

## Got Outdoor Cat Complaints? Try These Tips

Neighbors can get into pretty heated conversations over outdoor cats. Maybe you don't like pawprints on your freshly washed car or cats pooping in your garden. Or maybe you're on the receiving end of complaints about a cat you care for, and you just don't get what the big deal is.



By Mark Robison

Before diving into the plentiful solutions available, it's worth addressing one common claim: "Just get rid of the cat."

This is almost never effective. The main reason is that cats have territories. If you remove one, another will just fill that void. It's called the vacuum effect and happens with ecosystems everywhere, including urban and suburban neighborhoods.

Also, remember: The outdoor cats are keeping down the rodents who would chew the wires in your vehicle and leave little black pellets on your porch. They are a valuable member of our community.

- **Garden digger:** Many people with green thumbs who love cats nonetheless don't want them using their gardens or flower beds as a litter box.

Look for a product – there are different brands – called a "cat scat mat." Each mat has flexible plastic spikes, which are harmless to cats and other animals but discourage digging. You just press the mats into the dirt so the little brown spikes barely stick out. Pressing chicken wire or plastic fencing mesh into the dirt works well, too. There are also scent deterrents – most cats dislike citrus or you can purchase granules containing pepper that deter cats and other animals.

Another solution is to redirect the cats to a better place to do their business. You can till up some loose soil in a more remote area of your yard or make a little sandbox.

- **Paw prints on your car:** I happen to like little paw prints on my vehicles. They make me feel loved. Of course, I live down a dirt road and my two trucks look like they just got back from Burning Man. If you prefer a shiny, clean car, it helps to know why the cat is climbing on it.

Cats enjoy surveying their surroundings. They climb to a high spot to relax and, perhaps, imagine they rule their corner of the world.

A car cover is an obvious solution but not great for regularly used vehicles. Instead, create something that gives the cat a higher vantage point. You could put a small platform in a tree or provide a shelf.

- **Yard trespass:** Maybe you just don't want cats anywhere near your yard – and the same goes for dogs, rabbits, rodents, wild horses and deer. What you need is a "motion-activated sprinkler." Most animals want nothing to do with a sudden, unexpected blast of water.



Humanely trapping, spaying or neutering, and returning outdoor cats in your area will stabilize the cat population and substantially decrease unwanted cat behaviors. Nevada Humane Society has a Cat Action Team that can help with this – call 775-856-2000 ext. 200 or email [animalhelp@nevadahumanesociety.org](mailto:animalhelp@nevadahumanesociety.org) to learn more.

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