

Submission
No 230

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

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Dear Committee Members

We are concerned that many cats will be unnecessarily killed if culling goes ahead.

Cat owners should be responsible for caring for their pets and ensuring that they do not leave their property.

Some points we would like to submit follow.

The effectiveness and benefits of implementing large-scale cat desexing programmes:

Any serious strategy to reduce cat numbers and the threat they pose to other animals must start with stemming the flow of new animals into a world where there are not enough homes for them. Humans are responsible for deliberately increasing cat populations as well as the reproduction of unfixed roaming and homeless cats.

Every animal bought from a breeder costs one in a shelter the chance of a loving home, contributing to the euthanasia of animals in shelters. Council shelters are overflowing, putting pressure on staff and denying new animals in need safe spaces. Australian shelters and pounds must euthanise some 50,000 healthy cats and kittens a year, yet 25% of cats – 1.32 million in 2022 – are still being purchased from breeders directly or via pet stores.

If the bought animal is not desexed and reproduces, the problem is compounded. A single free-roaming, unfixed cat can give rise to as many as 5,000 cats in seven years. Extensive and readily available desexing programmes made affordable via state government subsidies must therefore be coupled with legislation banning the breeding and sale of animals by breeders, kitten farms, pet stores, and online operators to stem the flow of new animals.

Desexing also improves the welfare of individual animals. Spaying eliminates female feline stress and discomfort during heat periods, eliminates the uterine cancer risk, and greatly reduces mammary cancer risk. One study found that spaying cats younger than 1 year old was associated with an 86% reduction in the risk of developing mammary gland neoplasia.

Neutering makes males far less likely to roam or fight, prevents testicular cancer, and reduces the risk of prostate cancer. Altered animals are less likely to contract deadly, contagious diseases, such as feline AIDS and feline leukaemia, which are spread through bodily fluids.

The effectiveness of cat containment policies and welfare outcomes for cats under contained conditions:

Cats can happily live indoors or in secure outdoor cat runs (or a combination of the two), provided they have access to enrichment, such as toys, a feline companion, puzzle feeders, scratching posts, human-interactive games that encourage exercise, and shelves, levels, and cat trees for climbing. And 92% of Australians support or do not oppose 24/7 at-home cat containment.

Allowing cats to roam outside the home is dangerous not only for wildlife but also for the cats themselves, who are at risk of disease, being hit by cars, or becoming the victims of cruel people. Cats responsibly contained at home can live up to 10 years longer than those allowed to roam free.

Options for reducing the feral cat population:

Cat management strategies must be focused on humane ways of addressing the root cause of overpopulation, not employing cruel, dangerous lethal measures.

Poisoning as a cat control measure, for example, is counterintuitive to protecting wildlife. Sodium fluoroacetate (colloquially 1080), which is commonly used in cat baits, is an environmental disaster. It is easily ingested by companion animals as well as native species, and its victims endure a slow, agonising death.

Similarly, shooting cats is cruel. Shooting moving targets, which is usually done at night, can result in inaccurate shots and cause prolonged, painful death.

In regard to tackling the root causes of overpopulation, it is not enough to rely on reactionary control methods, such as the impounding of animals identified as having homes and the killing of homeless animals. We urge the New South Wales government to consider the following preventive measures to reduce cat populations:

- A ban on the sale of animals by breeders, in pet stores, and online
- A ban on kitten farms
- The enforcement of 24/7 cat confinement laws
- Continuation of mandatory microchipping
- Increased public education about the importance of cat desexing, at-home confinement (including environmental enrichment), fostering, and adoption
- Increased state government funding of adoption groups and shelters to better house impounded animals and enhance rehoming efforts
- Government funding of desexing programmes
- In cases where it is necessary, euthanasia – and an end to cruel, inaccurate lethal methods such as shooting and poisoning

Cats that are homeless are so because of the people that dumped them.

Poisoning them will poison other animals, mainly native species.

Shooting them is cruel and many other animals are killed or injured in the process, not only cats.

Shelters are overflowing and the toll on the people and animals is immense.

We have rescued 5 cats over the years, four that were dumped and 1 from the RSPCA and they never went outside the home and had happy and healthy lives.

We still have 2 after the other 3 passed away after living for 15 years or more.

The joy and affection that they brought us could not be measured.

Whether people like cats or not, they deserve to be treated humanely and not killed but put into shelters that are Forever Homes.

Please do not consider culling cats that are only homeless due to the cruelty of their owners who should be the ones held accountable.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely

Gary and Julie Reid

PETA acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live. We pay our respects to elders past and present and extend that respect to all other indigenous peoples.

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