

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF CAT POPULATIONS
IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to propose a more ethical and sustainable approach that prioritizes humane treatment, environmental protection, and community involvement.

It is well-documented that the wild cat population in NSW poses a significant threat to native wildlife, contributing to the decline of vulnerable species. However, it is also crucial to acknowledge that wild cats are sentient beings capable of experiencing pain, fear, and suffering. Therefore, I urge the Council to consider non-lethal methods as the primary strategy for managing this issue.

1. Implement a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Program

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) is an evidence-based, humane method that has been successfully implemented in various regions worldwide. TNR involves trapping wild cats, spaying or neutering them, and then returning them to their original location. This approach offers several advantages:

- **Population Control:** By preventing wild cats from reproducing, TNR gradually reduces their numbers over time without resorting to euthanasia.
- **Stabilization of Colonies:** Neutered cats are less likely to roam, fight, or spray, which reduces disruptions in the local ecosystem.
- **Protection of Native Wildlife:** With fewer wild cats over time, the predation pressure on native species will naturally decline.

I recommend that the Council allocate resources to establish a TNR program in collaboration with animal welfare organizations, veterinarians, and volunteers.

2. Establish “Cat Safe Zones” and Controlled Feeding Programs

Another ethical approach involves creating designated “Cat Safe Zones” where neutered cats can live under controlled conditions. These areas would include:

- **Feeding Stations:** Regularly monitored feeding stations would provide a reliable food source, reducing the cats’ need to hunt native wildlife.
- **Shelter and Medical Care:** Safe zones can also offer shelter and basic medical care to improve the well-being of these cats.
- **Community Engagement:** Encourage local communities to participate in managing these zones, fostering a sense of responsibility and compassion.

This strategy can significantly minimize the impact on local wildlife while ensuring that healthy cats are not needlessly euthanized.

3. Promote Community Education and Responsible Pet Ownership

A critical aspect of reducing the wild cat population is preventing abandonment and managing the influx of new strays. To this end, I recommend:

- **Education Campaigns:** Raising public awareness about the impact of abandoned cats on the environment and encouraging responsible pet ownership, including microchipping and desexing.

- Accessible Low-Cost Spay/Neuter Services: Collaborating with veterinary clinics to offer affordable or subsidized spay/neuter services for pet owners.
- Support for Pet Rehoming: Increasing support for rescue groups and shelters to rehome stray and abandoned cats rather than resorting to euthanasia.

4. Develop a Humane Cat Deterrent Strategy for Sensitive Wildlife Areas

To protect vulnerable wildlife in ecologically sensitive areas, the Council could implement non-lethal deterrents to prevent cats from accessing these zones. Such measures might include:

- Cat-Proof Fencing: Installing barriers around sensitive habitats.
- Ultrasonic Repellents: Using technology that emits sound frequencies that cats find unpleasant but do not harm them.
- Vegetation Management: Using plant species that cats avoid can also act as a natural deterrent.

5. Collaboration with Animal Welfare Organizations and Research Institutions

To ensure the success of these non-lethal approaches, I propose that the Council partners with animal welfare organizations and research institutions to study the effectiveness of humane management strategies. This collaborative effort can provide data-driven insights and continuously improve methods for balancing cat welfare with wildlife protection.

Conclusion

The issue of wild cat management is complex, but it is vital to approach it with compassion and long-term sustainability in mind. Euthanizing healthy animals should not be the default solution. By implementing TNR programs, establishing cat safe zones, promoting responsible pet ownership, and exploring non-lethal deterrents, we can effectively reduce the wild cat population while protecting our native wildlife.

I strongly urge the NSW Council to adopt these humane measures, which align with the ethical values of our community and prioritize both animal welfare and environmental conservation.

Thank you for considering this submission. I am confident that, with a collaborative and compassionate approach, we can achieve a solution that benefits both cats and the precious wildlife of New South Wales.