

The future of pet cat management in Western Australia

Wednesday 13 May 2026
Urban Bushland Council WA



Dr Bruce Webber
WA Feral Cat Working Group



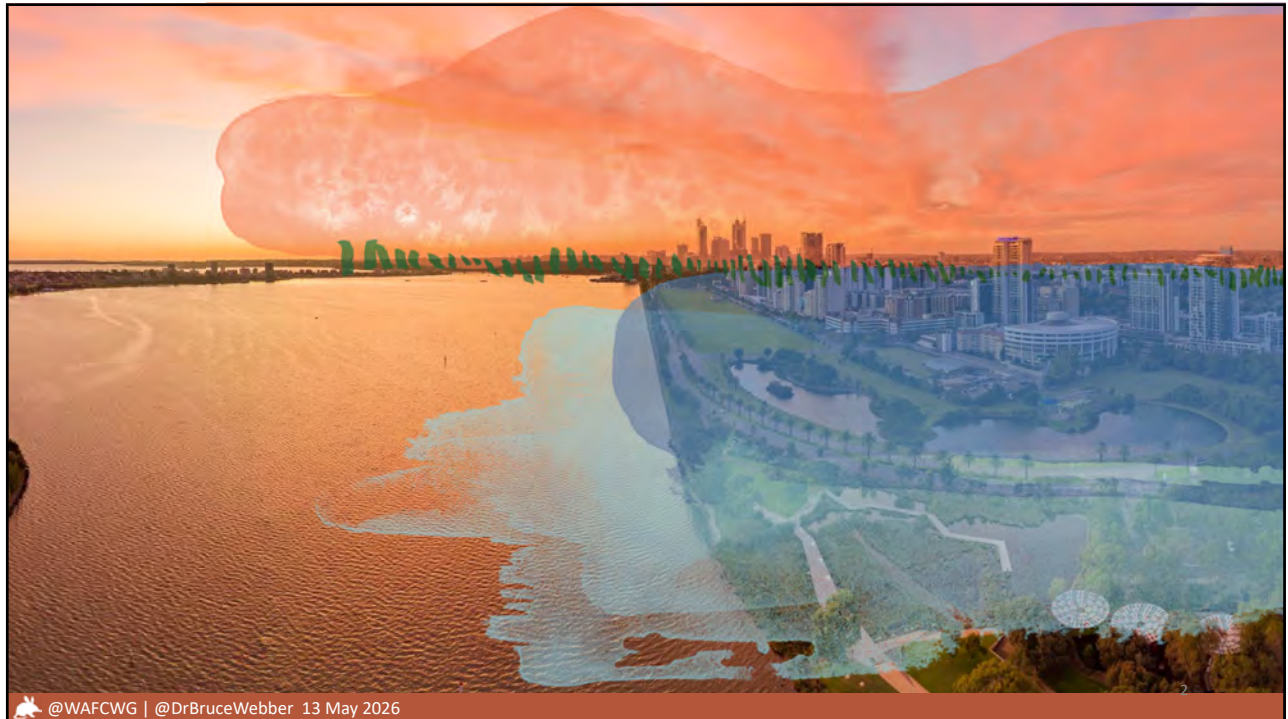
Dr Heather Crawford
Murdoch University



Prof Mike Calver
Murdoch University



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2

The Cook Labor Government is amending the Cat Act

Have your say on the domestic cat laws
(REVIEW INTO THE CAT ACT 2011)

CONSULTATION OPEN NOW

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Progressing cat management in Western Australia

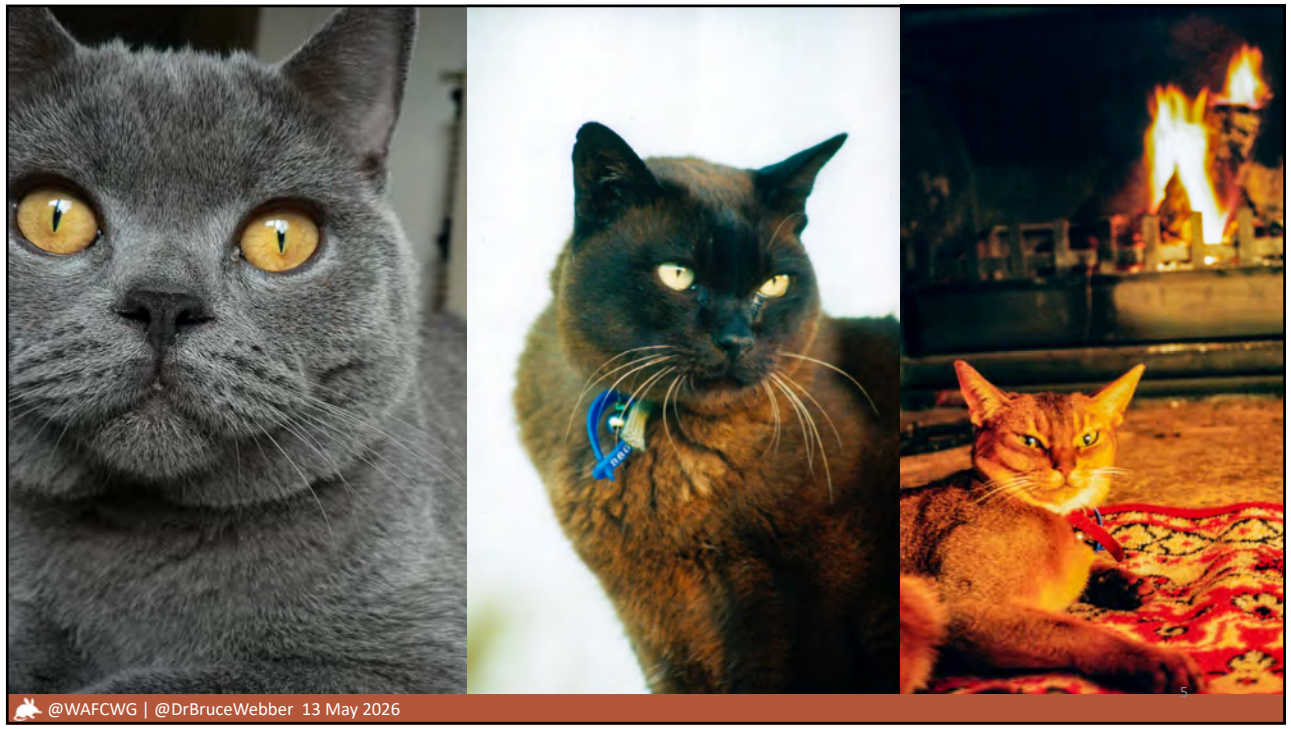
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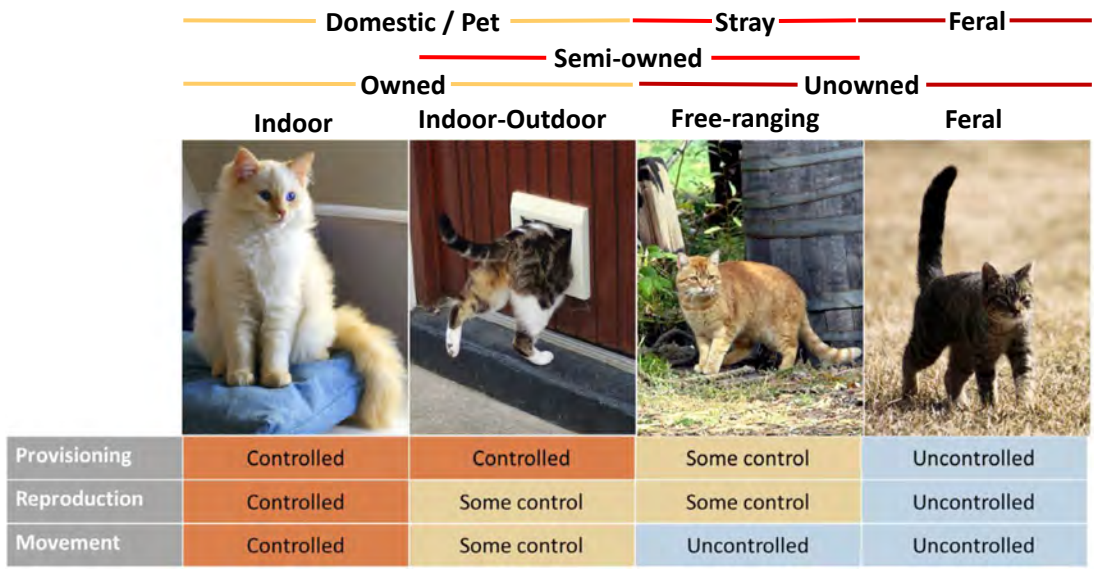
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Fifty shades of stray: terminology matters



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Modified from Crowley et al. 2019

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The lowest hanging fruit for cat management

Preventing pet cats from roaming



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Pet cats are popular in Australia

- 5.3 million pet cats in Australia (3.8 million pre-COVID-19)
- c. 456,000 pet cats in Greater Perth
- 1/3 of households own a cat
- 71% of pet cats are allowed to roam
- 39% of cats under night curfew escape
- Roaming cats cover large areas (5 km or 2 ha per night)
- Roaming cats regularly cross large roads
- Free roaming pets are a rarity!



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A need for change: effective control at all times

- Terminology:
 - *Outcome*: under effective control at all times (i.e. no free roaming)
 - *Method*: permanent/24hr containment/confinement
- Welfare based, supported by evidence
- Win-win outcomes for all



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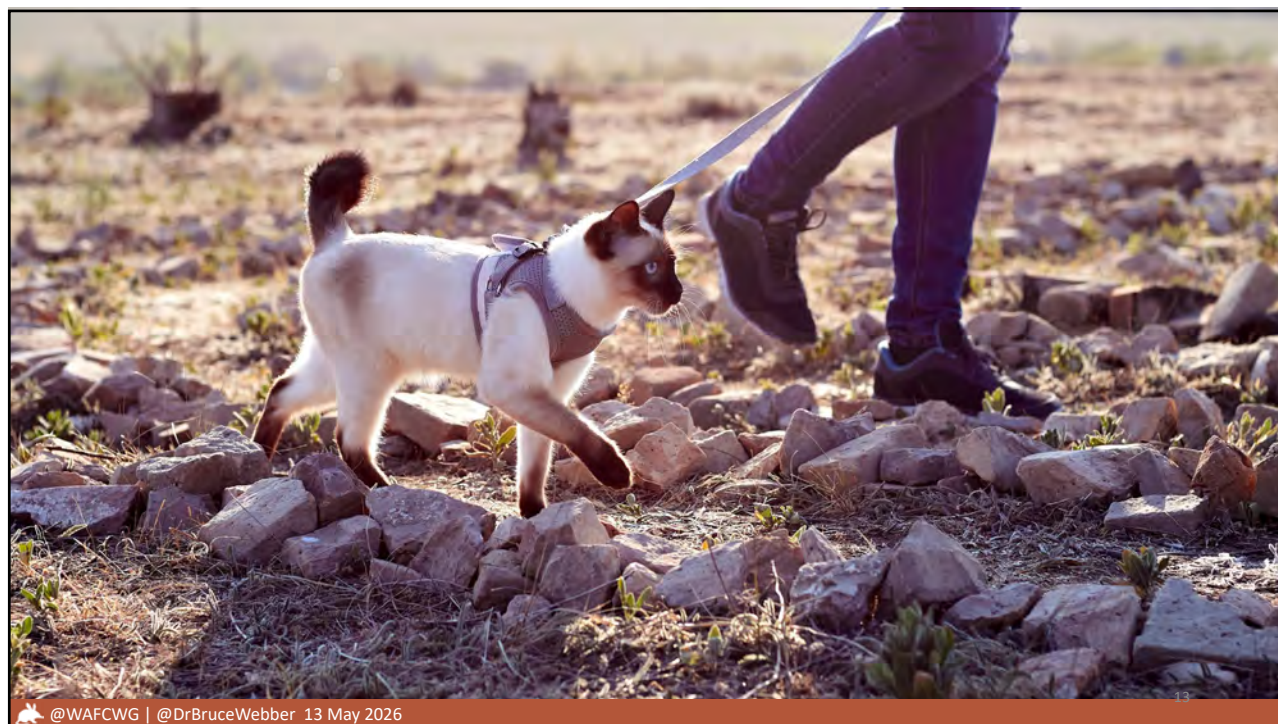
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(1) Containment: better for cats

- Indoor cats live lives 70-80% shorter than roaming cats
- Roaming cats are at greater risk of:
 - disease (e.g. feline AIDS, fleas, ticks, toxoplasmosis)
 - vehicle strike
 - snake bite
 - attacks (dogs & other cats)
 - toxins (e.g. secondary poisoning)
- Roaming cats can get lost, stolen or abused
- Risk of being impounded by the council (often with fines)
- 2/3 of cat owners have experienced a roaming-related death

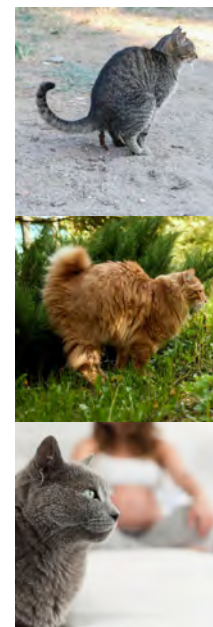


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(2) Containment: better for people

- Avoiding problems with neighbours:
 - Toileting in sandpits, spraying on property
 - Noise at night, killing wildlife
- Toxoplasmosis risks:
 - Illness, birth defects, miscarriages
 - Mental illness
- Treating cat-related disease in Aus: \$6.1 billion pa
- Cat-dependent disease: 8,500 hospitalisations, 550 deaths pa
- Also an agriculture impact: \$7.7 to 18.3 million pa
 - Toxoplasmosis responsible for 17% of sheep abortions
 - Sarcocystosis cysts cause \$5M of sheep meat loss pa



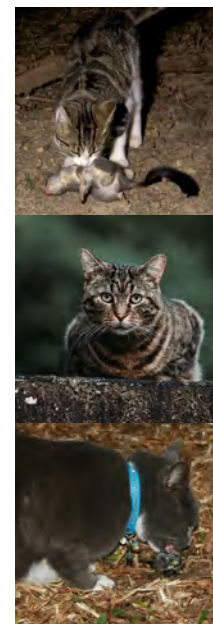
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(3) Containment: better for wildlife

- Roaming pet cats kill (mammals, birds & reptiles; per year):
 - 186 per roaming pet cat
 - 47 million in Greater Perth
 - 546 million in Australia (323 million natives)
 - Doesn't include insects & amphibians
 - Doesn't include prey that are injured/maimed
- Most animals killed are native animals
- 46% of Australia's threatened wildlife live in cities
- Kill up to 50 times more animals on an area basis than ferals



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All creatures great and small: One Welfare

Category	Impacted Animal(s) - Issue
Cat	Vehicle strike leading to death or permanent injury
	Infectious disease leading to death or poor health
	Fleas and ticks leading to poor health
	Toxoplasmosis leading to poor health (e.g. diarrhoea and neurological issues)
	Snake bite leading to death or severe health impact
	Attack by dogs or other large animals
	Attack by other cats, leading to injury or disease
	Poisoning by toxins (including direct ingestion and secondary poisoning)
	Abused by humans
	Owner abandonment leading to re-homing
	Owner abandonment leading to humane euthanasia
	Owner abandonment via an inhumane option (e.g. bush dumping)
	Poor health from diabetes due to poor diet and insufficient activity
	Bladder stones due to inadequate toileting provision
	Poor mental health outcomes due to insufficient owner knowledge
Humans	Poor mental health impacts due to cat-dependent disease
	Social disruption (e.g. sandpit toileting, night fighting)
	Social impact from vet bills due to roaming-related injuries (cats or other animals)
	Loss of income due to stock death and meat spoiling loss from cat borne diseases in livestock
Agricultural animals	Cat-borne disease leading to illness and/or death
Wildlife	Death or permanent injury from cat predation
	Landscape of fear' habitat loss due to cat presence
	Toxoplasmosis leading to poor health or death

Risk = Impact x Likelihood

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All creatures great and small: One Welfare

Category	Impacted Animal(s) - Issue	Welfare Impact	Permanent containment		Optional containment	
			Likelihood	Outcome	Likelihood	Outcome
Cat	Vehicle strike leading to death or permanent injury	5	1	5	4	20
	Infectious disease leading to death or poor health	3	1	3	2	6
	Fleas and ticks leading to poor health	2	2	4	4	8
	Toxoplasmosis leading to poor health (e.g. diarrhoea and neurological issues)	3	1	3	2	6
	Snake bite leading to death or severe health impact	5	1	5	3	15
	Attack by dogs or other large animals	4	0	0	3	12
	Attack by other cats, leading to injury or disease	3	1	3	4	12
	Poisoning by toxins (including direct ingestion and secondary poisoning)	4	1	4	2	8
	Abused by humans	5	1	5	2	10
	Owner abandonment leading to re-homing	2	2	4	2	4
	Owner abandonment leading to humane euthanasia	1	1	1	1	1
	Owner abandonment via an inhumane option (e.g. bush dumping)	3	2	6	1	3
	Poor health from diabetes due to poor diet and insufficient activity	3	2	6	1	3
	Bladder stones due to inadequate toileting provision	2	2	4	1	2
	Poor mental health outcomes due to insufficient owner knowledge	3	3	9	2	6
Humans	Poor mental health impacts due to cat-dependent disease	4	1	4	2	8
	Social disruption (e.g. sandpit toileting, night fighting)	2	0	0	3	6
	Social impact from vet bills due to roaming-related injuries (cats or other animals)	4	0	0	3	12
	Loss of income due to stock death and meat spoiling loss from cat borne diseases in livestock	2	1	2	3	6
Agricultural animals	Cat-borne disease leading to illness and/or death	4	1	4	3	12
Wildlife	Death or permanent injury from cat predation	5	1	5	5	25
	Landscape of fear' habitat loss due to cat presence	4	0	0	5	20
	Toxoplasmosis leading to poor health or death	4	1	4	3	12
TOTAL				81		217

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Cats – the disposable pet

Wednesday 13 May 2026
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Legal responsibilities Value in society Equality with dogs



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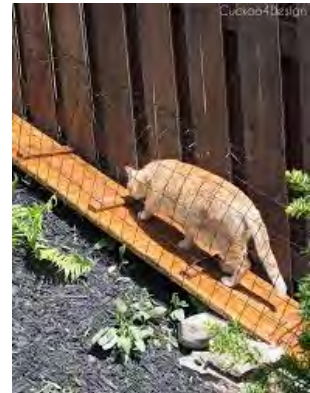


Containment with Catio

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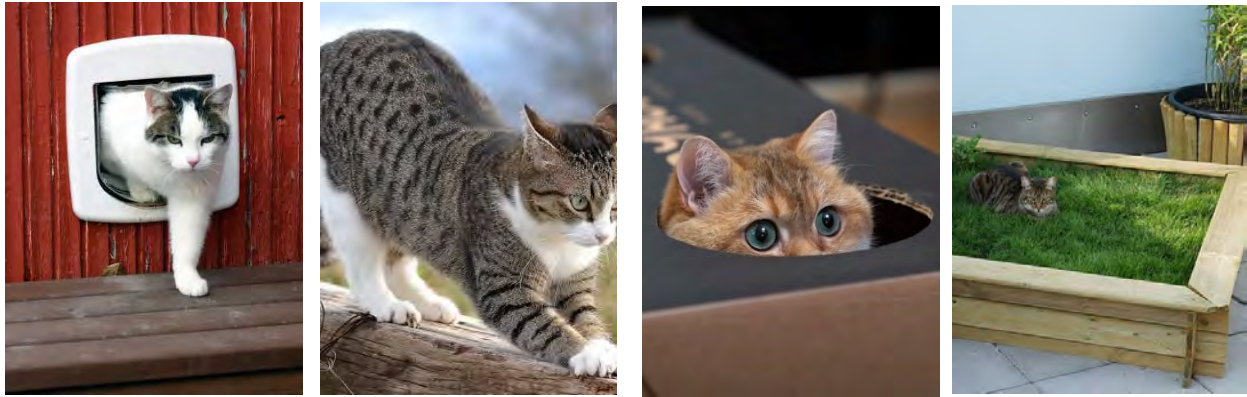
Styles to match budget, DIY ability, aesthetics & cats...



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Provision for cats' mental & physical needs...



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Transitioning cats indoors

- Start slowly & ignore begging!
- Winter is easier...
- Redirect/distract with play, brush & food
- Signs of stress – best to prevent from developing

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Myth busting: education and awareness underpins change

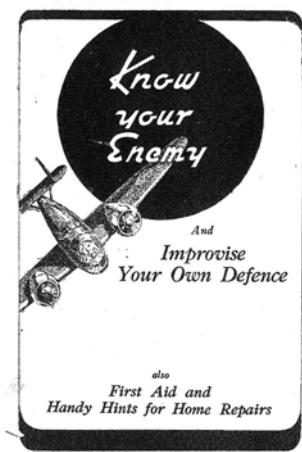
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Opposing mandatory containment



- Denialism
- What aboutism
- Social equity
- Absence of evidence
- Animal welfare – hedonism
- Human welfare

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Denialism

My cat doesn't hunt/doesn't cause nuisance

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What's known about predation by pet cats?




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What's known about predation by pet cats?



One in three cats killed prey



Of these, they averaged about two kills per week

Cat's schedule this week						
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
✓ eat cat food ✓ sleep ✓ play	✓ sleep ✓ blink lazily ✓ sleep more	MURDER	✓ eat ✓ sleep ✓ look cute	✓ cuddle with owner ✓ doze off	✓ purr ✓ sit on owner's face at 3am ✓ look cute	MURDER

Source: Matthew Inman – The Oatmeal comics – ‘How much do cats actually kill?’ https://theoatmeal.com/comics/cats_actually_kill

Inman's graphics use data from: 1. Loyd, K.A.T.; Hernandez, S.M.; Carroll, J.P.; Abernathy, K.J.; Marshall, G.J. Quantifying free-roaming domestic cat predation using animal-borne video cameras. *Biological Conservation* 2013, 160, 183-189, doi:10.1016/j.biocon.2013.01.008.

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What's known about predation by pet cats?



According to the study



- 21% of your cat's victims are brought home
- 30% are eaten
- 49% are left to rot



Source: Matthew Inman – The Oatmeal comics – ‘How much do cats actually kill?’ https://theoatmeal.com/comics/cats_actually_kill

Inman's graphics use data from: 1. Loyd, K.A.T.; Hernandez, S.M.; Carroll, J.P.; Abernathy, K.J.; Marshall, G.J. Quantifying free-roaming domestic cat predation using animal-borne video cameras. *Biological Conservation* 2013, 160, 183-189, doi:10.1016/j.biocon.2013.01.008.

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What's known about predation by pet cats?

What your cat shows you



What your cat DOES NOT show you



Source: Matthew Inman – The Oatmeal comics – 'How much do cats actually kill?' https://theoatmeal.com/comics/cats_actually_kill

Inman's graphics use data from: 1. Loyd, K.A.T.; Hernandez, S.M.; Carroll, J.P.; Abernathy, K.J.; Marshall, G.J. Quantifying free-roaming domestic cat predation using animal-borne video cameras. *Biological Conservation* 2013, 160, 183-189, doi:10.1016/j.biocon.2013.01.008.

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What's known about predation by pet cats?

<i>1 in 2 Australian cats kill prey (based on 10 studies), and each of those hunting cats kills 3.6 animals per week (based on 12 studies)</i>	
<i>Total pet cat population</i>	3.8 million
<i>Percentage of households with cats</i>	27%
<i>Size of animals cats can kill</i>	Up to 4 kg
<i>Percentage of pet cats that roam</i>	71%
<i>Mean home range of a pet cat</i>	2 hectares
<i>Average density of pet cats in Australian suburbs</i>	39 to 70 per km ²
<i>Average number of vertebrates killed annually by roaming pet cats</i>	186
<i>All vertebrates killed annually by roaming pet cats</i>	390 million
<i>All native vertebrates killed annually by roaming pet cats</i>	241 million

Source: Legge et al. 2020 See also video at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytZM3Tm_oQc

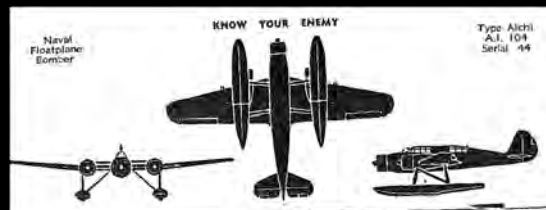
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What aboutism



Cats aren't the villains! It's land clearing and road traffic

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What's known about predation by pet cats?



Table 3. Causes of mortality of *Perameles gunnii* and relative effects on juvenile, subadult and adults at Hamilton

Mortality cause	Juvenile		Effect on group (%) Subadult		Adult	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Road death	23.1 (n = 6)	12.5 (n = 3)	80.0 (n = 8)	55.6 (n = 5)	73.8 (n = 45)	60.0 (n = 18)
Cat predation	38.5 (n = 10)	45.8 (n = 11)	—	33.3 (n = 3)	—	—
Machinery	7.6 (n = 2)	4.2 (n = 1)	—	—	1.6 (n = 1)	3.3 (n = 1)
Disease	3.9 (n = 1)	8.3 (n = 2)	—	—	8.2 (n = 5)	10.0 (n = 3)
Trap death	3.9 (n = 1)	8.3 (n = 2)	—	—	4.9 (n = 3)	3.3 (n = 1)
Dog predation	—	—	—	—	3.3 (n = 2)	3.3 (n = 1)
Unknown	23.1 (n = 6)	20.8 (n = 5)	20.0 (n = 2)	11.1 (n = 1)	8.2 (n = 5)	20.0 (n = 6)

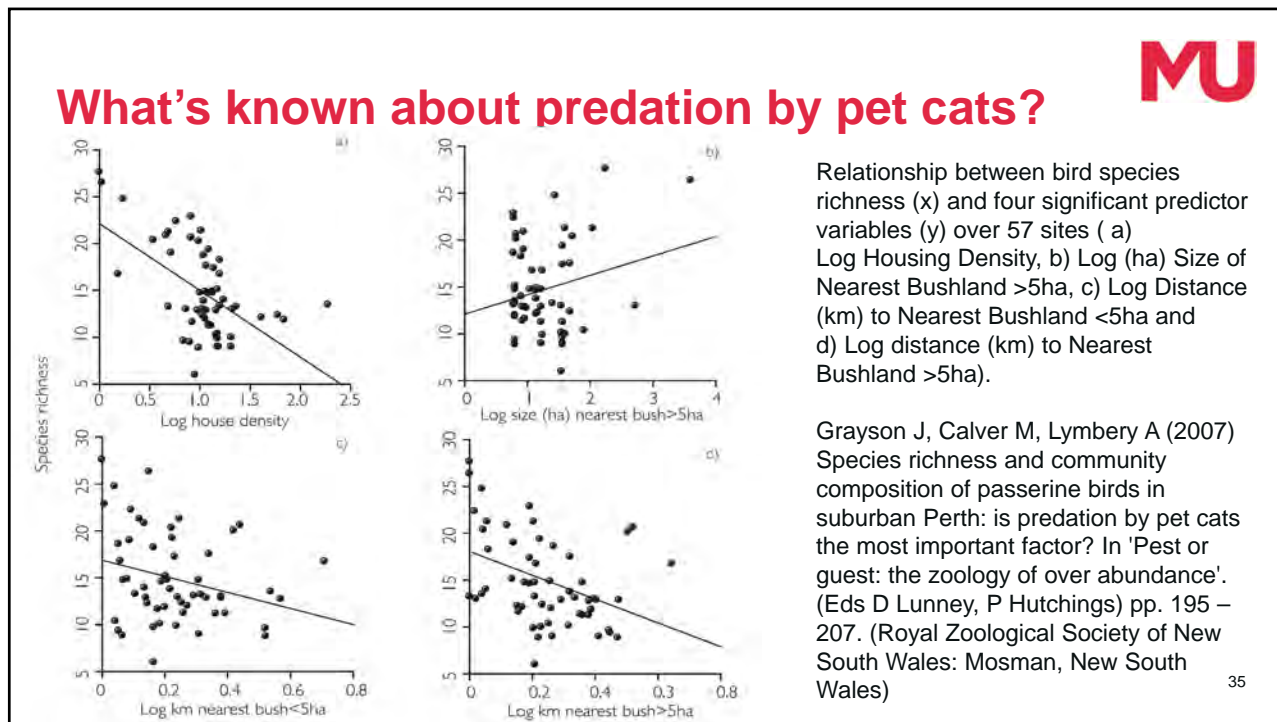


JJ Harrison
(<https://www.jjharrison.com.au/>), CC BY-SA 3.0
<<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

Duffy AC (1994) Population demography of the eastern barred bandicoot (*Perameles gunnii*) at Hamilton, Victoria. Wildlife Research 21, 445-454

LOFFI

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Social equity

Mandatory containment denies pet ownership to disadvantaged citizens

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VIDEO: Vet bill nearly cost Frankie the cat his life
 Thu 22 May 2025

ABC NEWS

Life, death or debt

Watch 1m 46s

Pet owner Michael Clayton was faced with a \$2000 vet bill after his cat Frankie lost an eye in a fight.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-22/vet-bill-nearly-cost-frankie-the-cat-his-life/105324164>

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Absence of evidence

We have compelling evidence for predatory impacts and cat welfare

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What's known about predation by pet cats?



Ctenotus fallens Credit: S. Mawson

Bamford, M.J. and Calver, M.C. (2012) Cat predation and suburban lizards: a 22 year study at a suburban Australian property. *The Open Conservation Biology Journal* 6, 25-29. [DOI: 10.2174/1874839201206010025]

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Fairy Tern. Credit: J.J. Harrison, Wikimedia Commons (<https://www.ijharrison.com.au/>)

Greenwell et al. (2019) Cat gets its tern: a case study of predation on a threatened coastal seabird. *Animals* 2019, 9, 445; doi:10.3390/ani9070445

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A promotional graphic for 'Scraps of Paper'. On the left is a portrait of a man with a beard and a hat. The title 'Scraps of Paper' is written in a green, stylized font. Below the title is the name 'Eric Bogle'. On the right, the letters 'MU' are displayed in red. A poem is written in black text, and a warning is written in bold black text.

Scraps of Paper

Eric Bogle

MU

'Oh, you who love your pussy
be sure to keep him in
Don't let him argue with a truck
the truck is bound to win
And upon the busy road don't let him play
or frolic
**If you do, I'm warning you it could be
CAT-astrophic.'**

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Animal welfare – hedonism



It's cruel to contain cats/containment means cats are killed

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Is cat welfare the key?




Table 3. Age-standardized mortality rates (ASMR; per 10,000 cat-years at risk) with 95% confidence intervals (95% CI), by diagnostic category for categories with at least 80 deaths and for the most common specific diagnostic codes (≥ 20 deaths) in cats covered by life insurance during 1999–2006 at a Swedish animal insurance company.

Category	Specific Diagnosis	Deaths	ASMR	95% CI	PM (%)
Urinary	Kidney/ureter ^a	907	64	52, 75	20
	Lower urinary problems	713	50	39, 60	16
		194	14	8, 19	4
Traumatic	Traffic accidents ^b	582	42	32, 51	13
		411	29	21, 38	9
	Other traumatic deaths	153	11	6, 16	3

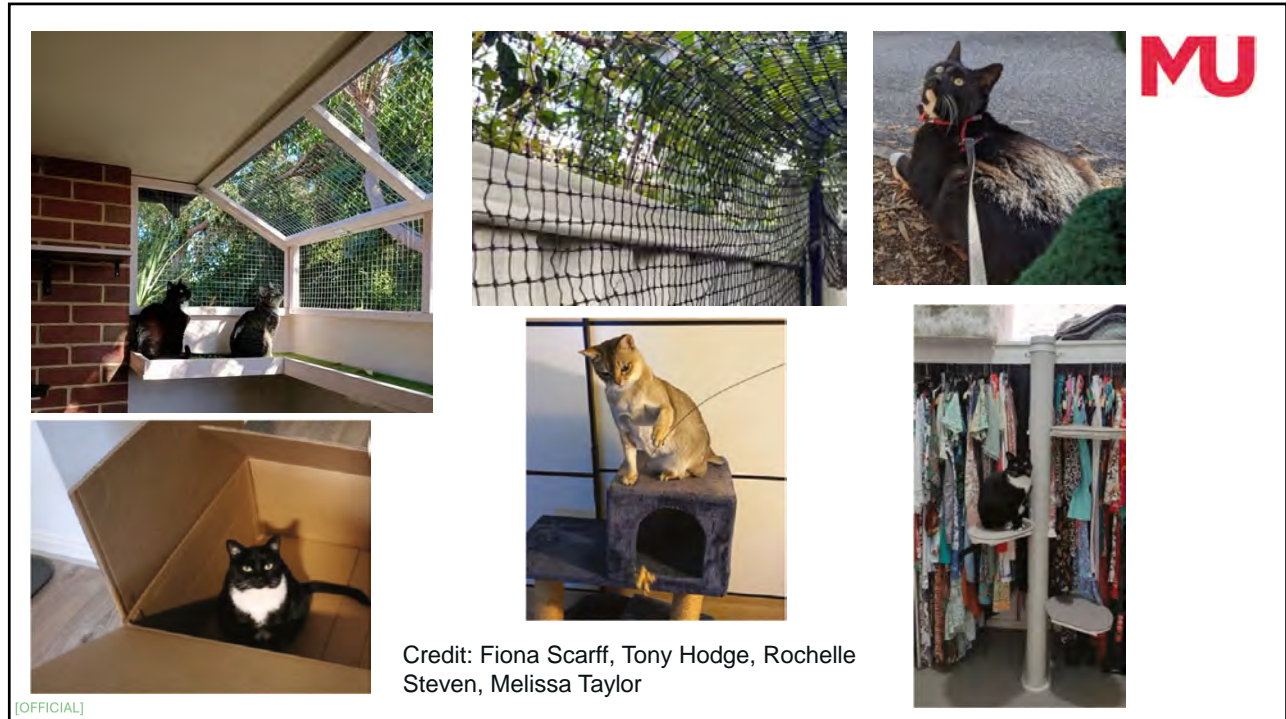
Egenvall et al. (2009) Mortality of life-insured Swedish cats during 1999-2006: age, breed, sex and diagnosis. *Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine* 23, 1175-1183.

Owner survey found
41%-62% have owned cats killed by car accidents

Calver et al. (2013) Assessing the safety of collars used to attach predation deterrent devices and ID tags to pet cats. *Animal Welfare* 22(1), 95-105.

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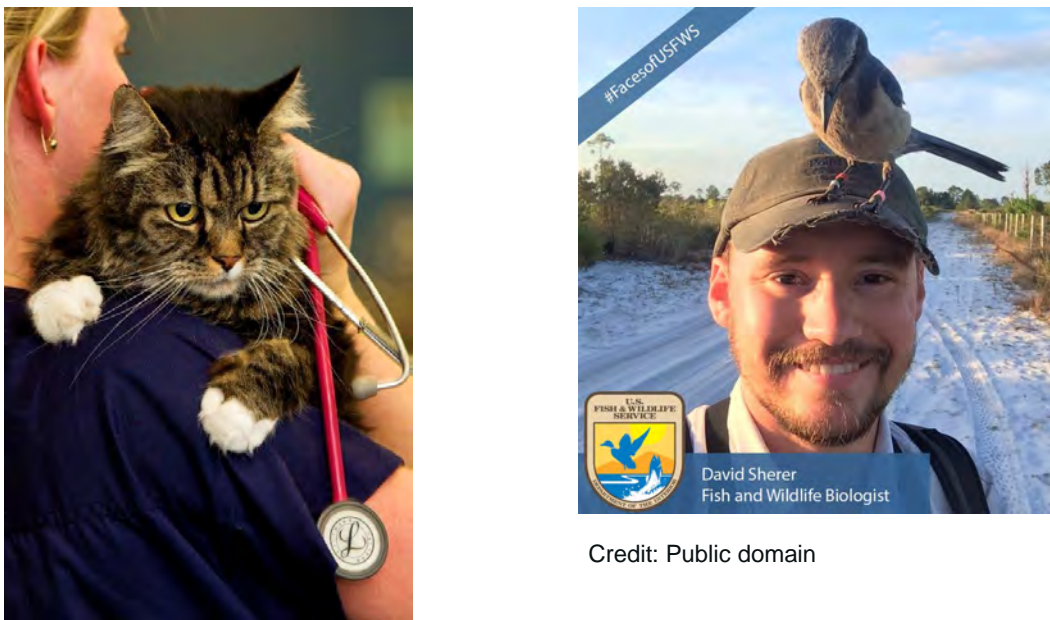
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Animal welfare – human welfare

Euthanasia stresses vets

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Credit: TAHMU

Credit: Public domain

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scientific reports

MU

Check for updates

OPEN Predictors of suicidal ideation in Italian veterinarians

Giorgia Varallo¹, Andrea Zagaria², Valentina Baldini^{1,3}, Alessandro Schianchi⁴, Marta Brcsic⁵, Matteo Panero⁶, Christian Franceschini⁷, Adriano Schimmenti^{8,10} & Alessandro Musetti^{9,10}


Suicide represents a significant problem for healthcare professionals such as veterinarians. Previous studies showed that contextual and individual risk factors can contribute to suicidality among veterinarians. In the present study, self-report measures on exposure to animal euthanasia, substance abuse, reflective functioning, and suicidal ideation were administered to 1556 Italian veterinarians aged 24–74 years old. Structural equation modelling revealed that failures in reflective functioning and substance abuse were associated with suicidal ideation. Prevention programs focusing on improving reflective functioning and decreasing substance abuse might reduce suicide risk among veterinarians.

Scientific Reports | (2024) 14:17504 | <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-68330-w> nature portfolio

Approximately 29% of Italian veterinarians experience suicidal ideation, compared to 3% lifetime prevalence in the wider Italian population.

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Psychiatry Research 357 (2023) 119946

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Psychiatry Research

Journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/psychres

ELSEVIER

Review article

Understanding the roots of suicide in veterinarians to inform prevention: A scoping review

Mateus Eduardo Romão ^{a,*}, Giacomo Belli ^b, Rebeca Gomes de Oliveira ^c, Valentina Sommovigo ^d, Silvia Damiana Visonà ^e, Simone Scoccianti ^f, Ilaria Setti ^g, Makilim Nunes Baptista ^h, Serena Barelllo ^{h,i}

Protective and Risk Factors for Suicide Among Veterinarians

Risk Factors
Occupational stressors (e.g., high workload, client conflict, frequent euthanasia), psychological vulnerabilities (e.g., depression, burnout, substance use), demographic factors (e.g., being female, early-career stage), and easy access to lethal means like euthanasia drugs.

Protective Factors
Social and peer support (e.g., supportive colleagues, open mental health dialogue), job satisfaction (e.g., clinical fulfillment, positive work environment), coping strategies (e.g., emotional flexibility, spiritual beliefs), secure access protocols (e.g., locked storage of euthanasia drugs), and frequent euthanasia exposure (e.g., more than 11 procedures per week, emotional habituation)

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Walking the talk on cat management

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WA Feral Cat Working Group
Protecting WA's Biodiversity

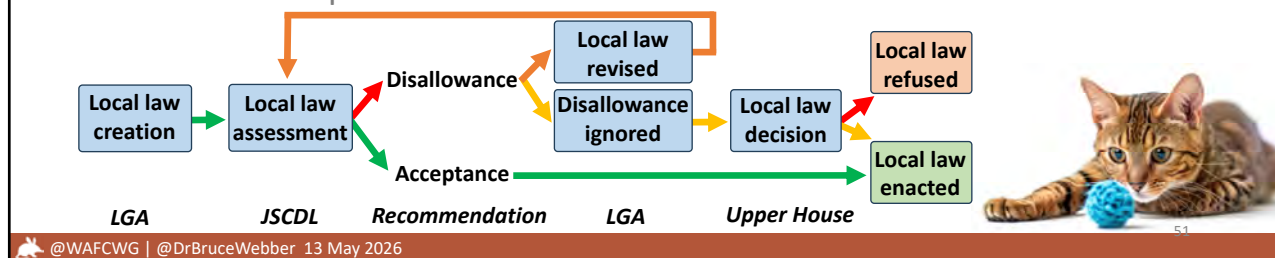
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WA is demanding permanent cat containment

- **2011:** Cat Act 2011, designed to allow local governments to introduce cat local laws that include permanent containment.
- **2014-2025:** Inconsistency and frustration:
 - 28 LGAs have sought to implement permanent containment laws.
 - 8 LGAs have tried twice!
 - 3 have been successful (Northam, Narrogin, Christmas Island).
 - 23 have accepted a disallowance recommendation from the JSCDL.



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Good for Steve, but not for Steve?



Narrogin APPROVED



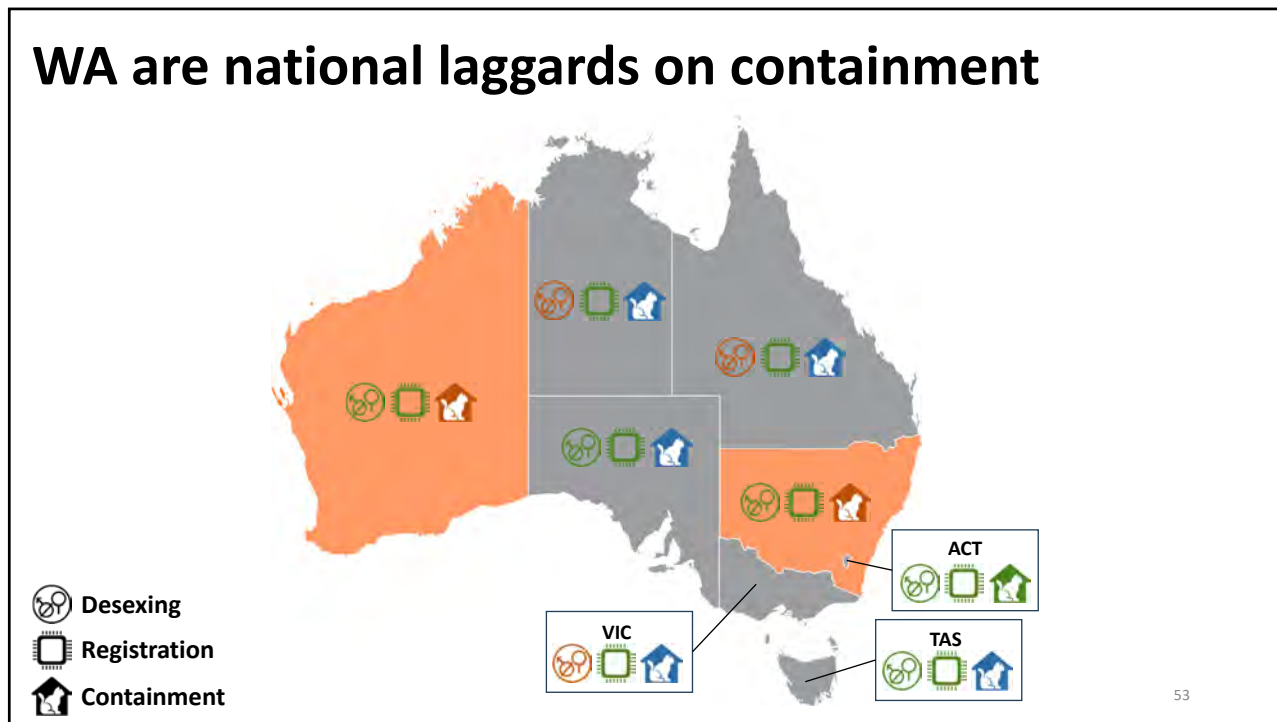
Identical Local Law



Capel REJECTED

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A mandate for change (that we've had since 2019!)

- **2019:** Cat Act review: 73% of people want permanent containment.
- **2024:** WAFCWG survey: 78% of WA LGAs want permanent containment
- **2025:** Local government information session
 - WALGA's biggest ever online workshop!
 - >200 registrations from 72 WA local governments

WALGA
 WAFCWG
 Brisbane City Council
 ACT
 CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO

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17 Sep 2025



The Cook Labor Government is **amending the Cat Act**



Later this year?



13 Feb 2026



Have your say on the domestic cat laws

(REVIEW INTO THE CAT ACT 2011)



>2030, if ever!




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(1) Amending the Cat Act (containment)

- Legislative framework
 - Model cat local law template being developed
 - Local government implementation

BUT, the devil is in the detail!
- Mandatory or opt-in?
 - Why prolong the cruelty?
- Grandfathering clauses
 - Implementation challenges (and prolonging cruelty)?
- Optimising the transition
 - Communication & outreach will be critical
 - Education over punitive incentives initially



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(2) The Cat Act review: going beyond containment

- Best practice pet cat management:
 - 🏠 Preventing roaming (containment)
 - 📡 Microchipping and registration
 - 🚫 Early age desexing
- Local laws versus state (or federal) laws?
- Maximum number of cats per household?
 - How to ensure cat breeders are not impacted?
- How to manage shelter intakes?
- How to manage stray cats?
 - Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) should **NEVER** be a solution in Australia

Due Aug 31st



We will be providing guidance for the review feedback on our website

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In the last week across greater Perth, 1 million animals have been killed by roaming pet cats, and 200 pet cats have been killed while roaming. We cannot let this carnage continue.



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*Average weekly estimates for the Perth-Peel region



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OUR ASK OF YOU

- **Write to the Minister for Local Government (and the media) now, asking:**
 - Why is she not progressing the Cat Act Amendment with haste?
 - If she is comfortable with so much blood on her hands?
- **Submit feedback to the Cat Act review (due Aug 31st)**
 - Focus on all benefits (for cats, wildlife and people)
 - Follow our guidance (available soon)
- **Be a proactive and positive voice for change**
 - Engage with your community and spread the word
 - Be kind!



 @WAF CWG |  @DrBruceWebber 13 May 2026

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QUESTIONS?

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Dr Mike Calver
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FURTHER INFORMATION:



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What about shelter intakes?

- Will there be an influx of abandoned cats?
 - Not according to Bendigo data

