

Humane solutions to unwanted cat behaviors

Cats are getting into my trash.

Explanation: Cats are scavengers and are looking for food.

Quick Solutions:

- Place a tight lid on your trash can. Exposed trash bags will attract other wildlife as well.

There are cat paw prints and/or scratches on my car.

Explanation: Cats like to perch on high ground.

Quick Solutions:

- Gradually move cats' shelters and feeding stations away to discourage cats from climbing on cars or other private property.
- Purchase an appropriate cover for the car or other vehicle.

Cats are digging in my garden.

Explanation: It is a cat's natural instinct to dig and deposit in soft or loose soil, moss, mulch, or sand

Quick Solutions:

- Scatter fresh orange and lemon peels or spray with citrus-scented fragrances. Coffee grounds, pipe tobacco, or oil of lavender, lemongrass, citronella, or eucalyptus also deter cats.
- Plant the herb rue to repel cats, or sprinkle dried rue over the garden.
- Use plastic carpet runners spike-side up, covered lightly in soil. They can be found at local hardware or office supply stores. Or, set chicken wire firmly into the dirt with sharp edges rolled under.
- Artfully arrange branches in a lattice-type pattern or wooden or plastic lattice fencing material over soil. You can disguise these by planting flowers and seeds in the openings. You can also try embedding wooden chopsticks, pinecones, or sticks with dull points deep into the soil with the tops exposed eight inches apart.
- Obtain Cat Scat™, a nonchemical cat and wildlife repellent consisting of plastic mats that are cut into smaller pieces and pressed into the soil. Each mat has flexible plastic spikes that are harmless to cats and other animals, but discourage digging. Available at www.gardeners.com.
- Cover exposed ground in flower beds with large, attractive river rocks to prevent cats from digging. (They have the added benefit of deterring weeds.)
- Establish a litter box by tilling the soil or placing sand in an out-of-the-way spot in your yard. Keep it clean and free of deposits.
- Use an aromatic spray product, such as Dog and Cat Repellent, available at www.gardeners.com.

Cats are lounging in my yard or on my porch.

Explanation: Cats are territorial and will remain close to their food source. Ensuring that cats are neutered will dramatically reduce their tendency to roam and keep them from unwanted areas.

Quick Solutions:

- Apply cat repellent liberally around the edges of the yard, the tops of fences, and on any favorite digging areas or plants. Available at pet supply stores and at www.gardeners.com.
- Install an ultrasonic animal repellent or a motion-activated water sprinkler, such as the ScareCrow™ or CatStop™ (Contech). Available at <http://www.contech-inc.com>.

Cats are sleeping under my porch or in my shed.

Explanation: The cats are looking for dry, warm shelter away from the elements.

Quick Solutions:

- Physically block or seal the location the cats are entering with chicken wire or lattice once you are certain the cats are not inside. Be sure to search for kittens before confirming that the cats have left—especially during spring, prime kitten season.
- Provide a shelter (similar to a small doghouse). Or, if they're feral and part of a nearby managed colony, ask the caregiver to provide a shelter for the cats. Shelters should be hidden to keep the cats safe, and placing them well can help guide the cats away from unwanted areas.

Feeding the cats attracts insects and wildlife.

Explanation: Cats need to be fed under proper guidelines. Leaving food out can attract unwanted animals.

Quick Solutions:

- Keeping the feeding area neat and free of leftover food and trash.
- Feed cats at the same designated time each day, during daylight hours. They should be given only enough food for them to finish in one sitting, and all remaining food should be removed after 30 minutes. If another person is feeding, ask them to follow these guidelines too. For a more thorough list of colony management guidelines, visit www.alleycat.org/ColonyCare.

Cats are yowling, fighting, spraying, roaming, and having kittens.

Explanation: These are all mating behaviors displayed by cats that have not been spayed and neutered, and they will breed prolifically.

Quick Solutions:

- Spaying or neutering and vaccinating the cats will reduce the sex-drive hormones causing these behaviors. Male cats will stop competing and fighting, spraying, and roaming. Females will stop yowling and producing kittens. After sterilization, hormones leave their system within three weeks and the behaviors usually stop entirely.
- To combat the urine smell, spray the area thoroughly with white vinegar or with products that use natural enzymes to combat the smell, such as Nature's Miracle® or Simple Solution®, available at pet supply stores.
- You can find local resources and help at our website: www.alleycat.org. To have a list of local feral cat help—Feral Friends—in your area email to you, visit www.alleycat.org/Reponse.