

Addressing Nuisance Cat Problems

Courtesy reprint from the City of Bowie

Most conflicts with cats can be resolved relatively easily. It may require working with neighbors if you're not the one feeding or providing shelter for the cats. For a productive conversation, express your concerns in a respectful way and work together to find a suitable solution. Bonus - many of the methods below also work for nuisance wildlife!

CATS IN THE GARDEN, YARD, ON THE PORCH, OR OTHER UNWANTED AREAS

1. Ultrasonic devices: Ultrasonic devices contain a motion sensor and upon being triggered, emit a high-frequency alarm imperceptible to humans but highly annoying and startling to cats. The key with CatStop and other ultrasonic devices is to make sure you have enough of them for the area you're trying to exclude the cats from. CatStop reportedly monitors 330 square feet.

- **CatStop**, made by Contech
- **Bird-X YG Yard Gard**, made by Bird-X, Inc

****CatStop Rental Now Available****

2. Motion-activated sprinklers: Motion activated sprinklers use infra-red to detect an animal entering a defined territory. When a cat enters the infra-red field, the sprinkler shoots out a burst of water for a few seconds in the general direction of the animal. The effect is to frighten the cats rather than soak them and they will quickly learn not to enter the area. After a while, the sprinkler becomes unnecessary. It doesn't work in winter conditions, as the water will freeze, but if you introduce the device in warmer weather, by wintertime you'll have trained them.



- **The ScareCrow**, made by Contech
- **Spray Away & Spray Away Elite**, made by Havahart
- **Orbit Yard Enforcer**, made by Orbit

****Spray Away Rental Now Available****

3. Scent repellants: Reports on the effectiveness of scent repellants are mixed, sometimes working quite well and in other situations, not at all. Repellants should be sprayed or placed around the edges of the yard, the top of fences and on any favorite digging areas or plants. Sprays need to be replenished after rain.

Naturally-based products include:

Coleus Canina plant, a weed originating in Europe, is known as the "Scardy-Cat" or "Pee-off" plant because it emits an odor offensive to cats (but not to humans) and deters their presence. Recommendation is to plant them three feet apart around the area to be protected.



For protecting gardens or flower beds, common household items may be effective, including the herb rue, either planted or sprinkled in its dry form. Other suggestions for garden areas are orange and lemon peels (cats dislike citrus smells), cayenne pepper, coffee grounds, pipe tobacco, lavender oil, lemon grass oil, citronella oil, peppermint oil, eucalyptus oil, and mustard oil.

- ***Havahart Dog & Cat Repellents*** use capsaicin, pepper and oil of mustard as its active ingredients. It repels by both taste and odor, has a lemon scent, lasts 7-10 days and needs to be reapplied after rain or new growth.
- ***Bonide Dog and Cat Repellent*** naturally repels dogs and cats, made from all natural ingredients in a granule formula, spread around trash cans, on lawns, gardens and other structures.

4. Physical barriers to digging: Gardens and flower beds can be protected from digging through a number of means:



Cat Scat from Gardener's Supply consists of plastic mats that are pressed into the soil. Each mat has flexible plastic spikes and is cut into four pieces. The spikes are harmless to cats and other animals, but discourage excavation.

- Cover exposed ground with rough surfaced rocks.
- Lay lattice fencing on the ground prior to planting, then plant flowers and seeds in the openings.

These products and others like them can be found locally at Home Depot, Lowes, and Patuxent Nursery

CATS ON THE CAR

1. Implement one or more of the above deterrent methods.

2. Use a car cover.

3. If feeding stations or shelters are nearby gradually move them farther away from cars. This may require working with a neighbor that is caring for the cats.

In winter cats may seek warmth from your engine. Having winter shelter available generally alleviates this issue, but it's still good practice to open or bang on the hood of your cat before starting the engine.

CATS ATTACKING OR KILLING BIRDS

Position feeders at least 12 feet away from grass and shrubs, which can serve as good cat cover. If possible, place the feeders within 15 feet of trees, where birds can hide or flee from avian predators.

If you can, hang feeders on a wire strung at least 8 feet above the ground, between two trees that are at least 8 feet apart.



If your feeder is mounted on a pole, install a predator guard (a metal cone with the wide bottom facing down) to keep cats and other animals from climbing up.

Place circular fences, about 2 feet high and 4 feet in diameter, on the ground directly below feeders to make it difficult for cats and predators to creep up on birds unseen.

Use high-quality food that birds will be sure to devour, rather than let some of it fall to the ground, where it can attract other types of birds and make them vulnerable. Also install a spill tray to catch seeds.

Put down sharp-edged gravel beneath feeders-or, under a shallow layer of dirt or mulch, bury small-gauge chicken wire, a plastic carpet runner with the knobby side up, or a deterrent mat such as the

Cat Scat brand. Cats don't like walking on these types of irregular surfaces.

Drive cats away from feeders with CatStop or other motion-activated devices

To prevent attracting cats to your yard, store garbage in a container with a lid that locks in place.

Do not leave food for your cat outdoors, as this can attract additional cats and other predators. If you feed feral cats, make sure they are spayed or neutered, and put food out at a designated time when you are present to monitor for predators. Take the food away when everyone is done eating.

Recommendations on keeping birds safe from feral cats provided by the [Humane Society](#) of the United States.

