

INQUIRY INTO THE PROBLEM OF FERAL AND DOMESTIC CATS IN AUSTRALIA. By The House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy.

A feral cat was shot in the country, possibly N.S.W. On examination the contents of its stomach revealed 39 small animals had been eaten; insects, lizards, birds, mice. I can't remember the exact list but it included native marsupials, birds and lizards.

Cats are natural and expert killers. The bird I freed from my woodheater flew to the window. Instantly my sleeping, lame (crookedly set back leg) had leapt into the air higher than the back of the couch claws extended. It was only good luck that I caught and released an uninjured swallow.

Professor Geoffrey Archer has said that native cats would make excellent pets for working people and older Australians as they are nocturnal and affectionate. They evolved in the Australian environment and shouldn't be threatened with extinction.

a. the prevalence of feral and domestic cats in Australia;

I'm planting native plants in my suburban garden to give birds and animals a home and food. I'm visited by 4 neighbours' pet cats.

During the 29 years that I lived on 7 hectares/17 acres near Horsham one kilometre from the Grampians National Park I trapped and took 15 cats to the Horsham pound. Another 4 cats were shot.

b. the impact of feral and domestic cats including on native wildlife and habitats;

The main impact for me personally is that native birds and animals that are listed as common, I do not see very often except for magpies. It is horrifying to see the list of endangered mammals. Cats are known to keep on killing when they have been fed.

c. the effectiveness of current legislative and regulatory approaches;

Sorry, I don't know current legislative and regulatory approaches apart from cats not allowed to nighttime roam in the Dandenongs. Some fox baiting is done in the Grampians since the indigenous rock wallabies went extinct. The Grampians rangers do have cat traps but I've never heard any results of their use.

Whimpy Reichelt (I think that's his name) who ran Little Desert Lodge and dedicated his life to preserving the mallee fowl which nest on the ground tried to organise a cat shoot by licenced shooters. Authorities wouldn't allow it. It was never publicised what the authorities did, if anything, for the mallee fowl. An organised cat shoot involving trained army shooters in Queensland one night was having very little effect until the people looked up and saw rows of cats observing them. Over 40 cats were shot.

Authorities trying to protect native species should not be deterred by cat lovers' protests.

d. the effectiveness of Commonwealth action and cooperation with states and territories on this issue, including progress made under the Threat Abatement Plan, national framework and national declaration relating to feral and domestic cats in Australia;

This year on ABC radio I heard Norman Swann on the Science Show introduce a scientist working in south west Tasmania. At the end of the segment Mr. Swann expressed amazement at the scientist's opinion that there were so many cats in the surrounding bush and national park south of Strahan that they should now be considered part of the environment. Effectiveness of national action and cooperation won't make much progress against feral cats if state governments are employing workers such as this scientist.

e. the efficacy (in terms of reducing the impact of cats), cost effectiveness and use of current and emerging methods and tools for controlling feral cats, including baiting, the establishment of feral cat-free areas using conservation fencing, gene drive technology;

There was a small oasis out of Alice Springs that maintained a colony of a small furry native marsupials (I've forgotten which one). This was one of the few colonies of the animal anywhere in Australia. Dingoes were observed in the area so these slow breeding (one fertile period per year resulting in 2 or 3 young per litter) were eliminated, not removed even though pure dingoes are native and rare. A year later a study couldn't find any of the small marsupials. Further study revealed that the dingoes had been keeping down the number of cats which were now able to breed like rabbits and eat in like ferocious manner.

Naturalist and former owner of sanctuaries, John Walmsley, successfully erected rabbit, cat and fox proof fences; he had to remove overhanging branches. It is known that the chicken wire has to extend out for over a foot to prevent rabbits. He found that the vertical wire netting had to be loose and wobbly to discourage the cats and foxes from climbing the fences.

f. the efficacy of import controls for high risk domestic cat varieties to prevent the impacts of feral and domestic cats, including on native wildlife and habitats;

The import of more domestic cats should be banned so allowing the improbable occurrence of the current domestic cats to die out thus increasing the chance of native cats/quolls to become pets.

g. public awareness and education in relation to the feral and domestic cat problem;

h. the interaction between domestic cat ownership and the feral cat problem, and best practice approaches to the keeping of domestic cats in this regard.

My neighbours don't seem to be aware of any cat problem even though I don't want them spraying, dirtying and digging here.

My pacifist friend who still lives close to the Grampians National Park on a bush block feeds a visiting cat even though it is occasionally trailed by a kitten.

If people could keep native cats/quolls as pets it would be easier to convince people of the damage that beautiful silky furred cats do. The big problem is we can't have our native cat pets until marauding domestic cats are eradicated as the domestic cats eat quolls.

For many years a small industry in Stawell was "Catnip" which made wire tunnels and rooms leading from cat doors to the areas of garden so that pet cats could freely come and go from the house and experience grass, earth, and even trees while being restricted within the wire creation. As well as protecting any creatures outside the wire containment it also protected the pet cat from dogs and feral cats.

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