

Submission
No 494

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

Name: Mrs Samantha Ryan

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To whom it may concern,

I believe wholeheartedly that the measures proposed by the New South Wales government to “control” the cat population is inhumane. Cats are being let down by greedy humans who fail to desex, contain, and supervise them, and the government of NSW is perpetuating this by proposing lazy and ineffective measures such as poisoning and shooting these defenceless creatures. 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. Furthermore, shooting moving targets, which is usually done at night, can result in inaccurate shots and cause prolonged, painful death.

Controlling Australia’s cat population requires a multipronged approach that must rest first and foremost on stemming the flow of new cats via breeding restrictions. 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. PETA urges 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

Desexing is, without doubt, the most important action we can take. 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.

I implore the government of New South Wales to consider the truly negative impact of its proposed measures, and instead to work with cat rescues and owners to fund and implement proper desexing programmes, which will ultimately have far more impact on the rising cat population of our state.

Sincerely,

Samantha Ryan