

Submission on draft report

Review of pest animal management

1. Please specify which recommendation(s) you are addressing.

Recommendation 17

2. What are your reasons for support of the recommendations?

N/A

3. If any, what are your reasons for non-support of the recommendations?

I am very concerned that limited data actually exists to support the common belief that feral cats are truly responsible for the damage alleged. The report acknowledges that accurate data regarding the distribution and abundance of pest animal species is not available. This vindicates my concern that assumptions rather than substantiated facts are being used to support the push to have feral cats listed as pest animals.

I do not support the recommendations to use poisons in feral animal management. Poisons are inhumane and cruel. Only humane no-kill methods should be used to control unwanted animal populations. A death by poisoning with 1080 or PAPP causes animal suffering and is not humane.

4. What are your suggestions for improvement in pest animal management?

In the case of cats it has been proven that Trap Neuter Return (or Rehome where possible) is far more effective than attempting to remove populations by shooting or poisoning. Before dismissing TNR as an effective strategy in certain contexts I respectfully ask that the NRC please refer to the following studies:

Key Overseas Scientific Studies on Trap-Neuter-Return

(courtesy of Alley Cat Allies <http://www.alleycat.org/page.aspx?pid=667>)

Finkler, Hilit, Idit Gunther, and Joseph Terkel. "Behavioral differences between urban feeding groups of neutered and sexually intact free-roaming cats following a trap-neuter-return procedure." *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 238, no. 9 (2011):1141-1149.

Finkler, Hilit, Erez Hatna, and Joseph Terkel. "The impact of anthropogenic factors on the behavior, reproduction, management and welfare of urban, free-roaming cat populations." *Anthrozoös* 24, no. 1(2011):31-49.

Hughes, Kathy L. and Margaret R. Slater. "Implementation of a Feral Cat Management Program on a University Campus." *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5, no. 1 (2002): 15-28.

Hughes, Kathy L., Margaret R. Slater, and Linda Haller. "The Effects of Implementing a Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Program in a Florida County Animal Control Service." *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5 (2002): 285-289.

Levy, Julie K., David W. Gale, and Leslie A. Gale. "Evaluation of the Effect of a Long-Term Trap-Neuter-Return and Adoption Program on a Free- Roaming Cat Population." *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 222, no. 1 (2003): 42-46.

Natoli, Eugenia, et. al. "Management of Feral Domestic Cats in the Urban Environment of Rome (Italy)." *Preventative Veterinary Medicine* 77 (2006): 180-185.

Additional studies:

Effect of high-impact targeted trap-neuter-return and adoption of community cats on cat intake to a shelter. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1090023314001841>

The Vacuum Effect: Why catch and kill doesn't work.
<http://www.alleycat.org/VacuumEffectScience>

Case Study: Marion Island proves that removing cats from an area is a futile effort that leads to decades of cruelty. <http://www.alleycat.org/page.aspx?pid=925>

Example of forward thinking by local government in the USA:

Local government outlaws euthanasia of feral cats. <http://micromediapubs.com/manchester-outlaws-euthanasia-feral-cats/>

I also strongly urge the NRC to take on board compassionate conservation strategies.

Compassionate conservation may offer a solution that helps re-balance ecosystems and does not involve inhumane shooting or poisoning which will affect wildlife too.

<https://theconversation.com/lets-give-feral-cats-their-citizenship-45165>

This article sums up strategies more likely to be effective to control wildcat numbers where a real problem is identified in a specific area.

<http://www.dingobiodiversity.com/feral-blog/category/feral-cat>

The case studies referred to at this site for the UTS Centre for Compassionate Conservation give examples of how a different approach has worked well:

<http://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/centre-compassionate-conservation>

5. Any other comments?

The definition of “feral cat”:

There seems to be a slippage in the report between the terms “stray cats” and “feral cats” and, in one instance, between the terms “feral cats” and “domestic pet cats”. This is highly problematic.

Many cats are deemed “feral” and untameable” at urban or country pounds but, with patience have been shown to become domesticated and suited to be domestic pets. Urban stray cat colonies, when well-managed, desexed, vaccinated, well-fed and given vet care when needed are also no threat to wildlife and pet cats. The government needs to listen to more stakeholders on this issue.

Targeted funding should be used to support people on low incomes to desex their cats to help reduce the stray cat population and prevent cat abandonment. This would be far more useful and effective than legislative changes. Education may also be more effective than new restrictive laws that will be difficult to enforce.

The NRC should take note that community based reporting referred to in the report is currently being misused in the Sydney Metropolitan area to target colonies of stray cats that have been well-managed by cat rescue groups and other concerned individuals. Since the mechanism for identifying “feral” cats became available there have been many incidences of cruelty or sudden disappearances of colonies reported by colony carers as a direct result of colonies being identified to people who wish to be cruel to cats or who simply “hate” cats. Frankly this is disgraceful and shameful. A government initiative is aiding those who apparently get pleasure from being cruel to animals. Community based reporting as referred to in the report is simply aiding cruelty in these instances.