

Cat Paper Collars

Why paper cat collars?

Identification (ID) such as **microchips** and **collars** are incredibly important for cats for many reasons:

- It means that if the cat is lost, it can be reunited with its owner
- Owners can be more easily contacted if anything unexpected was to happen
- The cat can't be stolen
- Community members can visibly see that the cat is owned, meaning they will not trap and remove the cat
- It helps shelters to reunite families and their pets faster. **DID YOU KNOW that only 2% of all cats brought into shelters get reclaimed by their owners?**

Seeing the successes of a program implemented by the RSPCA UK, the AWL have now developed our own paper cat collars to help people identify those cats in their community which are owned and unowned. These collars will help our community to provide better welfare outcomes for cats.

What type of cat can these collars be used on?

If you have a cat in your neighbourhood that you are concerned about, but you are unable to get in touch with the owner because of a lack of ID, this paper collar may be used. **IMPORTANT:** This method should only be used with cats in your community who you feel are safe to handle. Do not approach or attempt to put a collar on a cat that is unwilling to approach you or is displaying distance increasing behaviours. ***Please refer to our handout 'The Anxious Cat'*.**

If the cat is not safe to approach but looks healthy (no visible signs of cat flu or hair loss/no significant injuries/no indication of anorexia, e.g. ribs and spine being visible), this cat's welfare is most likely not at risk. The most prevalent concern is that the cat is possibly not desexed and can further contribute to the increasing number of stray cats. For advice in this situation, **please contact the AWL to ask us about our 'Desexing Community Cats Initiative'.**

How to use the collar:

1. Print out the template
2. Complete contact details you are happy to provide
3. Cut out the template and cut out a circle appropriate to the size of the cat's neck.
 - a. **Fitting a collar:** A collar for a cat should be fitted to allow for 2 fingers comfortably between the collar and the neck. The cat may tense when you put it on so recheck the fit after a few minutes and adjust if necessary.
4. Place the collar around the cat's neck (making sure the writing is visible) and insert the rounded end into the hole you've cut previously, securing the collar.

IMPORTANT: We would like you to put as much information as you feel comfortable sharing. This will open avenues for civil conversations with neighbours about cats in your community. Remember to be respectful with all conversations; we all want good outcomes for our companion animals and our communities.

What to do if there is no response:

1. How many times have you used this collar method? If the cat has returned without the collar on, there is a chance that the collar has been damaged and has fallen off, or that the cat has been able to remove it, it could also mean that the cat has gone home and the collar has been taken off, but no contact has been made. Try the collar method at least three times.
2. Talk to your neighbours
 - a. Has anyone else seen this cat hanging around?
 - b. How long has it been hanging around?
 - c. Has it gone places you haven't seen before? Perhaps into someone's house or yard.
3. Ask Lost Pets of South Australia (LPoSA) if they would come out to scan for a microchip.
4. Take the cat to a vet clinic or shelter to scan for a microchip ONLY if you can safely transport the animal to the vet or shelter (preferably in a carrier or cage).

If you have tried all of these steps, but no owner can be found, the cat could potentially be unowned.

***Please refer to our information about unowned cats*.**

My cat came home with an AWL paper collar on:

If your cat has come returned home with an AWL paper collar on it means that this cat is visiting one or more of your neighbours but has no visible form of identification. Therefore, someone was unsure whether this cat is owned or not.

It is essential that cats wear identification to alert people within the community that the cat is owned. Individuals who see cats without ID may bring them into shelters thinking they have been abandoned or need rescuing. If these cats do not have any form of identification, then there is no way for shelters and rescues to reunite them with their owners.

Microchips are an incredibly valuable form of ID as they can store all of the information required to return the cat home, but they are only useful if the details are kept up-to-date and if the cat is taken to a location where the microchip can be scanned. Microchips implanted without tattoos, such as those inserted during mass microchipping events like *Chipblitz* and *Connect and Protect* also offer the general public with no indication that the cat is owned either.

Please put some form of visible ID (like a collar) on your cat with a tag and a contact number, or write your number on the inside of the collar. For information about how to choose and fit a collar, please call our team or your local vet, or research reliable online sources.

If your cat is spending any time outside, it is vital to get your cat desexed. If you have the means, please take your cat to your local vet, plus while it's there, get it microchipped! If you do not have the means to desex the cat at your vet, please contact these low-cost desexing services:

- National Desexing Network (NDN)- 1300 368 992 OR www.ndn.org.au
- Cats Assistance To Sterilising Inc. (C.A.T.S)- 8331 0476

