



Department of
**Primary Industries and
Regional Development**

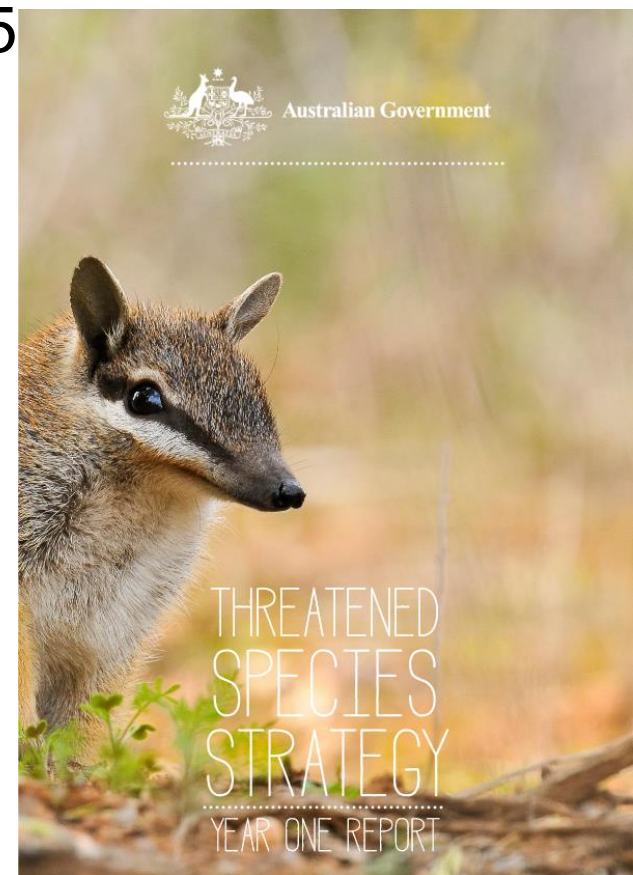
The process to declare feral cats

Andrew Reeves and Win Kirkpatrick



The feral cat in Australia

- Predation by feral cats is listed as a Key Threatening Process in the Australian Government's Threatened Species Strategy 2015
- The strategy identifies feral cats as a major factor in the extinction of at least 27 Australian mammal species
- The feral cat endangers 142 threatened mammals, reptiles, birds and frogs
- At a meeting of Environment Ministers in July 2015 the Ministers endorsed the National declaration of feral cats.



Current declaration status of cats

Western Australia

- The cat (*Felis catus*) is declared a permitted organism under section 11 of the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (BAM Act).
- The BAM Act and Regulations allow for organisms to be declared as pest in all, or part, of the State and categorised into different control categories if they have, or may have, and adverse effect on native organisms, the well-being of people, the natural environment and/or the productivity of the States agriculture, forest, fishing or pearling industries.

Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act
2007

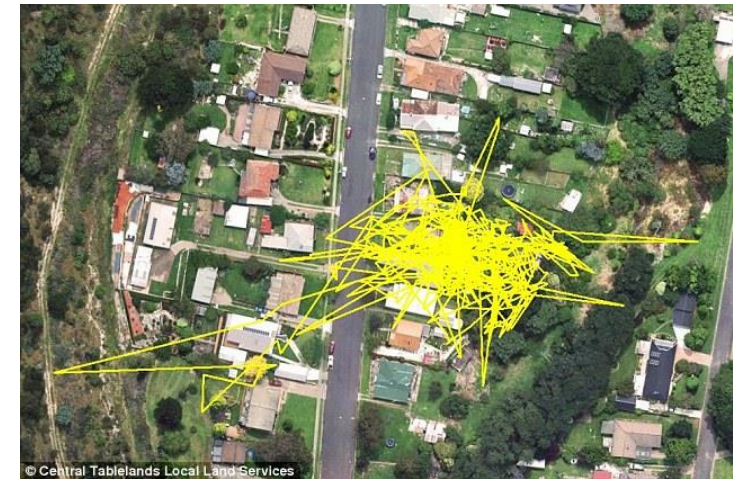
The Cat Act 2011

- The *Cat Act (2011)* currently applies to pet cats to enforce responsible cat ownership.
- This legislation is generally enforced by local governments.
- The Cat Act targets responsible cat ownership through mandatory cat sterilisation, use of cat curfews under the discretion of local councils, and penalties for dumping unwanted animals.
- Local governments may administer their own policies or local laws on cat ownership, enforce the legislation and its regulations.
- The Cat Act requires cats over 6 months of age to be sterilised, micro-chipped and to wear an identification tag. Registered cat breeders can obtain exemptions from mandatory sterilisation.
- A declaration of feral cats under the BAM Act will not affect these requirements already in place under the Cat Act.



Domestic cats, roaming cats, feral cats

- Feral cats are those that live and reproduce in the wild (e.g. forests, woodlands, grasslands, deserts) and survive by hunting or scavenging; none of their needs are satisfied intentionally by humans.
- Stray cats are those found in and around cities, towns and rural properties; they may depend on some resources provided by humans but are not owned.
- Domestic cats are those owned by an individual, a household, a business or corporation; most or all of their needs are supplied by their owners.



The declaration process

- In July 2017 staff from DBCA contacted DPIRD to discuss the declaration of feral cats.
- Win Kirkpatrick from DPIRD developed a technical assessment for declaration of the feral cat as a declared pest under section 22(2) of the BAM Act.
- A stakeholder list was prepared with input from DBCA and internal consultation with DBCA was completed in August 2017.

Stakeholder consultation

- External consultation was carried out with 43 key stakeholders including Recognised Biosecurity Groups, Natural Resource management groups, private conservation agencies, producer groups, cat havens and animal welfare groups.
- In all, 30 responses were received from stakeholders on the proposal.



Technical assessment

- For a pest to be declared as a section 22(2) declared pest it must meet five criteria.
 - Identifiable
 - Presence in WA
 - Potential for adverse effects
 - Potential for establishment or spread or increase in numbers
 - Subject to current or planned regulatory activity



Sources: National Land & Water Resources Audit (2008) Assessing invasive animals in Australia 2008, NLWRA, Canberra, SEWPaC, (2010) Feral animals on offshore islands database located at <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/ferals/islands/>

Summary of the Technical assessment

- When assessed against the five criteria (section 11, 12 or 22), the feral cat has low agricultural impact, high environmental impacts and potential to increase in abundance when not controlled.
- The feral cat does not meet the criteria for declaration as a section 12 Prohibited organism

Criterion 1	Meets the criteria – identity confirmed
Criterion 2	Meets the criteria – present in WA
Criterion 3	Meets the criteria – as an environmental pest
Criterion 4	Meets the criteria – potential for increase in abundance
Criterion 5	Meets the criteria for Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
Recommended declaration	Declared Pest Section 22(2)
Recommended area	Whole of State and off-shore islands

Determination of control category

- **Control Category: Exclusion C1**
 - Not known to be present in WA – The feral cat occurs throughout WA
- **Control Category: Eradication C2**
 - Eradication is not achievable with current techniques
- **Control Category: Management C3**
 - Present in WA and widespread throughout the state

Determination of control and keeping categories

Exclusion C1	Not achievable, occurs throughout WA
Eradication C2	Eradication is not achievable with current available techniques
Management C3	Meets the criteria – present in WA Management not undertaken by DPIRD
NCC - No control category assigned	Meets the criteria – as an environmental pest
Prohibited Keeping	Not applicable
Restricted Keeping	Not applicable

Determination of keeping categories

- Prohibited keeping:
 - Can only be kept under a permit for public display and education purposes, and/or genuine scientific research, by entities approved by the State authority.
 - Not applicable
- Restricted keeping:
 - Restricted to keeping under the authority of a permit
 - Not applicable
- Exempt keeping
 - No permit required
 - Applicable – domestic pet cats



Outcome of the Technical assessment and consultation

Summary	
Current declaration	Not declared
Recommended declaration	Declared pest under section 22(2)
Recommended area declared	Whole of State including off-shore islands
Recommended management category	NCC – No control category
Recommended keeping category	Exempt

Outcome of the declaration

Will DPIRD require feral cats to be controlled?

- DPIRD will not require landholders to manage or control feral cats on their property.
- A public or private landholder may manage feral cats on their property if they wish, but it must be done in accordance with the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Regulations and animal welfare legislation.



Will declaring feral cats as pests lead to inhumane acts on cats?

- No. Currently the management of cats, for any reason, must be carried out in accordance with Commonwealth and State animal welfare recommendations. This will not change if feral cats become a declared a pest under the BAM Act.
- A pest declaration under the BAM Act may provide a defence under section 24 of the Animal Welfare Act 2002 to a charge of cruelty, if the offence was committed while the person was attempting to kill the pest in a manner that is generally accepted as usual and reasonable for killing the particular pest.



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Questions?

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