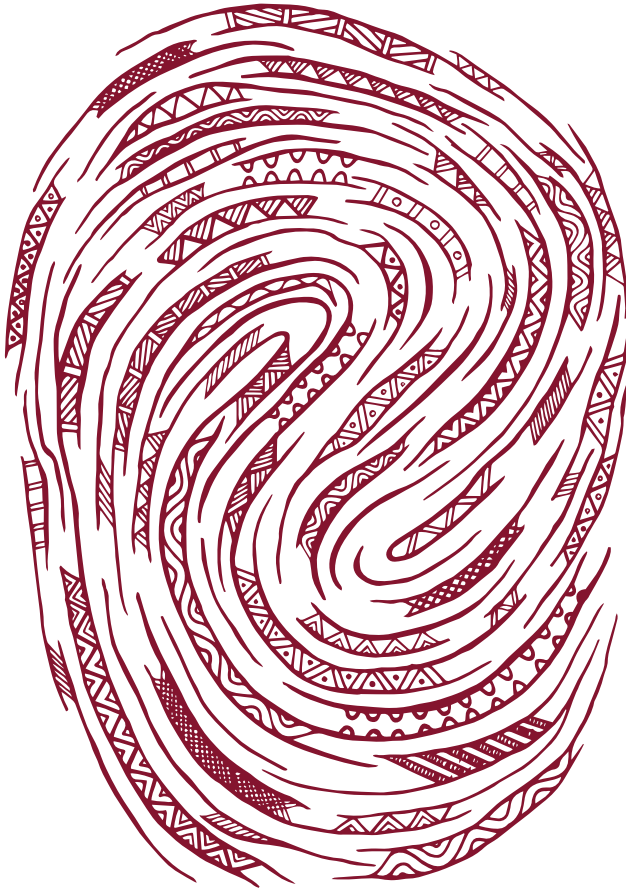


wat djerring Animal Facility

Adoption handbook

Cats and kittens





Artwork © Mandy Nicholson, 2017

Acknowledgement

The City of Whittlesea recognises the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea.

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Congratulations on adopting your new pet

Thank you for choosing the wat djerring Animal Facility (WDAF). We are so happy to help you welcome a feline friend into your family.

By adopting, you are giving your new pet a second chance at a safe and loving home. We appreciate your support and wish you many happy years together.

Desexing

Your cat has been desexed before adoption. You will receive a desexing certificate signed by the WDAF veterinarian. You will need this certificate when registering your cat with your local council.

At the time of desexing, your cat also received a small sterilisation tattoo in their ear.

Vaccinations

Your cat has received an F3 vaccination and may need a booster vaccination in the future. Your vaccination certificate will include the date the next vaccination is due.

Keeping up with annual booster vaccinations is important to help protect your cat from common diseases and keep them healthy.

Microchipping

Your cat has been microchipped. It is important to keep your contact details up to date so you can be reunited quickly if your cat goes missing.

WDAF will register the microchip in your name. You will receive confirmation from the microchip registry once this has been completed. If you do not receive confirmation within four weeks, please contact WDAF.

You are also responsible for registering your cat with your local council. WDAF will notify your local council that you have adopted an animal, but you will still need to complete the registration process.



Preparing for your new cat

Essential supplies checklist

Use this list to ensure you have everything you need to help your cat settle into its new home.

- ☐ Dry food
- ☐ Food bowl
- ☐ Water bowl
- ☐ Collar and ID tag
- ☐ Cat litter (for kittens, avoid clumping or crystal litter)
- ☐ Litter tray and scooper
- ☐ Cat toys
- ☐ Warm bedding
- ☐ Scratching post
- ☐ Cat carrier
- ☐ Grooming brush
- ☐ Flea and worm treatment

Your pet's information

Make sure you keep the following details in a safe and easy-to-find place:

- your name and contact details
- pet details:
 - name
 - age
 - ID number
 - microchip number
 - breed
 - colour
 - gender.

Health and safety

To help keep your cat healthy and safe:

- book a vet check-up soon after adoption (within one month, or when due for a vaccination if earlier)
- keep vaccinations up to date
- use regular flea and worm prevention treatments
- consider pet insurance for unexpected vet costs
- pet-proof your home by removing hazards, toxic plants, and securing loose wires or small objects.

Feeding your new cat or kitten

Current food

Your cat or kitten is currently eating mainly dry food.

Fresh water should always be available. Please follow the feeding guidelines on food packaging to make sure your cat is getting the right amount each day.

Changing food

As cats grow, their nutritional needs change. It is important to provide food that is suitable for their age and stage of life.

We recommend feeding a high-quality, premium cat food to support long-term health and wellbeing.

If you are changing your cat's diet, do so slowly over several days. Gradually mix the new food with the current food to help prevent stomach upset.



Ensuring a smooth transition

Preparing for the first 48 hours, the first week, and beyond

Bringing home a new cat or kitten is an exciting time, but it is important to remember that adjusting to a new environment can be stressful. Every cat settles in at their own pace.

When	What to expect
First 24 hours	Your cat may hide, sleep excessively, avoid interaction, or appear nervous. This is completely normal as they adjust to their new surroundings
First 3 days	Reduced appetite, limited activity, and cautious behaviour are common. Provide a quiet, safe space and allow your cat to settle at their own pace
First week	Most cats begin exploring their environment, becoming more comfortable with household routines and family members
1–2 weeks	Confidence and personality often start to emerge. Playfulness, affection, and curiosity typically increase as trust develops
First month	Many cats will feel fully settled and comfortable in their new home, although some may take longer. Patience and consistency are key

Normal early adjustment behaviour

Normal behaviour	Why it happens
Hiding for a few days	Cats often seek security in unfamiliar environments
Reduced appetite in the first 48 hours	Stress and change can temporarily affect appetite
Mild diarrhoea for a short period	Stress and dietary changes may cause mild digestive upset
Excessive sleeping	Rest helps cats cope with the stress of relocation
Light hissing or avoiding contact initially	Cats may need time to feel safe and build trust
Limited interaction or play	Some cats take time to become comfortable enough to engage

Unusual early adjustment behaviour

Abnormal behaviour	Action required
Not eating for 24 hours or more (especially kittens)	Contact a veterinarian
Severe or persistent diarrhoea	Contact a veterinarian
Repeated vomiting	Contact a veterinarian
Laboured, rapid, or difficult breathing	Seek urgent veterinary attention
Collapse, weakness, or extreme lethargy	Seek urgent veterinary attention
Signs of pain, distress, or excessive vocalisation	Contact a veterinarian
Straining to urinate or inability to urinate	Seek urgent veterinary attention
Sudden or significant change in behaviour	Contact a veterinarian



Adjustment periods

Every cat is an individual. Some settle within a few days, while others may take several weeks to adjust. Providing a calm environment, a consistent routine, and plenty of patience will help your pet feel safe and secure in their new home.

Making your cat comfortable

An animal facility can be a busy and stressful place for cats. It is also normal for cats to feel anxious in a new home and around new people.

Please be patient with your new cat during the settling-in period while they adjust to their new surroundings. The steps below will help make the transition easier and more comfortable.

Choosing a suitable room

Start by choosing a quiet room such as a laundry, spare bedroom, or your own bedroom.

Keep your cat in this room for at least a few days. Shy or anxious cats may need several weeks.

Make sure the room has everything your cat needs, including:

- food
- water
- litter tray
- toys
- bed.

This space helps your cat feel safe and secure while they adjust. Keep your cat in this room until they are confidently using the litter tray for both wees and poos.

Monitoring your cat

Spend time observing your cat as they settle in.

If they are hiding, not eating, or seem unsure, they will need more time in their safe room before exploring the rest of the house.

Some cats adjust in a few days, while nervous cats may take several weeks or more.

Signs your cat is ready to explore

Your cat may be ready to explore more of the home if they:

- start exploring the room confidently
- scratch or show interest at the door
- interact with you more regularly and calmly.

When you allow access to other parts of the home, do it when you have time to supervise. Let your cat explore at their own pace.

Make sure they know where their food, water, and litter tray are, and always provide a safe space for them to retreat if they feel overwhelmed.

Settling into the home

If your cat is happy and confident with more space, you can gradually allow full access to the home.

It is normal for cats to feel unsure in new environments. Patience and routine will help them feel secure and settled.

Living environment

Indoor living

We strongly recommend keeping your cat indoors. An indoor lifestyle helps protect your cat from injury, illness, and getting lost, while also helping to protect local wildlife.

Cat confinement requirements in the City of Whittlesea

In the City of Whittlesea, responsible pet ownership includes keeping cats safely contained on your property.

A 24-hour cat confinement law has been in effect since 1 August 2023. This means all cats must remain on their owner's property at all times unless they are under direct control (such as being securely restrained).

Keeping cats confined helps create a safer community for pets, wildlife, and residents.

Indoor cats can live an average of 12–18 years, while outdoor cats often live only 2–5 years.

More information and support to help you keep your cat safely contained is available at

 whittlesea.vic.gov.au/confinement

Benefits of keeping your cat indoors

Keeping your cat safely contained helps reduce risks, including:

- injury from cars and traffic
- fights with other cats and risk of diseases like Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)
- fleas, worms, ticks, and other parasites
- poisoning or accidental harm
- getting lost, stolen, or injured
- exposure to traps or cruelty
- stress from roaming or territorial conflict
- harsh weather conditions
- complaints from neighbours
- impact on local wildlife.

Safe outdoor options

Cats can enjoy outdoor experiences safely at home through secure containment options, such as:

- cat enclosures (including removable options for renters)
- cat-proof fencing systems
- netting or enclosed outdoor areas
- roller systems and barrier attachments for fences.

These options allow your cat to experience fresh air and enrichment while staying safe on your property.

Training and enrichment

Litter training

Cats naturally prefer to toilet in sand or soil. Kittens usually learn this behaviour from their mother at around 3–4 weeks of age.

By the time your cat or kitten comes home, they should already be familiar with using a litter tray. However, settling into a new environment can be overwhelming, and accidents may still happen during the first few days.

Helping your cat get started

Soon after arriving home, gently place your cat in the litter tray. You can softly guide their front paws to scratch the litter so they understand what it is for.

Repeat this a few times if needed until they begin using the tray on their own.

Setting up the litter tray

Cats prefer privacy when toileting, so placement is important.

- place the litter tray in a quiet, low-traffic area
- make sure it is easy for your cat to access
- keep it clean at all times
- keep it away from food and water bowls.

If accidents happen

Accidents are normal while your cat adjusts.

You can help your cat learn by moving their scent back to the litter tray.

- soak up urine with a tissue and place it in the tray
- if there is faeces, place a small amount in the tray using a litter scoop.

This helps your cat recognise the tray as the correct place to toilet and reinforces the behaviour over time.

For more information and advice on toileting, visit the RSPCA Knowledge Base

 kb.rspca.org.au

Enrichment and companionship

Enrichment for your cat

Providing toys and playing with your cat helps keep it mentally stimulated, active, and happy, while reducing boredom and stress while they adjust to their new home.

Cat companionship

Some cats enjoy the company of another cat. A compatible companion can provide:

- social interaction
- exercise and play
- mental stimulation
- company when you are not home.

However, not all cats enjoy living with others, so introductions should always be done carefully.

Scratching

Scratching is a normal and important behaviour. It helps cats:

- stretch their muscles
- mark their territory
- shed old claw layers.

Provide suitable scratching options such as:

- scratching posts
- cat trees
- scratching pads or boards.

Boxes and hiding spaces

Cats love cardboard boxes and enclosed spaces. These help them feel safe and in control of their environment. Research shows that hiding places can reduce stress in cats and help them settle more quickly.

Toys and play

Toys that encourage natural hunting behaviour are ideal, such as:

- feather wands
- string or wand toys
- small toy mice or balls.

Regular play helps keep your cat active and engaged.



Introducing your cat to your family

Introducing to children

Children may not always understand how to interact gently with a cat, and cats may feel overwhelmed by sudden movements or loud noises.

To help everyone stay safe and comfortable:

- always supervise children when they are with the cat
- teach children to be calm, gentle, and quiet around the cat
- avoid behaviours like chasing, grabbing, pulling, or loud play
- encourage children to sit quietly on the floor when patting or playing
- use wand toys or string toys to create safe play between children and the cat.

During the early settling-in period, it is best to keep interactions short and calm so your cat does not feel overwhelmed.

Introducing to other cats

Cats are naturally territorial and may need time to adjust to a new cat in their space. A slow introduction helps reduce stress and build a positive relationship.

Start by:

- separating the cats into different spaces
- swapping bedding or toys so they can get used to each other's scent.

Gradual introduction steps

- keep the new cat in a safe room with food, water, litter tray, toys, and a hiding space
- begin short, supervised introductions of 10–15 minutes
- slowly increase time together as they become more comfortable
- gradually allow access to more of the home.

Some early behaviours such as hissing or tail-swishing are normal. These usually reduce over time as the cats become more familiar with each other.

Patience and a gradual approach will help set both cats up for a calmer and more positive relationship.



Keeping your cat safe at home

Introducing to your dog

Take your time when introducing your new kitten or cat to your dog. Dogs can be very excited, and even friendly behaviour can scare or hurt a cat.

Before starting, your dog should know basic commands such as “sit”, “stay”, and “leave it”. These will help you stay in control.

Steps to follow:

- **Keep them separate at first**
 - For the first few days, keep your kitten in a safe room. Let your dog get used to their smell through the door.
- **Let them see each other safely**
 - Use a baby gate or barrier so they can look at each other without touching. Watch both pets closely. If your cat seems scared, give them more time.
- **Restrict your dog for meeting**
 - Keep your dog on a lead. Do not hold your cat; instead, let them move away if they want to. This helps them feel safe.
- **Remember to be patient**
 - Some pets take longer to adjust. With time, many cats and dogs can live happily together.

Ensure your home is safe before bringing home your new pet. Make sure you:

- keep electrical cords out of reach
- cover power points
- put all medications away safely
- keep bins closed and toilet lids down
- remove plastic bags and foam (they can be choking hazards)
- ensure plants are safe (non-toxic to cats)
- put away small or sharp objects
- watch high places – cats can fall and injure themselves.



Cat health care

Vaccinations

The F3 vaccine protects your cat from serious diseases, including:

- feline enteritis (a dangerous virus)
- cat flu (respiratory infections).

Kittens need a series of three vaccinations. Adult cats need two. After that, they require yearly boosters.

Worming

Parasites can make cats sick, so regular treatment is important.

For kittens, worming should be done:

- every two weeks until 12 weeks old
- then every three months.

For adult cats:

- every three months.

Flea prevention

- treat for fleas every 4 weeks, or as directed on the product
- use a product recommended by your vet.

Tip: Always ask your vet which flea and worming products are best. Some products do not cover all parasites.



Desexing and aftercare

Desexing (also called spaying or neutering) is important for your cat's health and behaviour.

Benefits of desexing

- prevents unwanted kittens
- helps keep your cat healthy
- reduces roaming and risk of injury
- can lower future vet costs
- reduces spraying and territorial behaviour.

After-surgery care

If your cat has recently been desexed, follow the care tips below.

For male cats:

- no stitches need to be removed
- check the surgery area daily

Call the wat djerring Animal Facility on

☎ **8401 6200** if you see:

- swelling
- discharge (fluid or pus).

For female cats:

- you will be told if a follow-up visit is needed
- most stitches dissolve on their own (under the skin)
- check the wound daily for:
 - redness
 - swelling
- stitches usually take about 10 days to heal
- keep the area clean and dry.

Recovery tips

- limit jumping and rough play
- keep your cat calm and quiet
- this helps prevent the wound from opening.

Tip: If you are ever unsure, contact your vet or the wat djerring Animal Facility for advice.

Medical emergencies

If your cat shows any of the following signs, seek emergency veterinary care immediately.

- trauma (for example, after being hit by a car)
- seizures
- inability to walk or stand
- exposure to a poisonous substance
- very high or very low body temperature
- difficulty breathing
- unconsciousness or not responding
- heavy or ongoing bleeding
- signs of severe pain.

Possible health issues

Cat flu

Cat flu is a common and contagious illness that affects a cat's breathing system. It is more likely in unvaccinated cats, especially kittens.

It usually lasts around two weeks. Cats that come from shelters may show signs as they adjust to their new home.

Common symptoms

Look out for these signs:

- sneezing or coughing
- runny nose
- eye discharge
- fever
- not eating or eating less
- red, watery, or sore eyes.

What to expect:

- some cats only have mild symptoms
- many cases will get better on their own
- others may need treatment from a vet.

Contact a vet if your cat:

- has trouble breathing
- stops eating.



Toxic plants and foods

Some plants and foods are very dangerous to cats. If your cat eats or touches something toxic, watch them closely.

Contact a vet straight away if your cat:

- shows signs of illness
- is acting differently.

Toxic plants

- lilies
- daffodils
- asparagus fern
- philodendrons
- sago palms
- aglaonema.

Lilies

All parts of the lily plant are poisonous to cats, including:

- flowers (petals)
- leaves
- stems
- pollen.

The following are also dangerous:

- water from a vase with lilies
- pollen that lands on your cat's fur (and is swallowed during grooming).

Very important: Even a small amount can cause serious kidney failure, which can be fatal within 12–72 hours.

Signs of lily poisoning

Watch for these symptoms:

- vomiting (may include pieces of the plant)
- drooling (excess saliva)
- loss of appetite
- tiredness or weakness
- depression or unusual behaviour
- dehydration
- changes in urination (too much or not at all).

Toxic foods

- milk and dairy products containing lactose (cats are lactose intolerant and these products can cause stomach upset)
- chocolate
- caffeine
- alcohol
- onion and garlic
- grapes and raisins
- cooked bones
- mouldy or spoiled food.



Signs of stress

Signs of stress in cats

Cats can feel stressed just like people. It's important to notice the signs early so you can help them feel safe and comfortable.

Common signs of stress

Your cat may be stressed if you notice them:

- scratching furniture, walls, or door frames
- spraying urine on walls or furniture (even if they still use the litter tray)
- hiding more or avoiding people
- fighting with other pets
- eating less or becoming fussy with food
- grooming too much, which can cause bald spots
- eating more than usual.



Feliway uses natural cat pheromones to help cats feel calm and safe. These are the same kinds of signals cats use to communicate with each other.

It can help reduce stress behaviours such as spraying urine, scratching furniture, fighting with other cats, or hiding.



Welcome to Petcademy

30 days of training and behavioural support for you and your new pet



What is Petcademy?

Petcademy provide 30 days of training and behavioural support for you and your new pet. It's like having a trainer in your pocket! You can reach out to Petcademy's team of certified, fear-free trainers with your toughest questions and we will respond within 24 hours, five days a week.

How to sign-up?

wat djerring Animal Facility has worked with Petcademy to provide all new fosters and adopters with 30 days of access to Petcademy. Within 24 hours of taking home your new pet, you'll automatically receive a welcome text message from Petcademy and you can start asking any questions you may have.

Have a question now?

Can't wait 24 hours? Not a problem. Scan the QR code or text 'woof' or 'meow' to the number below to ask the Petcademy team any burning questions as you and your new pet get settled.



 **0483 903 471**

Want continued access after 30 days?

Sign up for a full Petcademy membership at petcademy.org
20% of the purchase price goes to supporting wat djerring Animal Facility

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COUNCIL OFFICES

Civic Centre
25 Ferres Boulevard
South Morang, VIC 3752

Whittlesea Services Hub

63 Church Street,
Whittlesea, VIC 3752

 whittlesea.vic.gov.au

 9217 2170, select option 4
National Relay Service: **133 677**
(ask for 9217 2170)

Connect with us in your preferred language:



Free telephone
interpreter service

131 450