

Feral cat management

State-wide review of pest animal management

Final report



The issue

- Feral cats are the likely cause of seven mammal species extinctions. They threaten around 90 native mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians.
- Domestic cats are an important companion animal to many people in the community. However, stray and unconfined domestic cats threaten wildlife and contribute to the feral cat population.
- Cat management focuses on encouraging responsible pet ownership and suppressing feral cat populations in areas of high biodiversity value.
- Current cat control techniques are expensive, labour intensive, and require ongoing management effort to be effective. It is hoped that advances in cat-specific baits can improve control effectiveness.

Current status

- The Threat Abatement Plan for predation by feral cats aims for reduced stray and feral cat abundances in areas around human habitation.
- NSW lags behind many Australian jurisdictions that have tightened the control of stray cats. Control measures include limiting numbers per household, compulsory desexing, breeder registration and confinement.
- Increasing the proportion of cats that are registered is critical. More than 90 percent of cats that are registered are desexed, however less than 45 percent of cats are registered.
- Feral cats are not currently treated as pests and the controls in NSW are not strong enough
- Responsible cat ownership, including confinement and desexing, is promoted by animal welfare agencies including the RSPCA.

Final report recommendations

- Declare feral cats a pest by including them in pest animal regulation addressing pest animals under the NSW *Biosecurity Act 2015*.
- Redefine cats for the purposes of the NSW *Companion Animals Act 1998* as those cats that are registered or owner identifiable.
- Require entire cats to be registered annually and their owners to be registered as a breeder.
- Allow local governments to issue orders to stop owners allowing their cats to trespass and provide property owners the right to humanely seize trespassing cats.
- Simplify the declaration and enforcement of cat confinement areas by local government.
- Clarify that abandoning or releasing any seized cat into the wild is an offence.

