



## How to avoid a cat-astrophe in the home

Cats by their very nature are curious creatures, known to explore dark, small places and novel items. They can also fit into the smallest of spots! Many gravitate towards confined areas that help them feel secure and protected. The problem is, they can sometimes get stuck. To ensure your whiskered wonders don't get caught it is important to make your home cat friendly and be aware of potential dangers.

We often hear of cases where kittens and cats get their bodies or heads stuck in items or household furniture. The CFA were recently called to a house in Doreen where the family cat had its head caught in a wire basket. Thankfully the cat was okay, but it did spark a discussion on social media on what to do if this happens to your cat, highlighting how often pet cats can get stuck.

Our Head Vet at the Cat Protection Society of Victoria, Dr Petra Keown wants cat owners to put strategies in place to prevent their kitties from getting stuck.

"In much the same way you would 'babyproof' a house, the same applies when you have a whiskered four legged family member. Responsible cat owners should assess the items in their home that could potentially cause a risk and make sure they aren't accessible to their kitten or cat," Dr Keown said.

"It is also recommended that you keep your cats indoors, and if they are allowed outside, have a designated area for them in a safe cat enclosure with a cat run connected to the home. You can also section off 'dangerous' areas within the home that you don't want your cats to enter, this is especially important when you have kittens."

"You may also find that a way to prevent your cat from seeking out unusual places to hide is to have a safe, dark hidey place for your cat to rest undisturbed. This could be as simple as a box up high. Cats love to have a place to survey the world and it would be a great place for them to relax if they need it," she said.

Some places that your kitty could get its head or body stuck are narrow furniture, wire baskets and trellis fences. If your cheeky moggie does find itself in a difficult situation, Dr Keown suggests your best contact should be your nearest veterinary clinic.

"The action you take will be dependent on the type and size of the household item your cat has become caught in. With time, most cats will actually free themselves. If you don't think this will happen, or there appears to be a risk of the cat being seriously injured or traumatised, your first point of contact should be your veterinary clinic and transporting your cat to the clinic if safe and possible to do so. Ideally, you should look for the quietest solution that won't cause your cat added stress," she said.

If this does happen you also need to watch for signs that your cat is not in serious harm, and it is not a life-threatening emergency.

"If your cat has an underlying health condition, you should always err on the side of caution and contact your veterinary clinic who will be familiar with your cat's medical history and any signs you should look out for. If your cat is otherwise healthy, check they are breathing, you can tell this by their mouth being open and tongue out and they don't appear to be in significant pain," Dr Keown said.

There are also ways you can calm your cat if they are stuck, and you feel they are becoming distressed.

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“Depending on the situation, you can cover your cat with a blanket or towel. Turning off the lights, reducing noise and any external stimulation will also help. Try and keep your cat or kitten as calm as possible to prevent any further injury,” Dr Keown said.

“There is a chance your cat may injure themselves if stuck especially for an extended period. Injuries could range from contact sores to a fracture or break, especially if the cat is struggling and is highly stressed. There is also a risk of being mentally traumatised.”

“It is also important that cat owners keep themselves safe. You need to approach your cat slowly and remain calm. Your cat may act in an unpredictable manner if it is in pain or significantly stressed,” she said.

Like all things, prevention is much better than cure. As a responsible cat owner if you can be mindful and remove threats and dangers from your kitty around the home there's less chance you and your cat will become unstuck.

## ORGANISATIONS YOU CAN CONTACT OUT OF HOURS IF YOUR LOCAL VET IS NOT OPEN:

### **Nigel's Animal Rescue**

Ph: 0427 533 083 (24 hours)

### **CARE: 24 Hour Emergency & Specialist Animal Hospital**

5 Hood Street, Collingwood

Ph: 9417 6417 (24 hours)

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