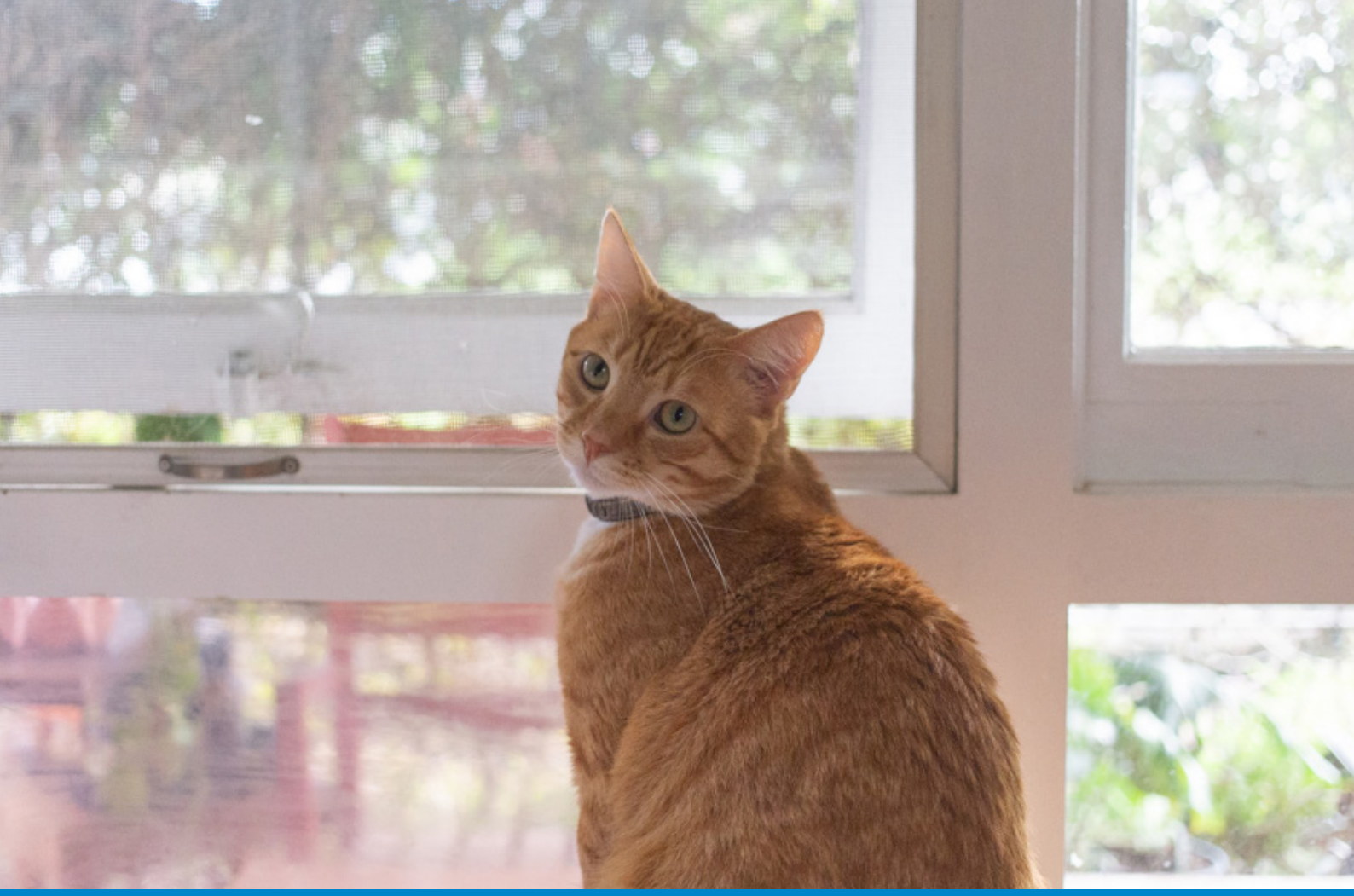


Keeping Cats Safe at Home

Project Report

2021-2024

NSW GOVERNMENT

RSPCA New South Wales

This project has been assisted by the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust.

About Keeping Cats Safe at Home

Keeping Cats Safe at Home (KCSAH) was a four-year human behaviour change project assisted by the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust. The project aimed to reduce the impact that domestic cats have on wildlife by encouraging cat caregivers to desex, permanently identify and register their cats and prevent them from roaming.

Cats, threaten the survival of many native animal species through competition and predation and are estimated to kill close to 2 billion native mammals, birds, and reptiles in Australia each year. Hunting and killing is instinctive and even well-fed pet cats hunt when given the opportunity. Around 30% of households in Australia care for cats, and thanks to their high reproductive rate (on average one female cat will produce two litters of four kittens each year), cat populations can grow rapidly.





Through **KCSAH,** RSPCA NSW developed and implemented a holistic human behaviour change strategy that aimed to reduce pet cat impacts on wildlife by encouraging responsible cat guardianship. The project was conducted in partnership with 11 diverse NSW councils, Blue Mountains City Council, Byron Shire Council, Campbelltown City Council, City of Parramatta Council, Hornsby Shire Council, Kyogle Council, Northern Beaches Council, Shoalhaven City Council, Tweed Shire Council, Walgett Shire Council and Weddin Shire Council.

Engagement and consultation of a diverse array of stakeholders (including local government, veterinarians, wildlife and animal welfare organisations, and cat-owning individuals) assisted with identifying factors contributing to and preventing cat containtment. A tailored behaviour change strategy was developed for each participating local government area in consultation with Dr Lynette McLeod.

Targeted Cat Desexing and Microchipping Programs

The **KCSAH** project involved targeted desexing and microchipping programs empowering pet owners to manage and ensure the safety of their cats. By reducing, monitoring, and controlling local cat populations, the programs also sought to help local communities get stray cats off the streets and into safe and permanent homes.



2,700
desexed.

1, 721
cats microchipped.

1,570
Participants in desexing programs.

26
local vet partners.

Desexing and Microchipping Outcomes

The Context:

KCSAH successfully reduced free-roaming cat populations in all three council areas where ecological research was conducted. Dr. Brooke Kennedy from the University of New England measured these changes using a before-and-after study over 80km transects.



Cats getting desexed at one of our desexing programs in Shoalhaven.



Vet Gemma Ma and one of our shelter cats.

The impact:

From 2021 to 2024, free-roaming cat density dropped by:

Blue Mountains - 25%

Campbelltown - 35%

Tweed shire - 50 %

> ***Complaints have reduced dramatically*** *since this program of desexing began. Clearly the program had a significant impact on unwanted litters and roaming cats in Walgett.*
>
> ***Paul Flint,***
> *Regulatory Officer,*

More Positive Project Outcomes

Number of new cats registered since the project launch was 17,464 (as of 30 June 2024).

Cat-related nuisance complaints decreased by more than 40% in seven project council areas, and by more than 60% in four project council areas.

The number of cats impounded by partner councils also decreased substantially in some project council areas (Blue Mountains 54%, Campbelltown 59%, Parramatta 73%, Kyogle, and Walgett 100%).

> ***This has been really brilliant!***
>
> ***Ray Budd,***
> *desexing program participant with 19 cats.*



Vets during our Liverpool desexing program.

Increase in number of cats identified per 1,000 estimated resident population:

Blue Mountains +15%
Byron Shire +6%
Campbelltown +12%
City of Parramatta +16%
Hornsby Shire +12%
Kyogle +18%
Northern Beaches +12%
Shoalhaven City +2%
Tweed Shire +9%
Walgett +57%
Weddin Shire +75%

Partner Packages

Packages including posters, brochures, and information handouts were sent to more than 60 veterinary clinics, 11 partner councils and more than 12 rehoming organisations within partner council areas to facilitate veterinarians to have conversations about the risks of roaming behaviour and the benefits of keeping cats safe at home with cat caregivers.

In addition to sending partner packages to stakeholders, the **KCSAH** team have participated in more than 30 community events to engage directly with more than 36,000 members of the public, including cat caregivers, veterinarians, and animal care professionals.



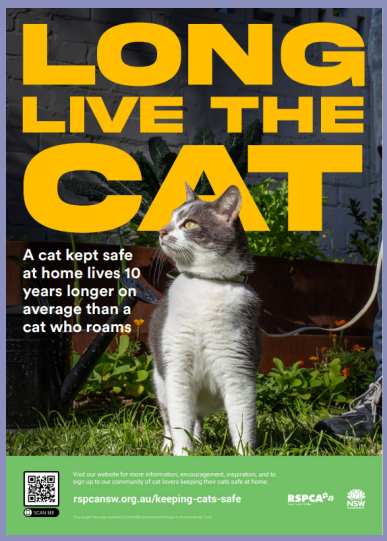
Vet Gemma, Liz and feline expert Isobel at the 2022 vet expo in Sydney.



Our cat expert Isobel talking at the 2024 cat lovers show.



Sticker for vets and homes.





Poster for vet clinics.

School Education Package

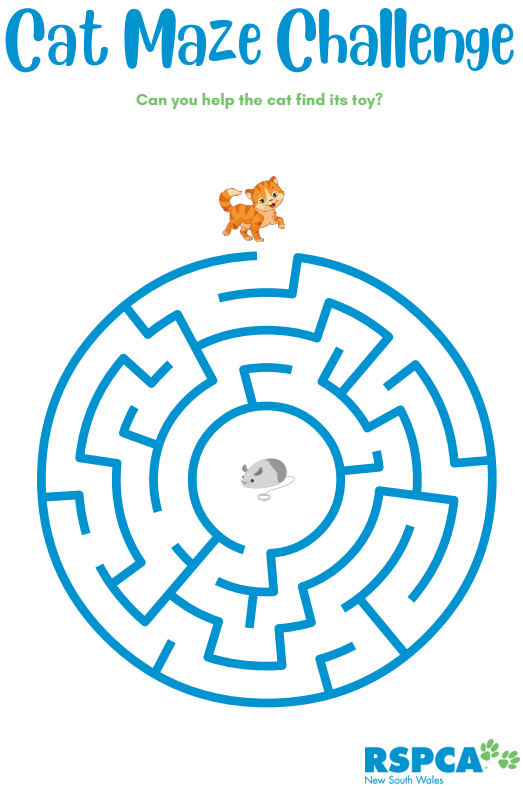
We created a package of resources linked to the NSW curriculum to allow the RSPCA NSW Education Team, council education officers, and local volunteers to deliver **KCSAH** incursions to students up to Year 6. All of the school education resources are free to download from the **KCSAH** microsite including: lesson plan, power point presentation, 3 educational videos, classroom activity booklets for early stage 1, stage 2 and stage 3 and activity posters.



Our resources for educators and parents landing page.



One of our activity posters " find the cat in dangerous situations".



A maze challenge for kids.





One of our classroom activity booklets.

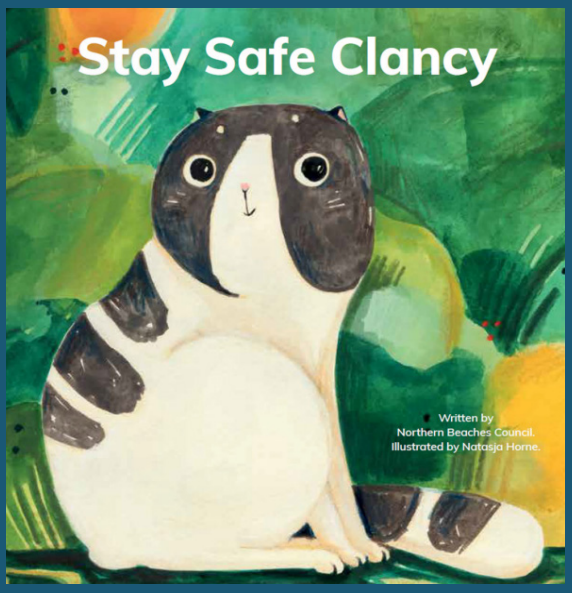
Throughout the project, more than **1,400** children participated in **KCSAH** excursions to the RSPCA Sydney Education & Adoption Centre and incursions at their local schools delivered by members of the RSPCA NSW Education team.



KCSAH education at our Sydney Shelter.



KCSAH enrichment education at our Sydney Shelter.



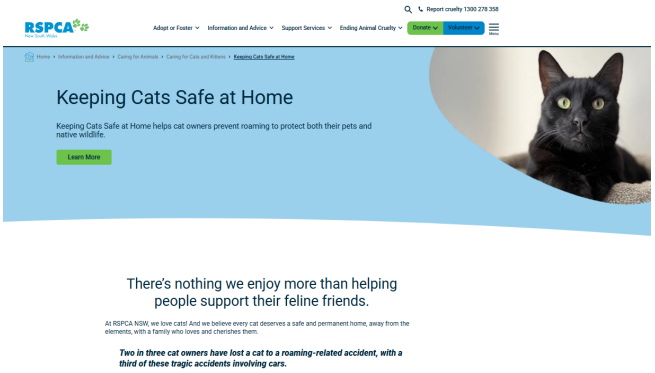
KCSAH has also published a children's book – Stay Safe Clancy – in collaboration with project partner Northern Beaches Council, and local artist Natasja Horne. Since its release, it has been distributed to local libraries, primary schools, and community centres in the Northern Beaches Council area, as well as other KCSAH project partner council areas.



Children's book Stay Safe Clancy published with project partner Northern Beaches Council and local artist Natasja Horne.

Website

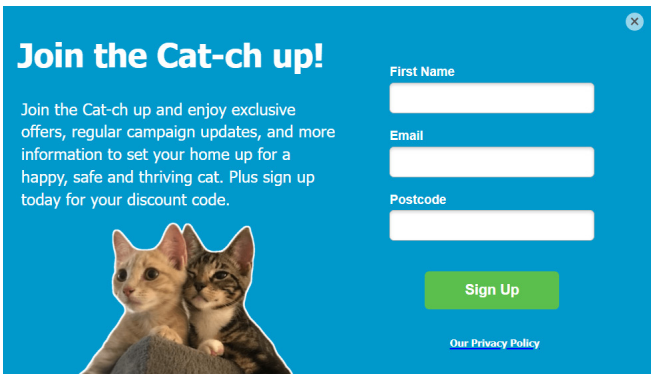
The **KCSAH** landing pages were launched and hosted on the RSPCA NSW website in June 2022. The landing pages have been strategically linked to high-traffic sections of the RSPCA NSW website and optimised for strong performance in search engine results.



The KCSAH main landing page.

The **KCSAH** webpages purpose is to provide shareable and engaging learning resources to protect pets and native wildlife by raising awareness of the dangers of roaming cats.

The webpages have 7 core downloadable handouts for cat caregivers, and includes the pop up on our website *"Join the Cat-ch Up!"* that links to our **KCSAH** trigger email journey.



The "Join the Cat-ch Up!" pop up on our website.

Over 87, 000 website visits.

Most of the project website's key performance indicators (KPIS) exceeded their targets. Below are some examples:

Number of cat caregivers visiting the project website via QR codes on promotional material:

KPI: 1,000

Result: 4,638

Number of views on project website:

KPI: 20, 000

Total website views: 87,140

Number of downloads of resources:

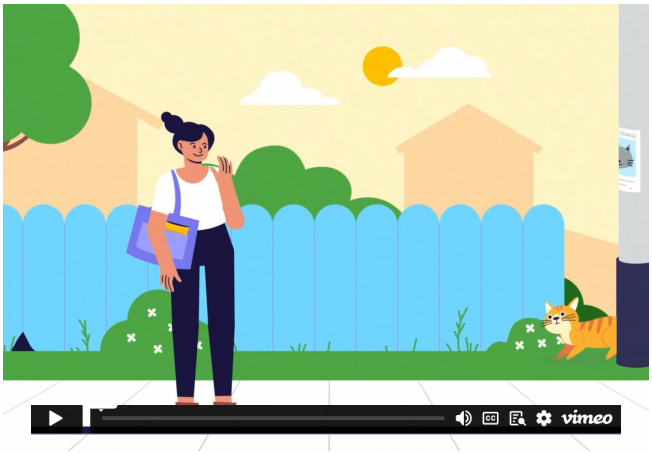
KPI: 5,000

Total resource downloads: 15, 920

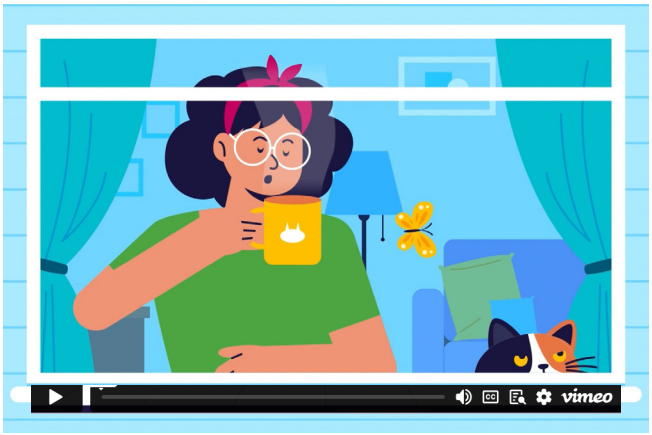
Animated Videos

The **KCSAH** webpages feature animated videos **"The Story of Tanya and Tom"** and **"The Story of Penny and Bella"**. The animated videos serve as powerful educational tools that highlight both the dangers outdoor cats face and the importance of practicing responsible pet ownership.

1) The Story of Tanya & Tom, encourages people to act when they notice stray cats by urging community members to help them find safe and permanent homes.



2) The Story of Penny & Bella, tells the story of a free-roaming cat who, after being injured by a moving car, transitions to a safe-at-home lifestyle.



The story of Tanya & Tom reached:

36, 623

people on Facebook!

The story of Tanya and Tom included a paid advertisement on Facebook that reached an impressive 28,781 people in addition to its organic reach.

The Story of Tanya & Tom insights:

Facebook Reach: 36, 623

Facebook Impressions: 57,221

Instagram Interactions: 230

Instagram Reach: 4, 391

The Story of Penny & Bella insights:

Facebook Reach: 5, 087

Facebook Impressions: 6,006

Instagram Interactions: 111

Instagram Reach: 3, 345

Blogs

The aim of our **KCSAH** blogs was to provide further information on the care and safety of cats. Traffic to the **KCSAH** webpages and downloads of resources were encouraged by publishing regular blog articles on the RSPCA NSW website on cat care and management. Blog articles were promoted through organic social media posts on the RSPCA NSW Facebook and Instagram accounts.



An image from the “Harness training your cat” blog.

Blog Title	Views
I Found a Stray! What Should I do?	19, 874
I Found Kittens! What Should I do?	10, 342
Kitten Season 2022	5, 189
Kitten Season 2023	1, 224
Leave Lilies Out of Valentine's Day	1, 163
Making the Move	608
Managing Cat Overpopulation	604
Trick Training	459
Desex Your Cat this Kitten Season	409
Kyogle Education Trip	324
Keeping Cats Safe at Home - Progress in 2023	322
Transitioning Your Cat To a Safe at Home Lifestyle	320
Staying Safe this International Cat Day	281
Benefits of Playtime	230
Weddin Shire Council Leading the Way	226
Harness Training Your Cat	219
Recreating the Outdoors Indoors	198
Keeping Your Cat Happy at Home	191
Facts to Get You Through Kitten Season	131
Nose Work Enrichment for Cats	91
How To Raise Well-Adjusted Kittens	65
Warmer and Longer Days Means It's Kitten Season	4
Total:	42, 474

This table shows all the blogs that we have published from 2021-2024.

Trigger Email Journey

To support cat caregivers, we have created a 12-month triggered email journey called *The Cat-ch Up!* This journey consists of twelve editions packed with high-quality, engaging, and informative cat care advice.



The creative from our trigger email *The Cat-ch Up!*



An image from one of our emails on why cats need scratching posts.

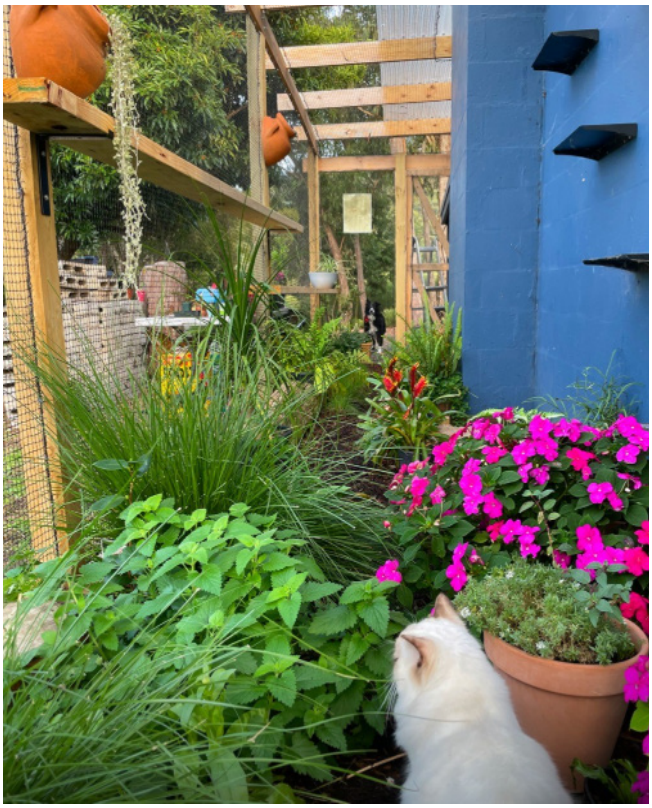
Throughout the emails we share quality information and expert advice on how to best care for your cat. Every month our expert behaviour veterinarian Dr. Findy Wills provides tips and tricks for making your cat's nine lives amazing.

Each email shares stories of cats who have successfully made the transition from roaming to a safe-at-home life and what that journey was like for them.

The emails also contain expert advice on cat care, enrichment ideas, and inspiration to create amazing outdoor and indoor spaces for your furry friend.



An image from one of our emails. A recovery story about an ex roaming cat called Melon who now lives safe at home.



A story from one of our emails about cat owners Nick and Silvias amazing catio hand built for cats Merlin, Cleo and Kingston.

Cat Grass Seed Campaign

The trigger email journey was supported by a cat grass giveaway campaign to drive subscriptions. Cat lovers were offered a free packet of cat grass seeds in exchange for their subscription. Cat grass packets were sent along with cat containment messaging and links to the **KCSAH** projects webpage. The campaign was advertised on social media through Facebook and Instagram and resulted in over **4,000** people subscribing to *The Cat-ch Up!*





A paid ad on Instagram promoting the cat grass seed campaign.







Email Direct Marketing (EDM)

To help promote the importance of keeping cats safe and happy at home, we launched an email direct marketing (EDM) campaign highlighting the benefits of catios. By partnering with Catnets, a company that specialises in cat netting, portable enclosures, and outdoor cat furniture, we tapped into their expertise to strengthen our message around cat containment.

To generate interest in catios, we included an exclusive 20% discount code in our EDMs and trigger emails. Our collaboration showcased the unique features of Catnets catios, and demonstrated how they can transform outdoor areas into secure spaces for our feline friends.



Creative we used in our EDMs to advertise our 20% off Catnet's discount.



A photograph of one of the Catnets customers catio that we showcased in one of our EDMs.

Competitions!

KCSAH competitions gave cat caregivers the opportunity to win cat enclosures or cat enrichment products while also promoting key project messages. The user-generated content helped create a community of practice around cat containment, reinforcing keeping cats safe at home as a social norm.

Over

2,491

cat caregivers participated in competitions.



Catnets selfie competition winners cute cats, Lasagna and Mushu.

We collaborated with brands such as Catnets and PetBarn to promote engaging competitions such as “showcase your cat enjoying life at home with the chance to win a $500 Catnet voucher”.



A finalist in our Catnets competition.

These competitions were used to not only encourage pet owners to share images of their beloved cats living a safe at home lifestyle but they also provided valuable enrichment ideas to others wanting to enhance their furry friends lives.



Winner of our Catnets competition Kahlia, with this photo of her RSPCA NSW adopted cat Holly.

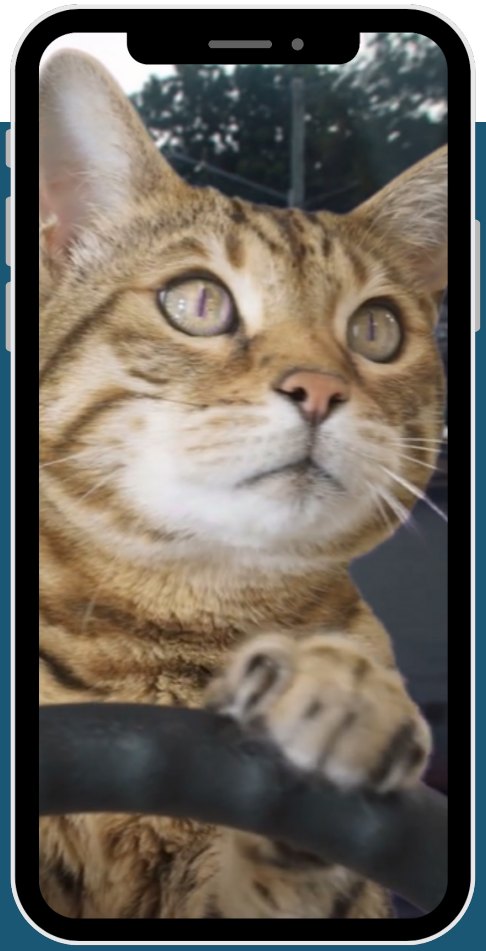
Not all Cat Videos are Funny

In 2024, a paid advertising campaign was developed in collaboration with social marketing company Khemistry to reach a broader cat-caregiver audience with the aim of increasing awareness and motivation to contain.

The campaign **"Not All Cat Videos Are Funny"** aired on commercial catch-up television, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Engagement with the social marketing campaign was strong and overwhelmingly positive.



Not All Cat Videos Are Funny Organic Facebook Post.



Link to webpage:
https://tinyurl.com/5hc5dhhw

> 4. 6 million people viewed the video.

> Reached 1.7 million people.

> 2, 766 people visited the Not all Cat Videos are Funny landing page.

Information Resources for Cat Caregivers

Our **KCSAH** resources aimed to provide cat caregivers with the knowledge and tools to effectively prevent their cats from roaming while ensuring their wellbeing and quality of life. 7 core resources were translated into 4 additional community-centric launguages: Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Hindi, Korean.

Over

14, 000

information resources provided to cat caregivers.

rspcansw.org.au/keeping-cats-safe/resources

Core resources include:

- **What your cat needs at home**
- **Settling your new cat into the family**
- **How to keep your cat safe at home**
- **Enrichment: help your cat live their best life at home**
- **Introducing your new cat to your dog**
- **Introducing your new cat to your existing feline family**
- **Transitioning to the safe-at-home lifestyle**



"Enrichment: help your cat live their best life at home" resource.



"Transitioning to the safe-at-home lifestyle" resource.

Organic Social Media

The organic social media campaign aimed to provide cat caregivers with the knowledge, skills, and encouragement they need to prevent their cats from roaming. Facebook and Instagram posts promoted strategies designed to keep cats contained while meeting their needs. Furthermore, they illustrated ways pet owners could learn to understand their cats behaviour. The campaign also provided social support to cat caregivers on their journey to keeping their cats contained and helped them to set goals.

Over

3,500,000

reached via Instagram and Facebook.

Quarterly themed social media bursts:



Instagram post about the importance of keeping your cat safe at home.



Key findings from a survey of 2000 NSW cat caregivers conducted through KCSAH in November 2024:

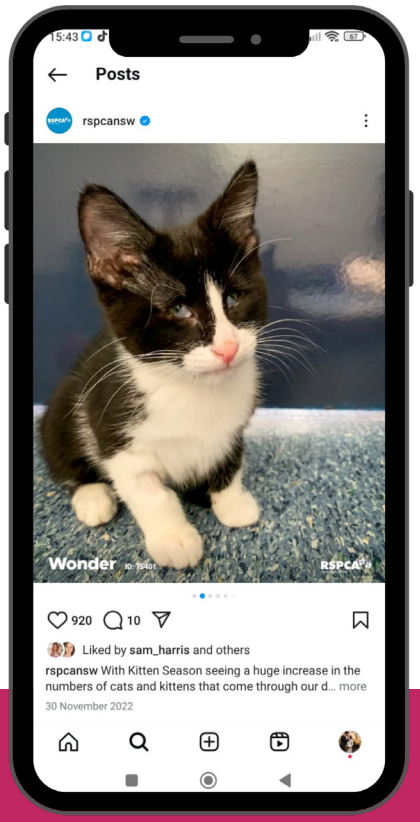
- **46%** of respondents had encountered cat containment messaging in the last 12 months
- **75%** responded that it increased their awareness of roaming risks to cats
- **57%** of respondents who had encountered cat containment messaging were aware of the campaign

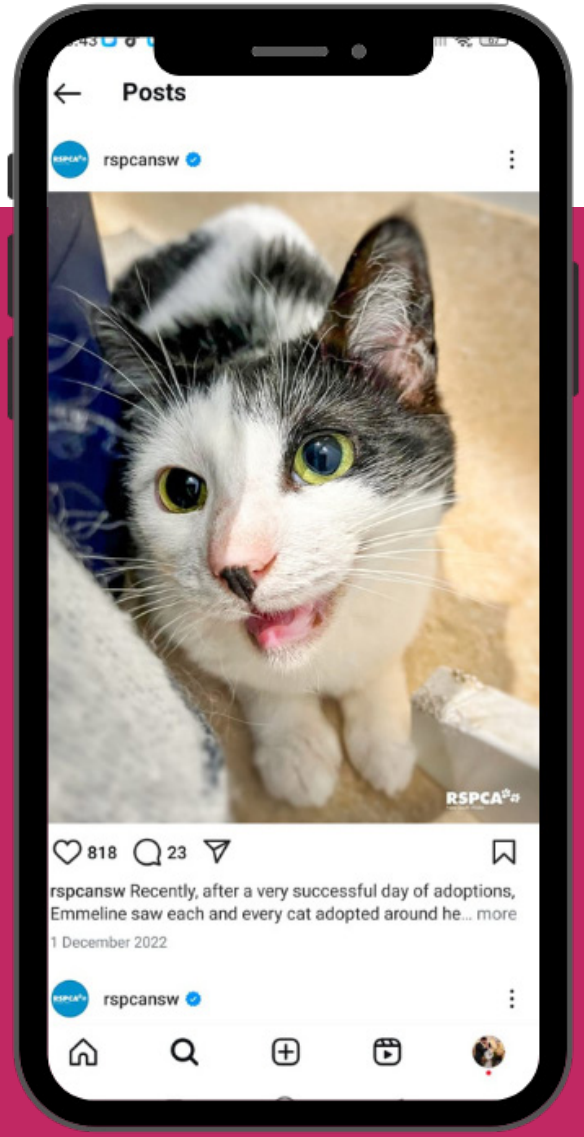
Burst Highlight: Kitten Season 2022

> 24,000 reactions

> 4,000 comments

> 3,000 shares







A social media post for the Kitten Season campaign.

Research:

The Keeping Cats Safe at Home behaviour change strategy was not only based on a strong foundation of social science and psychology research, it has also contributed to the evidence base on domestic cat management. To date four original research articles have been published in high-ranking international open-access journals:

1. Ma GC, McLeod LJ. Understanding the Factors Influencing Cat Containment: Identifying Opportunities for Behaviour Change. Animals. 2023; 13(10):1630. https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13101630

2. Ma GC, McLeod LJ, Zito SJ. Characteristics of cat semi-owners. Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery. 2023;25(9). https://doi.org/10.1177/1098612X231194225

3. Davey IJL, Westman ME, Van der Saag D, Ma GC, Kennedy BPA. Spatial and Temporal Movements of Free-Roaming Cats and Wildlife in Two Local Government Areas in Greater Sydney, Australia. Animals. 2023; 13(10):1711. https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13101711

4. Kennedy, B.P., Clemann, A. and Ma, G.C., 2024. Feline Encounters Down Under: Investigating the Activity of Cats and Native Wildlife at Sydney's North Head. Animals, 14(17), p.2485.