

**Submission
No 132**

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

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Date Received: 25 November 2024

My name is Sandy Collins. I am a member of the Mid South Coast WIRES, previously branch Chair, Echidna Coordinator and Possum and Glider Coordinator and at present Raptor Coordinator and Reptile Coordinator. Our branch is only one of the 28 WIRES' branches in NSW.

My submission relates to the consequence of uncontrolled cats has on our wildlife with particular reference to our branch statistics.

Since January our WIRES' branch, which extends from Lake Conjola to Wallaga Lake, has attended over 380 rescues involving pet cats. Data is filtered by Fate as: 'Cat attack' and under 'brought in by cat' or 'cat mouth.' This would not reflect the true statistic as a number of members of the public do not inform the rescuer that a cat attack is suspected. Also these calls are just the ones that are reported where the victim is still alive.

In all thirty-eight different species were rescued. The most common species are Ringtail Possums, Sugar Gliders, Feathertail Gliders and Little Wattlebirds. Also attacked are lizards, particularly Blue Tongues, and bats. Only 22% were able to be rehabilitated and released. All others died or had to be euthanased as a result of the pet cat attack. The bacteria in a cat's saliva is toxic to our native animals so even if a cat does not immediately kill them its bite usually leads to infection and death. Shock and stress compounds the problem.

More than a quarter of Australian households have a pet cat. Half have two or more. In reference to studies by both the University of Sydney and the CSIRO it was concluded that one free roaming pet cat kill on average 186 native species every year including reptiles, birds and mammals. Greater numbers of hunting pet cats are in urban areas which means that they are able to decimate native species leading to a decline or a complete loss in that area. Many of our native animals don't have a high reproductive rate so they cannot survive this level of predation. Cats tracked in studies to ascertain their movements have shown that many will roam over a kilometre from their homes. If the urban area is located close to bush the hunting area is expanded. This reduces the places that should be safe for our wildlife.

Keeping pet cats securely contained 24 hours a day is the only way to prevent them from killing wildlife but it also keeps the cat safe. Contained cats live longer. They are protected from injury, unwanted breeding, nuisance behaviour and feline diseases.

Our wildlife is still in recovery after the 2019/2020 fires. Many are vulnerable or endangered species. The lack of Government legislation at the State level to control pet cats has increased feral cat numbers and contributed to the long list of extinct, endangered and vulnerable species. There are rules that govern pet dog behaviour. It is time those rules were applied to pet cats.