

## Problem Solving for You and Your Cat

# Unwanted Litters



From November to May each year, thousands of kittens are brought in to Ten Lives.

They are the result of owners not desexing their kitten prior to them reaching sexual maturity, which occurs from 4 months of age; or continuing to not desex their cat and/or their offspring, allowing them to continue to have litters of kittens.

If left unchecked the numbers of cats quickly increases due to the effective breeding cycle of cats, which in Tasmania can produce two litters of kittens a year.

Additionally, kittens are often given away or sold un-desexed which allows the cycle of unwanted litters of kittens to continue with the new owners.

### The law and desexing cats

The *Tasmanian Cat Management Act 2009* states

- All cats that are sold, given away, or transferred to a new owner must be desexed.
- Proposed changes to this Act, the *Cat Management Amendment Bill 2019*, legislate desexing of a cat compulsory by four months of age.
- Penalties may apply to owners of pet cats if they fail to comply with the Act.
- Exceptions will apply where a vet certifies that the animal is not in a physically suitable condition to be desexed or for cats owned for the purpose of breeding by a registered breeder.
- There will be a transition period of 12 months to allow cat owners adequate time to adjust to the changes.

### What can you do?

- Desex your cat prior to 16 weeks of age.
- If your cat has a litter of kittens, do not sell them or give them away unless they are desexed, microchipped, vaccinated etc. as per the *Tasmanian Cat Management Act 2009*.
- Kittens can be surrendered to Ten Lives if you are unable to meet the terms of the Act and find homes for them. Visit: [tenlives.com.au/surrender](http://tenlives.com.au/surrender) for more information on Surrendering Your Cat or Kittens to Ten Lives.
- Where possible, kittens should remain with their mother until 8-10 weeks of age. This gives them the best possible opportunity to develop physically and socially.
- As soon as a female cat has weaned her kittens, she can become pregnant again, so desex her as soon as the kittens are 10 weeks of age without delay.
- Do not take free or cheap kittens unless they are already desexed, microchipped and vaccinated.
- Encourage owners of unwanted cats and kittens to surrender them to a reputable shelter, such as Ten Lives, instead of giving them away.
- Never dump or abandon a cat or kitten (it is against the law).

## Reasons to desex cats

### Health:

- Reduced risk of cancers associated with the reproductive organs.
- Females cats are healthier as not suffering from physical/nutritional exhaustion if continually breeding.
- Male cats are healthier as not roaming and fighting.
- Pets generally live longer and healthier lives.

### Behaviour:

- Less prone to wander, fight, becoming lost or injured.
- Reduces territorial behaviour such as spraying.
- They become more affectionate and better companions.
- Eliminates “heat” cycles in female cats and their efforts to get outside in search of a mate.

### Cost:

- Reduces the cost to the community of having to care for unwanted kittens in shelters and over populations of cats within the community.
- No additional food or vet bills for the offspring.
- No need to find homes for unwanted or unexpected litters of kittens.
- Save money from expensive surgeries from car accidents or fights, which are less likely to occur if your cat doesn't roam.
- Dumping kittens is an ethical cost, as well as being illegal and inhumane.
- The cost of desexing cats varies between veterinary clinics so it is worth phoning around for an affordable price.