



“Uninvited Guests, Keeping Cats Off Your Porch and Out of Your Yard”

This is an overview of humane products and techniques that have proven useful in helping to deter cats from entering an area. In order to implement the most effective method for your situation, it's important to consider the specifics of your property and to allow time to test out various options for effectiveness. Some cats are easily deterred and do not return, others may require use of several products over time. Before starting, here are some things to consider:

- the size of the area to be protected.
- selection of the most appropriate product and compatibility together.
- potential need to routinely move the device around an area to maximize its effectiveness.

Our goal is to help ensure that healthy community cats can live peacefully in the neighborhoods they call 'home.' Humane Rescue Alliance (HRA)'s Community Cat program can assist you in developing the most effective ways to deter cats from your property.

For further assistance, contact HRA's Community Cat program at catnipp@humanerescuealliance.org, 202-608-1356

[Click here to view the full HRA document, “Uninvited Guests”](#), that further outlines the following humane techniques for keeping community cats out of your personal areas.

Patios, Decks and Outdoor Furniture

In order to keep cats from sleeping on cushions on patio furniture, it's necessary to create a surface that the cats will want to avoid. The following items can be located where cats tend to lay down.

- Patio furniture covers are used to keep cats from depositing fur in seating areas.
- Plastic mats, manufactured with protruding spines along one side, can be placed on top of flat surfaces to prevent cats from sleeping or resting. Mats must be placed with the spine side facing up. Also called “carpet protector” it can be purchased by the foot/yard at hardware stores. Two similar products are *Cat Scat* or *X-Mat*. They can be ordered in several sizes.

To restrict access to the entire area, a disruptive device must be deployed.

- A combination ultrasonic noise producing/strobe light device may be helpful in excluding cats from the entire patio or deck area. Quick bursts of noise and bright lights are produced, which cats find offensive and will want to avoid. The sounds cannot be heard by humans and the lights are only briefly on when flashing. Many devices are battery operated but some do have wall outlet plugs.
- More than one device may be needed in order to ensure cats are not able to find a route around the protected zone. See each device's specifications regarding the amount of area covered when deployed. The most effective results will be where multiple devices are used in order to create an overlapping of zones.
- Routinely rearranging the devices will prevent the cats from learning where open zones exist.



Gardens, Flower beds, & Potted Plants

Mulch and loose soil are very attractive to all animals who dig, including cats, birds, and rodents. The most effective deterrents create a physical barrier at the top layer of the soil to prevent cats and other animals from digging. However, in order to be effective, the barrier must not be allowed to become covered over with an excess amount of leaves or weeds. Routine weekly or monthly clean up around these deterrents is critical to their effectiveness. Some options for physical barriers include:

- Place plastic mats, with spines that protrude from the surface, on top of the soil and around plants, leaving the spines exposed upwards. Careful weeding of the area will protect its usefulness. *Cat Scat* is an example of an effective commercially available product; its long spines keep it above the soil line.
- Use chicken wire or another type of hard mesh to bury underneath the surface of the soil or under a thin layer of mulch. This will prevent the cat from digging deeper into the soil.
- Lay down wooden lattice fencing flat on the ground where you intend to plant flowers or other plants. Plants would then be added between the spaces in the lattice and covered with mulch. The wood can be painted or stained in order to blend in with the ground and left on the surface of the soil.
- Place large rocks or river stones on the ground between plants. They must be large enough to not be dislodged when an animal is digging.
- Utilize chemical odor deterrents that are intended to smell unpleasant to certain animals but may also be unpleasant to people who are nearby. Spray-on deterrents must be reapplied frequently, especially after a rainstorm. Recommended spray-on deterrents include *Liquid Fence* and *Repels All*, which both contain garlic oil and other plant-based oils that cats will avoid.

Lawns and Yards

Motion-activated devices such as automatic sprinklers and combination ultrasonic sound/strobe light devices are proven to be the most effective devices available for lawns and yards

- A water sprinkler device discharges a harmless, but startling, burst of water. It is meant to trigger and spray when the cat or other animal crosses its path. These are very effective but do require a hose connection and batteries. *Scarecrow* or *Havahart* brand's *Spray Away* are two products that are proven to be effective.
- A combination ultrasonic noise producing/strobe light device may be helpful in excluding cats from the entire area. Quick bursts of noise and lights are produced, both of which cats want to avoid. More than one device may be needed in order to ensure cats are not able to find a route around them. Routinely rearranging the devices will prevent the cats from learning where open areas exist. Most devices are battery operated but some do require a wall outlet.
- To provide total protection to a yard, fence top devices can be installed to prevent cats from entering the property. Overall, this type of physical barrier is highly effective but may be costly. Some of these ideas have been adapted as do-it-yourself (DIY) projects and examples can be found online.



- o Angled netting at the top of a fence will deflect animals attempting to climb over the fence. There are several commercial versions available including *PurrFect Fence* and *Cat-Fence-In*.
- o Installation of a revolving pole or roller along the fence top, prevents animals from getting a perch on the fence top in order to pull itself over, *Oscillot* and *Coyote Roller* are two versions of these devices.

Some fence top deterrents, including wires and spikes, can be harmful and should not be used.

Ineffective and Toxic Products

Some products that are marketed to discourage specific species have been found to be not effective with cats, especially over large areas. Some of these products can be harmful and even toxic. The following items are ineffective, and/or harmful and toxic and should not be used to deter cats:

- Hot pepper flakes, orange peels, coffee grounds or other scented oils have not been proven to be effective.
Mothballs are toxic to wildlife and can be confused with candy by young children. They are not appropriate for use outdoors. According to the National Poison Control Hotline, "mothballs are pesticides. They can be poisonous if swallowed or if large amounts of fumes are inhaled."