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New cat laws welcomed by shire

By [Sharon Kennedy](#) (Cross Media Reporter)

New cat laws to be introduced state wide next year will help promote responsible cat ownership, says the Busselton Shire Ranger.

The WA Government has decided that from November next year, all cats will have to be identified, registered and sterilized.

Busselton Shire has had cat laws since the mid 90s but Ranger Tim Wall says the WA legislation gives the Shire greater powers to control cats. As well, he notes, only 19 shires in WA have cat control laws.

The Shire already encourages owners through a subsidy to register and chip their cats. However, the response has been disappointing, he says.

However, since an increase in the subsidy by \$25 to \$75, the uptake has doubled. "But we'd like to see more."

There are no plans to remove the subsidy when the new laws take effect, he adds, because at the end of the day, the goal is to have cats sterilized.

Statistics show there are three types of cats, says Tim, cats with owners which are settled and domestic and those which are semi-owned wander from house to house." They do cause us a problem."

The problem on the biggest scale is feral cats and there are estimated to be 6 - 18 million cats in Western Australia, he says.

Busselton Shire culls humanely using contractors on a regular basis, especially in reserves, says Tim, adding that their efforts dovetail with those of the Department of Conservation and Environment programs on nature reserves.

Identification and registration of cats will help, says Tim. "Statistics show that most cats we impound very rarely get picked up."

The rangers don't euthanize immediately, however. The cat and its behaviour is assessed and if suitable it's put up for adoption. All cats re-homed must be sterilized.

"That then helps us reduce the problem down the line."

As for those people who believe their animal will never stray and don't see the point of microchipping, Tim has a story to tell.

"I've been in the industry a long time," he says. "Once



All cats will need to be microchipped once new state laws come into being (SK - ABC Local)

we impounded this dog and we scanned it. It had a microchip in it. That microchip belonged to someone in Broome. That dog was stolen two years prior.

"We do have expensive cats out there. If the cat goes missing, it can be found."

Busselton probably won't have to change current operations greatly to fit in with cat laws, Tim believes.

"We all have microchip scanners in our cars and at the pound."

Having laws enacted at a state level means that people who move between shires won't be faced with extra registration costs or differing bylaws. "I applaud the state government for doing it. It needs to be done at a state level," says Tim.

The penalty in Busselton is \$100 for an unregistered cat. "I'm assuming (the state government) will go down the same line as the dog act," he says.

Tim estimates the cost of microchipping to be between \$45 and \$75 which needs to be put into the context of the amount of money that people generally spend on their animals, he says.

From late next year, new state laws say that all cats will be singing soprano. Which is good news for those disturbed by late night yowls and screeches.

Cats will have to be kept home and not wander. Which is good news for those disturbed by finding half eaten birds on the windscreen.



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