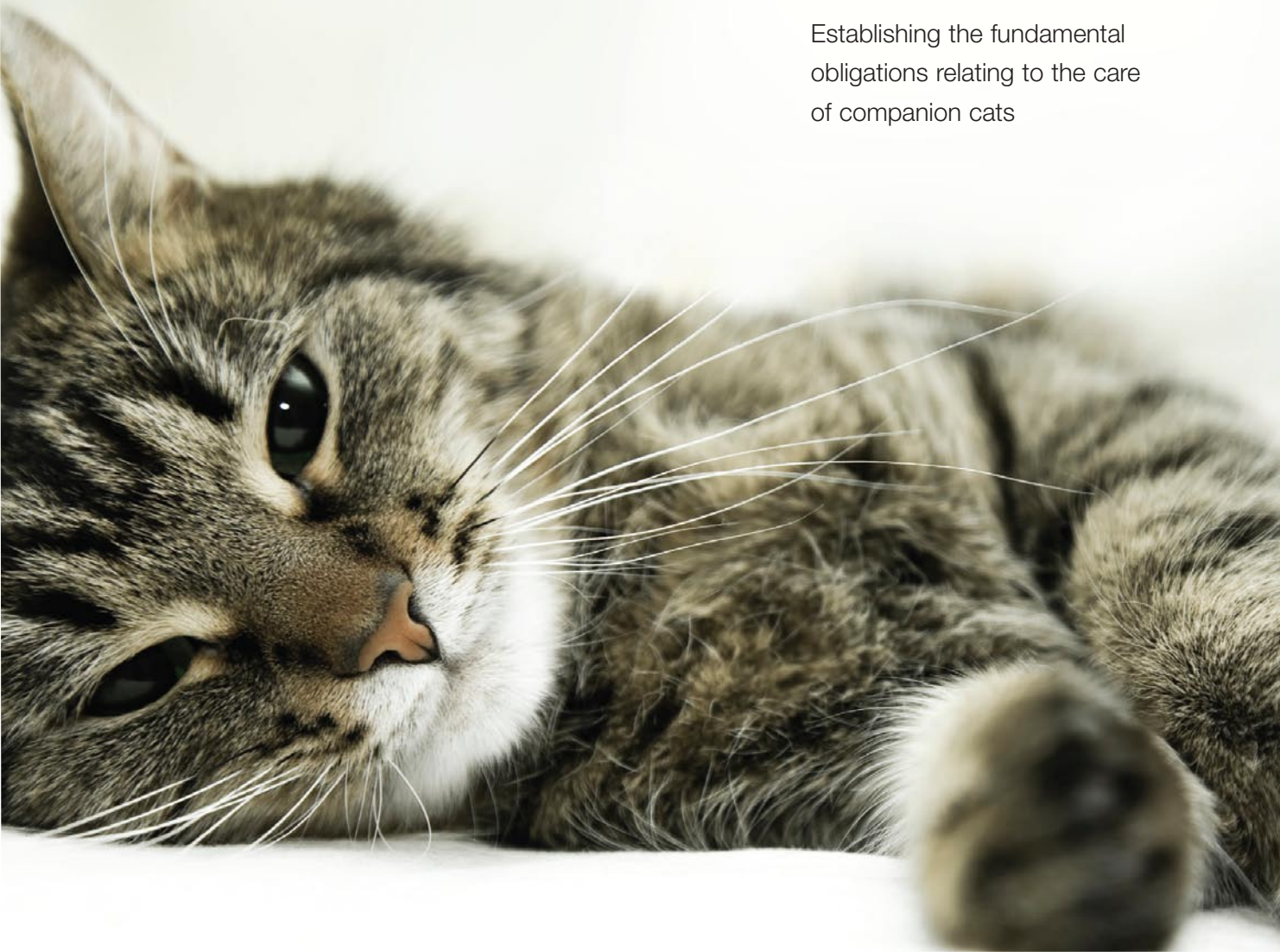




THE NEW ZEALAND
COMPANION ANIMAL
COUNCIL INC

A Summary of the Companion Cats Code of Welfare

Establishing the fundamental obligations relating to the care of companion cats



Foreword

This booklet is produced as a summary of the Animal Welfare (Companion Cats) Code of Welfare 2007 (the code) and is *not* a full reproduction of the code. The code contains more detailed information, and can be accessed at www.biosecurity.govt.nz/animal-welfare.

The Animal Welfare Act 1999 (the Act) imposes obligations on every person who owns or is in charge of a companion cat. The code has been issued pursuant to section 75 of the Act and provides guidance on how to comply with the legislative requirements. However, the code does not provide an exhaustive list of the Act's requirements, and owners and those in charge of companion cats should note that they must comply with the minimum standards in the code *and* the general provisions in the Act. A copy of the Act is accessible at www.legislation.govt.nz.

The code provides for the physical, health and behavioural needs (as defined in section 4 of the Act) of animals. These needs include:

- proper and sufficient food and water
- adequate shelter
- opportunity to display normal patterns of behaviour
- physical handling in a manner which minimises the likelihood of unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress
- protection from, and rapid diagnosis of, any significant injury or disease

being a need which, in each case, is appropriate to the species, environment and circumstances of the animal.

The code also takes account of:

- good practice
- scientific knowledge
- available technology.





*A kitten is chiefly remarkable for rushing about like mad at nothing whatsoever,
and generally stopping before it gets there – Agnes Repplier.*

Introduction

What is the purpose of the code?

Under the Act, the “owner” of a cat and every “person in charge” of a cat is responsible for meeting the legal obligations for the cat’s welfare. The code complements the Act by setting minimum standards, and providing advice and recommended best practice, for the well-being of cats.

It is recognised that a responsible attitude to the care and handling of cats is essential to providing for their welfare. The code is intended to encourage all those responsible for its implementation to adopt the highest standard of care and to meet, or preferably exceed, the minimum standards.

Who does the code apply to?

The code applies to all persons responsible for the welfare of companion cats, including cats in breeding establishments, boarding catteries, animal welfare shelters and pet shops. A separate section at the end of the code provides information on stray cats (i.e. lost or abandoned companion cats) and cats living in colonies.

What animals does the code apply to?

Cats are the most commonly owned companion animals in New Zealand. Unlike commercially farmed animals, the vast majority of cats are kept for their intrinsic nature as loved and loving companions. While individual cats exhibit widely varying natures, they also share some common characteristics, such as an instinct for predation. Hunting is a normal part of a cat’s behaviour, and some cats (such as those on farms and in commercial premises) are kept mainly for the purpose of controlling rodent populations. The question of protecting wildlife is outside the scope of the code.

Feral cats are not included under the provisions of the code. Feral cats may be defined as pests under the Biosecurity Act 1993 and therefore may be subject to control under a pest management strategy.

What happens if I do not follow the minimum standards in the code?

Failure to meet a minimum standard in the code may be used as evidence to support a prosecution for an offence under the Act.

A person who is charged with an offence against the Act can defend himself or herself by showing that he or she has equalled or exceeded the minimum standards in the code.

The recommendations for best practice in the code have no legal effect and are included to encourage higher standards of animal welfare.

How does the code relate to other codes of welfare?

Other codes of welfare that are relevant, and are either being produced for the first time or are in the process of being reviewed, include those concerned with animals in boarding establishments, the sale of companion animals, and animals transported within New Zealand. Where relevant, these other codes should be consulted.

Cat Definitions

COMPANION CAT: Common domestic cat that lives with humans as a companion and is dependent on humans for its welfare. For the purposes of the code, is referred to as “cat”.

STRAY CAT: For the purposes of the code, means a companion cat which is lost or abandoned and which is living as an individual or in a group (colony). Stray cats have many of their needs indirectly supplied by humans, and live around centres of human habitation. Stray cats are likely to interbreed with the unneutered companion cat population.

FERAL CAT: For the purposes of the code, means a cat which is not a stray cat and which has none of its needs provided by humans. Feral cats generally do not live around centres of human habitation. Feral cat population size fluctuates largely independently of humans, is self-sustaining and is not dependent on input from the companion cat population.

Adopting/Purchasing a Cat

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

- (a) Kittens should be kept indoors after adoption/purchase until their course of vaccinations has been completed.
- (b) Cats should be kept indoors after adoption/purchase, until it is clear that they are comfortable with their surroundings.
- (c) Parents/guardians/teachers should teach young children in their care how to properly handle a cat, so that both cat and child are secure and not harmed.
- (d) The cat's previous diet should be continued initially, as a change of diet can result in stomach upsets. Any change in the diet should be introduced gradually.

Water

MINIMUM STANDARD

Cats must have continuous access to water that is palatable and not harmful to health.

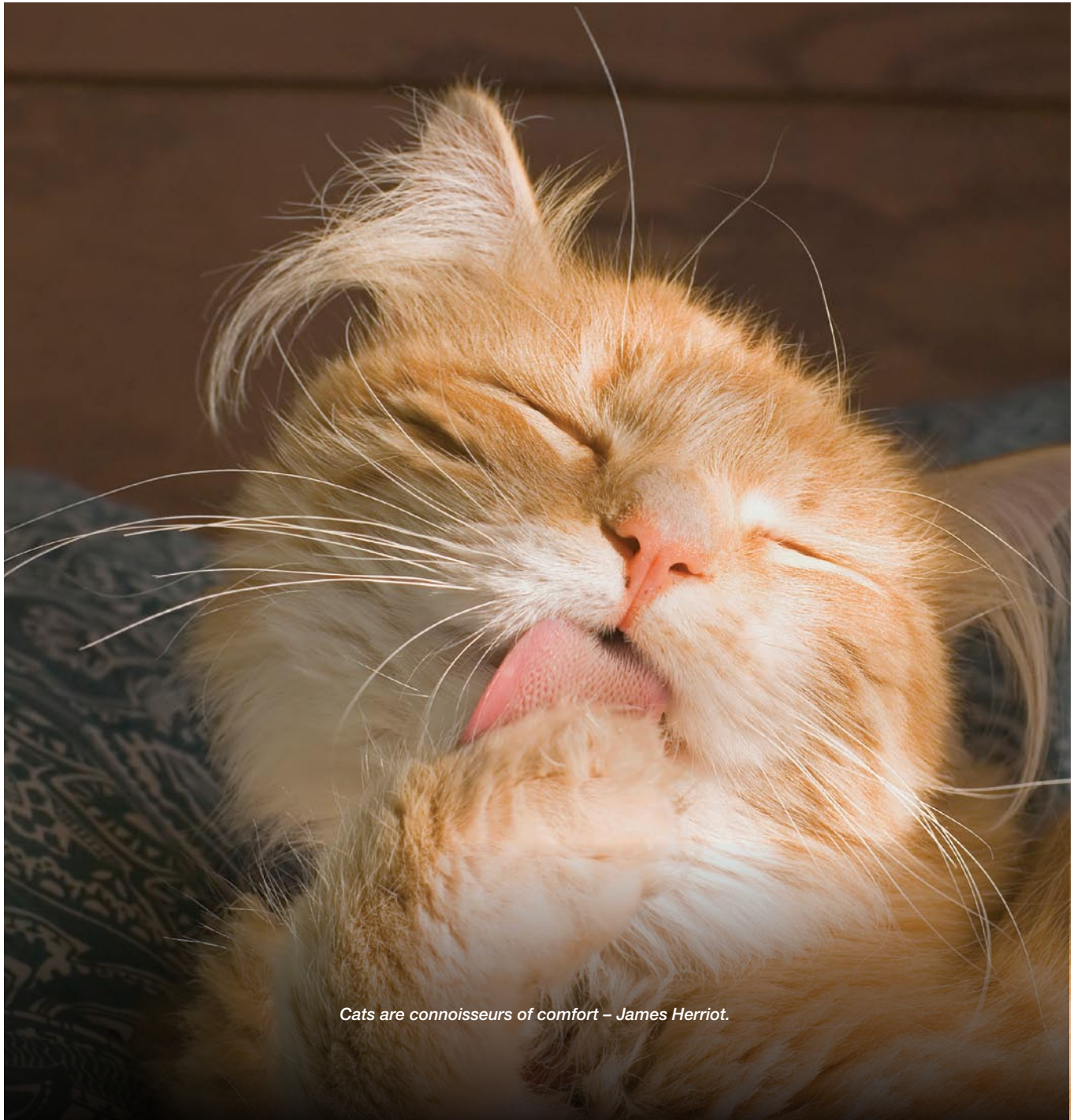
Food and Feeding

MINIMUM STANDARD

- (a) Kittens that have been weaned must be fed a minimum of twice a day.
- (b) Cats over the age of 6 months must be fed at least once a day.
- (c) Cats must receive adequate quantities of food and nutrients to enable each cat to:
 - (i) maintain good health; and
 - (ii) meet its physiological demands, including those resulting from pregnancy, lactation, growth, exercise and exposure to cold; and
 - (iii) avoid metabolic and nutritional disorders.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

- (a) Kittens that have been weaned should be fed small quantities at regular intervals throughout the day.
- (b) Cats over the age of 6 months should be fed twice a day.
- (c) Cats should be fed a complete meat-based cat food diet.
- (d) A diet appropriate to the particular life stage should be fed.
- (e) Prescription diets for certain medical conditions should be fed as instructed by a veterinarian.



Cats are connoisseurs of comfort – James Herriot.

Body Condition

MINIMUM STANDARD

- (a) When a cat's body condition score is "thin" as defined in Appendix III, "Assessment of Body Condition of Cats", to the code, remedial action through veterinary attention or improved nutrition must be taken.
- (b) A cat's body condition score must not be allowed to fall below "thin" as defined in Appendix III, "Assessment of Body Condition of Cats", to the code.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

A cat's body condition score should be maintained at "ideal" as defined in Appendix III, "Assessment of Body Condition of Cats", to the code.

Care of Claws and Coat

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

- (a) Claws should be trimmed if overgrown.
- (b) Long-haired cats should be groomed daily to prevent mats forming in the coat.

Hygiene

MINIMUM STANDARD

- (a) Food and water bowls must be washed regularly to prevent contamination that may pose a threat to the health and welfare of the cat.
- (b) Cats kept indoors, and caged cats, must have access to a litter tray containing absorbent material.
- (c) Litter trays must be attended to regularly, with faeces and moisture-laden litter removed, to prevent contamination that may pose a threat to the health and welfare of the cat.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

- (a) Food and water bowls should be washed daily.
- (b) One deep litter tray for each indoor cat should be provided.
- (c) The litter material should be discarded every few days from a litter tray, and the tray cleaned and disinfected.

Caged Cats (Other Than for Transport)

MINIMUM STANDARD

- (a) Caged cats must have sufficient room to enable them to stretch and move around freely, and must be provided with appropriate areas for feeding and toileting.
- (b) Caged cats must be provided with the opportunity to engage in play and exercise daily.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

- (a) Caged cats should have access to climbing ramps, platforms, sleeping shelves and scratching posts or pads.
- (b) Caged cats should have daily access to sunlight (when available).
- (c) Caging areas should be adequately ventilated for the control of dampness and noxious odours and to minimise the airborne spread of infectious diseases such as viral respiratory diseases.

House Cats

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

- (a) Cats at risk of injury from traffic, dog attacks or cat fights should be kept indoors between dusk and dawn.
- (b) Cats should be kept indoors when fireworks are in use.
- (c) A scratching post or pad should be provided to meet cats' need to maintain their claws.

Use of Collars

MINIMUM STANDARD

Collars, where used, must be fitted to the cat in such a way that the risk of injury to the cat is avoided.

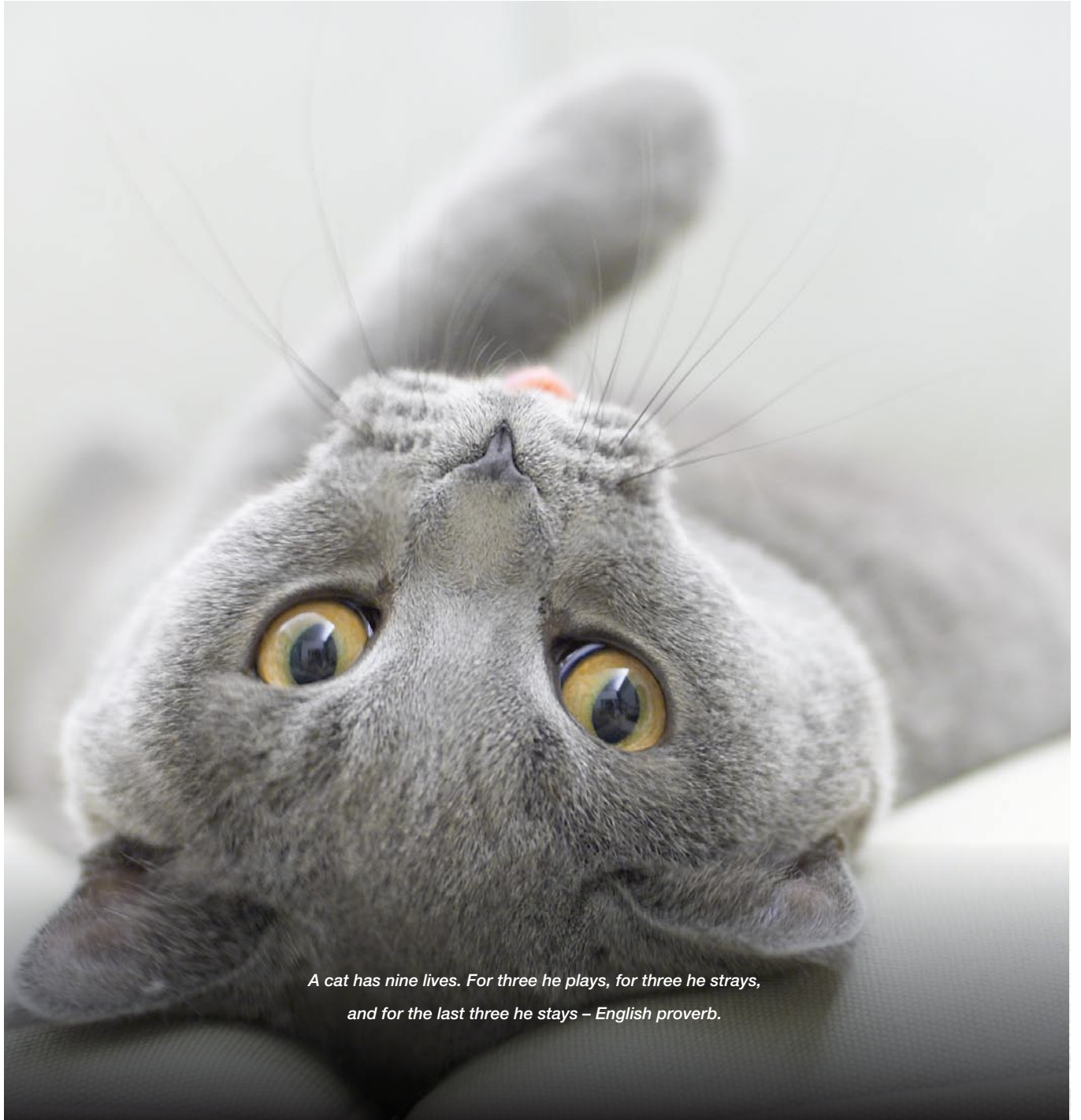
RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

Only collars that are elasticised or provide a quick-release mechanism should be used.

Methods of Identification

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

Cats should be identified with a microchip.



*A cat has nine lives. For three he plays, for three he strays,
and for the last three he stays – English proverb.*

Behaviour Problems

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

- (a) Advice should be sought at the early stages of a behaviour problem.
- (b) Cats should not be punished by physical means for toileting in inappropriate places.
- (c) Cats kept indoors should be provided with a scratching post or pad.

Mating, Pregnancy, Birthing and Lactation

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

- (a) Only cats in good health and physical condition and with favourable temperament should be used for breeding. At all times, the health and welfare of the cat should be paramount.
- (b) Queens should be a minimum of 9 months of age before breeding.
- (c) Studs should be confined so as to prevent any indiscriminate breeding with queens.
- (d) Breeding should only take place after it has been ascertained that there are suitable homes available for the kittens.
- (e) Prior to the queen giving birth, a suitable box for the birthing should be provided in a safe and quiet environment.

Removal of Kittens from the Queen

MINIMUM STANDARD

Kittens made available for sale or rehoming requiring removal from the queen must be in good health and must be at least 8 weeks of age, except where they have been orphaned and cannot be fostered to another queen or where early removal from the queen is deemed necessary by a veterinarian.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

Kittens should be at least 10 weeks old when removed from the queen.

Need for Desexing

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

- (a) Cats, other than those kept by a registered breeder for breeding purposes, should be desexed at or before puberty.
- (b) Cats sold from a pet shop or rehomed from an animal welfare shelter should be desexed before sale/adoption.
- (c) Veterinarians, pet shops, cat breeders, local councils and animal welfare organisations should continually encourage the desexing of cats in the community.

Signs of Ill Health

MINIMUM STANDARD

- (a) Cats which are observed by their owners or persons in charge to be showing:
 - (i) signs of *significant* pain, suffering and distress; or
 - (ii) signs of repeated straining over a *continuous* period of 30 minutes, as if to pass urine or faeces; or
 - (iii) signs of *rapidly* deteriorating health must URGENTLY receive veterinary attention, be brought to the attention of an inspector under the Act (e.g. an SPCA inspector) or be humanely euthanased.
- (b) Cats which are observed by their owners or persons in charge to be showing:
 - (i) signs of chronic pain, suffering and distress; or
 - (ii) signs of deteriorating health must receive veterinary attention, be brought to the attention of an inspector under the Act (e.g. an SPCA inspector) or be humanely euthanased.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

- (a) Cats which are observed by their owners or persons in charge to be showing signs of ill health should receive appropriate veterinary attention.
- (b) Cats should have an annual health check conducted by a veterinarian.
- (c) Kittens should receive a course of vaccinations from the age of 8 weeks. All cats should be vaccinated according to veterinary recommendations.
- (d) Kittens should be wormed every 2 weeks, starting at 3 – 4 weeks of age and continuing to 3 months of age. Cats over 3 months of age should be wormed every 3 months.
- (e) Light-coloured cats should be protected from the threat of skin cancer with the regular application on nose and ears of appropriate animal sunscreen, especially during summer.

Transportation

MINIMUM STANDARD

- (a) While being transported in a vehicle, cats must be carried in a secure container.
- (b) Cats being transported must have sufficient space within the container to stand, turn around and rest normally.
- (c) There must be adequate provision for ventilation in the form of multiple holes on at least 3 sides of the container.
- (d) The interior of the container must be smooth, with no projections that could cause injury to the cat.
- (e) Cats must not be left unattended in a vehicle when heat is likely to cause distress to the cat.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

Cat-carry containers, bedding such as a blanket, and dry food and water supply should be on hand to enable evacuation of cats during an emergency.

Injured Cats

MINIMUM STANDARD

Cats which are observed by their owners or persons in charge to be significantly injured must receive urgent veterinary attention, be brought to the attention of an inspector under the Act (e.g. an SPCA inspector) or be humanely euthanased.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

Cats of unknown ownership which are observed to be significantly injured should receive urgent veterinary attention or be brought to the attention of an inspector under the Act (e.g. an SPCA inspector).

Care of Older Cats

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

- (a) Cats over the age of 8 years should receive a veterinary check 6-monthly.
- (b) Special attention should be given to providing an appropriate diet for the age and health of the older cat.

Euthanasia

MINIMUM STANDARD

- (a) When a cat is euthanased it must be carried out in such a way to ensure that death occurs quickly.
- (b) Cats (including kittens) must not be killed by drowning.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE

Cats should be euthanased by a veterinarian or, where they are clearly suffering extreme and unacceptable pain and a veterinarian is not immediately available, by a warranted inspector under the Act (e.g. an SPCA inspector).



Stray Cats & Cats Living in Colonies

Stray cats may live singly or may join colonies, particularly in urban environments where there is shelter and a food source. Often single stray cats, and cats living in colonies, are given food by sympathetic individuals.

MANAGED COLONIES: Managed cat colonies are cared for by individuals in agreement with the landowner and/or the local council. Management should include means of identification; provision of food, water and access to shelter; a vaccination and parasite programme; provision of veterinary treatment; a desexing programme; and a long-term strategy for continuity of care.

While a person who merely feeds cats in a colony is not the “person in charge” in terms of the Act, it should be noted that, where people trap cats in order to provide for their specific needs, they do have legal obligations as the “person in charge”.

TRAPPING OF CATS: The Act provides that, for **any** trapped cat, the following obligations apply:

- any traps set must be checked daily within 12 hours of sunrise, commencing from the day after the trap is first set; and
- any cats caught must be attended to without delay.

Where practicable, it is recommended when trapping stray cats and cats in colonies that traps be checked more frequently.

Legal Status of Codes of Welfare

Codes of welfare are deemed to be regulations for the purposes of the Regulations (Disallowance) Act 1989. As such, they are subject to the scrutiny of the Regulations Review Committee of Parliament.

Codes of welfare contain minimum standards and may also contain recommended practice and recommended best practice. In the Companion Cats Code of Welfare, only minimum standards have legal effect and in two possible ways:

- evidence of a failure to meet a relevant minimum standard may be used to support a prosecution for an offence under the Act
- a person who is charged with an offence against the Act can defend himself/herself by showing that he/she has equalled or exceeded the minimum standards.

Recommendations for best practice under New Zealand conditions set out standards of care and conduct over and above the minimum required to meet the obligations in the Act. They are included for educational and information purposes.

Any person or organisation aggrieved at the operation of a code of welfare has the right to

make a complaint to the Regulations Review Committee, Parliament Buildings, Wellington.

This is a parliamentary select committee charged with examining regulations against a set of criteria and drawing to the attention of the House of Representatives any regulation that does not meet the criteria. Grounds for reporting to the House include:

- the regulation trespasses unduly on personal rights and freedoms;
- the regulation is not made in accordance with the general objects and intentions of the statute under which it is made; or
- the regulation was not made in compliance with the particular notice and consultation procedures prescribed by statute.

Any person or organisation wishing to make a complaint should refer to the publication “Making a Complaint to the Regulations Review Committee”, which can be obtained from the website: www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz, or by writing to: Clerk of the Committee, Regulations Review Committee, Parliament Buildings, Wellington.



THE NEW ZEALAND
COMPANION ANIMAL
COUNCIL INC

CONTACTS

Officers of the New Zealand Companion Animal Council are confirmed annually and are accordingly subject to change from time to time. For full contact details including office bearers, telephone numbers, and postal and email addresses visit our website: www.nzcac.org.nz

General communications by mail may be directed to:

The NZ Companion Animal Council Inc
C/- SPCA Auckland Inc
PO Box 43221
Mangere
Manukau 2153
NEW ZEALAND

This publication has been produced with the cooperation and support of:



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
www.nzcac.org.nz

THE NZCAC ACKNOWLEDGES
THE ONGOING SUPPORT OF
THESE SPONSORS

