

HUMANE DETERRENTS FOR COMMUNITY CATS

We share our Berks County community with 32,000-60,000* free-roaming, outdoor cats (community cats). Chances are, they live right in your neighborhood — but that doesn't mean everyone wants community cats on their property. Fortunately, there are many safe solutions to deter these cats from choosing your yard as their outdoor home!

- ♦ **BLOCK ACCESS:** Cats seek out dry, warm shelter. Block access to places you don't want cats to nest. **Tip:** Make sure no cats are inside before doing so! If you'd like to provide an alternate shelter for community cats on your property, there are many inexpensive options to purchase or make yourself. Otherwise, the cats will move on to another location!
- ♦ **COVER TRASH:** Keeping your trash cans securely covered will prevent attracting animals, including community cats. For extra security, considering keeping lids closed with bungee cords or locks.
- ♦ **DIG PROOF YOUR YARD:** Deter cats from digging by pushing wooden chopsticks into small potted plants. Use pine cones, lava rocks, concrete pavers, eggshells or stones as mulch in your garden or yard. Place large river rocks throughout the garden or use small-gauge poultry fencing just under the soil. Products like Cat Scat or plastic office chair mats placed spiky side up will also do the trick.
- ♦ **USE MOTION-ACTIVATED DEVICES:** ScareCrow, a motion-activated sprinkler, has an infrared sensor that releases three-second blasts of water. The sprinkler "fires" 1,000 times on one 9-volt battery and covers a 45-by-35 foot area. PetSafe SSSCat emits a blast of air when triggered. Ultrasonic devices like CatStop, Wikomo Ultrasonic Solar Animal Repeller and many others emit a tone cats and dogs don't like, but it won't bother birds.
- ♦ **REPEL WITH SMELLS:** To keep cats out of yards or gardens, plant lavender, rosemary or the herb rue, or sprinkle dried rue. Citrus, lemon, or garlic scents, ammonia, vinegar, coffee grinds, pipe tobacco, mustard, citronella, cayenne pepper or eucalyptus and lavender oils all deter cats as well. The scents diminish over time, so reapplying is necessary. Other products to consider are: Critter Ridder, Repels-All Animal Repellent, Repellex, Nature's MACE Cat Repellent, Silent Roar and U Scram cat and chipmunk deterrent. Planting catnip, on the other hand, tells felines they are welcome there.
- ♦ **SPAY/NEUTER:** Sterilizing community cats and returning them to the areas in which they were found is the only proven way to reduce their population over time. It also stops many nuisance behaviors — including fighting, spraying urine, roaming and caterwauling. The Animal Rescue League of Berks County's Community Cat Program provides healthy community cats with spay/neuter surgeries, vaccinations and ear-tipping before returning them to their outdoor homes. Learn more at berksarl.org/community-cats-program

*Low estimate of feral cats from Margaret Slater's book Community Approaches to Feral Cats, 2002; high estimate from University of Wisconsin's Veterinary School Shelter Medicine Outdoor Cat Calculator, <https://www.uwsheltermedicine.com/library/resources/is-there-a-method-of-estimating-the-number-of-unaltered-feral-cats-in-a-geographic-area>

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