



FERAL ANIMAL CONTROL

ABN: 44517409376/ Trading as Feral Pest Control
www.feralcontroller.com.au

PARLIMENTARY INQUIRY SUBMISSION

DOMESTIC AND FERAL CATS



“The Action Plan for Australian Mammals, published in 2014, tells us feral cats are the single biggest threat to Australia’s native mammals”.

INQUIRY INTO THE PROBLEM OF DOMESTIC AND FERAL CATS IN AUSTRALIA

Reference

- A. Parliament of Australia - Inquiry into the problem of domestic and feral cats in Australia, Terms of Reference
- B. Parliament Brochure – Making a Submission

Introduction

1. In accordance with Ref A. and B. the intent of this submission is to provide written commentry to the parliamentary committee, not to outline statistical data of the domestic and feral cat problems in Australia, as this already exists and there is already substantial data available of the associated problems.
2. The intent of this submission is to provide the committee a view from a professional licenced contract shooter and trappers perspective dealing with domestic and feral cat engagements, and to provide some solutions and observations for consideration by the committee.

Observations and point of view

3. The feral and domestic cat problem has existed for some time and as the Action Plan for Australian Mammals, published in 2014, outlines, feral cats are the single biggest threat to Australia's native mammals.
4. The Australian cat problem can be clearly categorised into two types - Domestic and Feral Cats, and requires separate strategies to address the problem.

Domestic cats

5. The following strategies should be considered, in order to address the 'Domestic Cat' problem, as the issue clearly lies with the owner and irresponsible behaviour by 'some' owners that do not control their pets, allowing them to roam free.

Possible Domestic Cat Strategies

- ❖ Mandatory National microchipping of all domestic cats bought and sold.

- ❖ Mandatory National neuter all domestic cats bought and sold.
- ❖ Fines for owners that do not control their pets, and non-compliance.
- ❖ Termination of domestic cats ‘dumped by owners’¹ (*see footnote 1*)
- ❖ For every domestic cat purchase, a brochure is issued to the owner outlining their responsibilities and associated penalties if the pet is caught outside the home.
- ❖ Pet shops, breeders are required to issue said brochure with any purchase, and an acknowledgement form signed by the purchaser.
- ❖ Domestic cats caught by contractors or council operators have a responsibility to take the animal to an approved vet for scanning, and if necessary neutering, if not already done so, and the associated bill for services completed by the operator/ vet, is issued to the owner and an associated fine for non compliance, if appropriate.
- ❖ Local council issue Expressions of Interest to contractors as the councils representative for a 2 year period for trapping and management of domestic cats caught and returned. Any non-chipped cat caught is to be terminated.

Feral Cats

6. **Feral cats** live, hunt and reproduce in the wild. They are the same species as domestic **cats** but differ in how and where they live. **Feral cats** have the body shape, acute senses and fine coordination perfectly suited for stalking and capturing prey.

7. Feral cats are a greater problem in our wild and cause significant damage to our native flora and fauna, and therefore need to be managed differently to domestic cats. There needs to be overlapping strategies to address this problem and the following are some considerations for the committee

Possible Feral Cat Strategies

- ❖ Trapping, both cage and approved humane leg traps (IAW current State Legislation)
- ❖ A ‘scalp’ bounty for feral cats, as is the case for foxes in VIC. Given the scalp bounty is \$15 in VIC and they are the second biggest threat to our native fauna and flora, it would be appropriate to have a similar bounty of \$15 per scalp nation wide for feral cats.
- ❖ Whilst baits are high risk to other animals, specific and appropriate curiosity baiting is an option for feral cat control “outside suburbia”.
- ❖ Contract shooting, with appropriate weaponry, based on environment.
- ❖ Contractors check microchips of terminated animals. If identified as a domestic cat, a report and details is sent to the area controlling body, and appropriate notice/ penalty applied to the owner.

¹ A systemic problem of feral cats is the dumping of a domestic cats by irresponsible owners, and are allowed to breed in the wild, thereby exacerbating the problem. As a licenced shooter, I have experienced this first hand where a client had several feral cats on her property that came from a dumped domestic cat that was pregnant at the time.

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8. With over 40 years service in the ADF and Special Forces, I have applied some experiences learnt during that time in my business in the management of feral animal control. Specifically, the ability to operate at night in complete darkness and complex terrain, when feral animals are most active, especially the ‘cat’.

9. There is a misconception about firearms in the general public, and unfortunately is associated with criminal activity. Firearms used in feral animal control are varied and in some cases specific to task and environment, as is the ammunition.

10. There is a varied choice of firearm – Air Rifle, Rimfire and Centre Fire. All these categories provide the professional shooter the ability to operate safely indoors and outdoors in suburbia and in the rural environment to ensure a quick and humane termination of the animal, in a safe manner to the general public.

11. As outlined above, we differ from most contractors, in that we utilise the Specialist Equipment that has served me well in the Military, that being Night Vision(NV) and Thermal imagery (TI) and weapon suppression.

12. Using NV and TI allows operators to work in complete darkness, attached to an appropriate weapon, specific to task and environment, to ensure cost effective results for both the operator and client. Combined with concurrent activities, such as baiting and trapping, provides a better result, rather than just shooting.

Conclusion

13. Feral and domestic cat problems in Australia, must be categorised separately and appropriate strategies applied to domestic cats, which may well differ to feral cat management.

14. Irresponsible pet owners need to be made aware that uncontrolled, dumped or discarded domestic cats into the environment attract associated penalties.

15. Any singular strategy for the management of feral and domestic cats is flawed and needs overlapping and combined strategies to address the problem.

 14 July 2020

RHODES, AM, CSM

Owner/ Operator Feral Pest Control
