



KEEPING CATS ON CHRISTMAS ISLAND

In accordance with the Cat Local Law 2004, rules now apply concerning the keeping of domestic cats on Christmas Island.

The Shire introduced a Cat Local Law to control the number of cats kept by residents and to protect the amenity of the town and the environment. The Cat Local Law provides a scheme for registering and neutering cats, as well as for the impounding and disposal of unwanted cats. By controlling cats in the town areas, the Cat Local Law supports the objectives of Parks Australia and Christmas Island Phosphates to eliminate feral cats in national park and mine lease areas.

The following is a guide for cat owners about their rights and obligations.

1. **An owner must apply for a permit to keep a cat.** The Shire will consider each application having regard to physical, environmental and health factors associated with the keeping of cats. This consideration can include whether the premises is suitable for housing a cat, the suitability of any enclosure in which a cat is to be kept, the impact on others in the area, and whether the keeping of cats may affect the local environment including any damage to native birds and animals. Specific health considerations apply where a person wishes to keep more than two cats.

The application form can be obtained at the George Fam Centre, Planning, Building and Health section. Currently there are no fees associated with the registration of cats however failure to hold a permit will attract a fine of \$25. Cat owners are being given until the end of March 2008 to apply for a permit for domestic cats before fines apply. A permit if issued is valid for three years and is non-transferable.

2. **Cats must be sterilised.** If a cat hasn't been sterilised, this must be done within 12 months of registration. An agreement to sterilise the cat when the veterinarian is next on Island must be completed and submitted at the same time as the permit application. Sterilisation is conducted by the vet and a proof of sterilisation from the vet is required. Notice is given about when the Vet visits the Island, which currently is twice per year. Parks Australia fully subsidises the sterilisation of cats.
3. **Cats must be able to be identified.** A cat can be identified by a collar around its neck or by the implant of a microchip. The identification must include information to enable the current address of the keeper of the cat to be obtained. This is essential in the event that a cat is caught and impounded. The Shire will provide tags and collars if required to enable identification. The vet can implant a microchip for a fee.
4. **Cats may be impounded if captured by the Shire Ranger.** The Ranger will endeavour to contact the owner of the cat if it is registered. After seven days, the cat will be destroyed if the owner is not identified. If the cat is diseased or sick it can be destroyed immediately. Fees will be applied for each day a cat is impounded and a fee will also apply on release.
5. **No cats are to be abandoned.** A person who abandons a cat can be fined. The Shire will collect any unwanted cats to ensure cats aren't abandoned.

A copy of the Cat Local Law can be accessed on the Shire's website at www.christmas.shire.gov.cx or from the Shire office. For more information contact Ron De Cruz or Sho Yit Meng at the Shire on 9164 8300 during office hours.

Community cooperation is vital to ensuring effective cat control on the Island.