



WAFCWG

WA Feral Cat Working Group

Protecting WA's Biodiversity

Meeting 15 Communiqué

A Working Group to improve native fauna conservation trajectories with a focus on effective and humane management of feral cats.

This communiqué highlights key discussions and considerations from the Working Group's meeting as well as other important information.

Date: Tuesday 15th April 2025

Location: WA Biodiversity Science Institute (WABSI) Trustee Building 132 St Georges Tce

Organisations represented: WAFCWG, Natural Resource Management WA, National Feral Cat Taskforce, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Bush Heritage Australia, and Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), WA Biodiversity Science Institute (WABSI) and Indigenous Desert Alliance.

The April WA Feral Cat Working Group Meeting (#15) received information from our Executive Officer on workshops and presentations delivered. There was an update on our funding status and resignation of the current Executive Officer. There was also an update on the research pillar including the preliminary results of our survey to all WA Local Governments regarding responsible pet cat ownership and cat laws.

There was discussion about the possible alignment of WA policy to the cat definition as outlined in the National Threat Abatement Plan for predation by Feral Cats 2024. This was with the intent to ensure better protection for native species across the State. There were also detailed updates from Working Group members about feral cat initiatives as well as a short review of how to improve and keep the Working Group's website up to date for users.

Summary of Matters for Discussion:

1. The State Feral Cat Management Grant that the WAFCWG has been operating on from May 2024-December 2024 has been fully acquitted through the State NRM Office.
2. It remains a priority to source longer term funding to enable the coordination of information, research and feral cat program activity in WA.
3. WALGA has confirmed interest in working with the WAFCWG to proactively engage on solutions and improve pet cat management, with a specific focus on cat containment. These activities are likely to include advocacy and a workshop to share knowledge on how to best implement cat containment. This interest builds on the overwhelming support that WALGA received at their 2024 AGM for stronger engagement on improving pet cat ownership.
4. There are several local governments that have expressed a commitment to better manage cats in their jurisdictions. Working Group members continue to provide advice and deliver presentations to decision makers and to stakeholders in this area.

Summary of Matters for Noting:

- The WAFCWG is working to secure long-term funding for a coordinator and/or communication position/s.

- The Working Group's interactive website has been made more prominent on our [webpage](#). We ask that any new projects underway on feral cat management as well as related research are added so that this is more visible and to improve coordination and knowledge sharing. Site-locations can be made broad, should there be confidentiality concerns.
- A report outlining the result of our recent survey of WA Local Government Authorities about cat management is being drafted. Preliminary findings indicate a strong interest in increased cat containment.

Highlights of working group activities:

Australian Wildlife Conservancy

AWC is developing an AI species classifier model that has currently trained 102 species and is working well to identify feral cats (see photos below). They are progressing trials of a Fauna SmartGate airlock style AI-operated two door tunnel to enable target species to move through a fence, while not letting cats enter. They have contributed cat samples to the CSIRO Genetic Biobank research project. AWC were featured in the ABC TV series - Eat the Invaders Episode 5 (cats) which was partially filmed at AWC's Yookamurra Sanctuary.



Photos: AWC photos of feral cats correctly identified by an AI species classifier model.

Indigenous Desert Alliance

IDA and Kiwirrkurra Rangers also featured in the ABC TV series - Eat the Invaders Episode 5 (cats) talking about the threat of feral cats to native animals, and the work the rangers are doing to control cats to protect bilbies. Kiwirrkurra Rangers and IDA presented results of their aerial Eradicat baiting work at the IDA conference in November, and at the National Bilby Summit in March. Kiwirrkurra Rangers and IDA are continuing to research the impact of aerial Eradicat baiting on cats, foxes, dingoes and bilbies this year.

IDA is coordinating multiple ranger teams to monitor predator visitation to Great Desert Skink burrows in 3 states, to tailor predator management programs to local situations. A cat control workshop for multiple ranger teams was held at the IDA conference in November 2024, to demonstrate a Celium Trap Alert System. IDA continues to assist with funding and permit applications, and provide training for cat control monitoring and management projects, including cage and leghold trapping at Great Desert Skink sites in NT, use of Felixers around a night parrot site in WA and a Great Desert Skink site in SA, and Eradicat baiting at a bilby site in WA.

Bush Heritage Australia

BHA is currently analysing camera trap data for multiple reserves in WA. Analysis consists of occupancy and activity trends of feral cats in relation to baiting, Felixers and shooting (in certain locations). The analysis aims to continue the evaluation of the integrated pest management across Bush Heritage reserves. They are in the second phase of the Celium Trap Alert System and will have

staff visit the Fitz-Stirling in April for training in this technology and to be trained in the use of soft-jaw leg-hold traps. Eradicat permits for continued work in the Fitz-Stirling are in review for some areas and in other areas ground baiting occurred in February 2025.

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

DBCA and DPIRD have undertaken pre-grant submission meetings for the Feral Cat Management Grants (Round 3). These meetings aim to provide pre-submission advice and guidance to assist applicants. Participants have included a mix of LGAs, NRMs, research entities, and community groups. Nine applications have been received with good coverage across the state.

In terms of Eradicat baiting deployed by DBCA, WA has now been divided into two operational areas for aerial baiting: Northern and Southern. The Northern Hub is operational with a variety of proponents involved, however, 70% of the work will take place on DBCA managed lands.

Natural Resource Management WA

Some WA NRMS have applied to undertake cat management work in certain areas to protect a range of native species under the State Feral Cat Management Grant (Round 3).

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held Tuesday 10 June 2025 at WABSI

Note

This communiqué presents a synthesis of the meeting and should not be taken to represent the position of any individual Feral Cat Working Group member.

Susan Hunt AM PSM

Chair, WAFCWG