

Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia
Submission 58 - Supplementary Submission
Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy
Answers to questions on notice
Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

Committee: Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy
Inquiry: Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia
Question No: 1
Hearing Date: 26 August 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia - domestic cat and feral cat population
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Question Date: 26 August 2020
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Zimmerman asked:

Mr ZIMMERMAN: In terms of the population's replenishment, obviously it's self-sustaining through natural replenishment, but how much leakage are you seeing from the domestic cat population to the feral cat population, or is that largely under control in this day and age?

Dr Box: I wouldn't say it's largely under control, but I don't have figures at hand.

Mr ZIMMERMAN: Is that documented? Is that something that you could provide us with information on?

Dr Box: I can investigate and see what's available there. I'm sorry; I'm not 100 per cent sure.

Mr ZIMMERMAN: If you could take that on notice, that would be handy.

Answer:

The role that domestic and stray cat populations play in replenishing the feral cat population is widely recognised but, to the Department's knowledge, not yet quantified in Australia. Leakage from the domestic cat population occurs indirectly via urban and peri-urban stray cat colonies which function as reservoirs that can further bolster feral cat populations. Researchers from the National Environment Science Program's Threatened Species Recovery Hub estimate that there are 3.8 million domestic cats and 0.7 million feral and unowned cats living in highly modified environments across Australia.

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Inquiry: Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia
Question No: 2
Hearing Date: 26 August 2020
Division/Agency: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Topic: Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia -
International case studies into feral cat control
Hansard Page: 7
Question Date: 26 August 2020
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Burns asked:

Mr BURNS: I thank everyone very much for being with us tonight. Are there any cases overseas where countries have been able to manage the feral cat population? Are there any good case studies for Australia of where it's been managed well?

Dr Box: I'd have to take that I notice. I know my colleagues have done a bit of a stocktake of examples of where feral cat control has happened in other parts of the world. As a general summary, Australia is seen as a leader in this space, in terms of identifying feral cat control tools. We're actively working to manage the impact of feral cats on our biodiversity. I'd be very happy to provide the committee with some case studies of where that work has been undertaken in other parts of the world.

Mr Thompson: The only thing I would add to that is that the rest of the world is perhaps a little bit less interested because they've got native populations of small cats anyway. The other place you could look for examples would be New Zealand, where they've worked, like Australia, on trying to take cats off islands and things like that because of the impact they've had on their native birds. Australia and New Zealand are way out in front on trying to control cats.

Answer:

Research conducted by K.J Campbell et al (2011) (http://www.issg.org/pdf/publications/island_invasives/pdfhqprint/1campbell.pdf) found 87 successful cat management campaigns on 83 islands, with islands ranging in size from 5 to 29,000 ha. Cats have been eradicated on islands managed by the United States, British Overseas Territories (Caribbean), Seychelles, New Zealand, South Africa, Brazil, Spain, Ecuador, Mexico, France, Fiji, Mauritius and Portugal.

In Australia, feral cats have been successfully removed from a number of islands including Tasman, Serrurier, Hermite in the Montebellos, Faure, Rottneest and Macquarie Islands. Other Australian case studies of successful cat management are outlined in the Department's submission to this Inquiry.