



# Intensive Adoption as a Management Strategy for Unowned Urban Cats

**Michael Calver, Heather Crawford, Fiona Scarff, Stuart Bradley, Peter Dormon, Samantha Boston, Trish Fleming**

We acknowledge the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation as the traditional custodians of this country and its waters and that Murdoch University stands on Noongar country.

# 1. What's in a name?

## Helpful names

- Feral cats
- Stray cats
- Companion cat (NZ)
- Outdoor pet cats
- Housebound pet cats

## Unhelpful names

- Community cat

There is rarely such a thing as a 'community cat'

- Semi-owned cat

Who takes responsibility?

- Domestic cat

Common name for the species  
(i.e. includes ALL cats)

## 2. Why manage unowned cats?

- **For their welfare**

risks such as road accident trauma, fighting, disease, attack by predators, and human persecution are substantial



Credit: Claire Sharp, Murdoch University

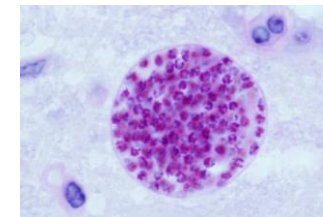
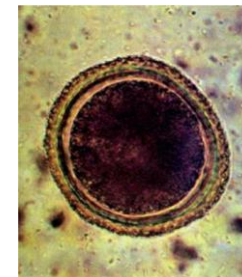
- **To protect wildlife from predation and disease spread**



Credit: Jiri Lochman, Lochman Transparencies

- **To reduce public health risks**

because of the numerous zoonotic pathogens transmitted by cats



Credit: Wikimedia Commons

### 3. Management options

a. Trap and remove (i.e. cull)

Example: Read et al. (2020)

b. Trap, neuter, return (TNR). Stray cats are trapped, desexed, vaccinated and returned (some adopted)

Examples: Debated by Crawford et al. (2019), Wolf et al. (2019), Calver et al. (2020)

c. Trap, assess, resolve (TAR). Stray cats are trapped, desexed, vaccinated and adopted

Example: Used by 'Lonely Miaow' in Auckland, New Zealand

<https://www.lonelymiaow.co.nz/about>

## Welcome to Lonely Miaow

Founded in 1990, the Lonely Miaow Association is an incorporated, non-profit organisation dedicated to the rescue and care of stray and abandoned cats and kittens in the greater Auckland area. Every day, we receive calls and emails about homeless cats and kittens from the public – they are often injured, starving or neglected. We have a list of hundreds of cats and colonies from most parts of Auckland, as far out as Albany, Clevedon, Papakura and Kumeu. We know this is just the tip of the iceberg. We utilise a Trap, Assess, Resolve (TAR) policy.

**Our Goal:** *"No More Strays"*



**Educate**



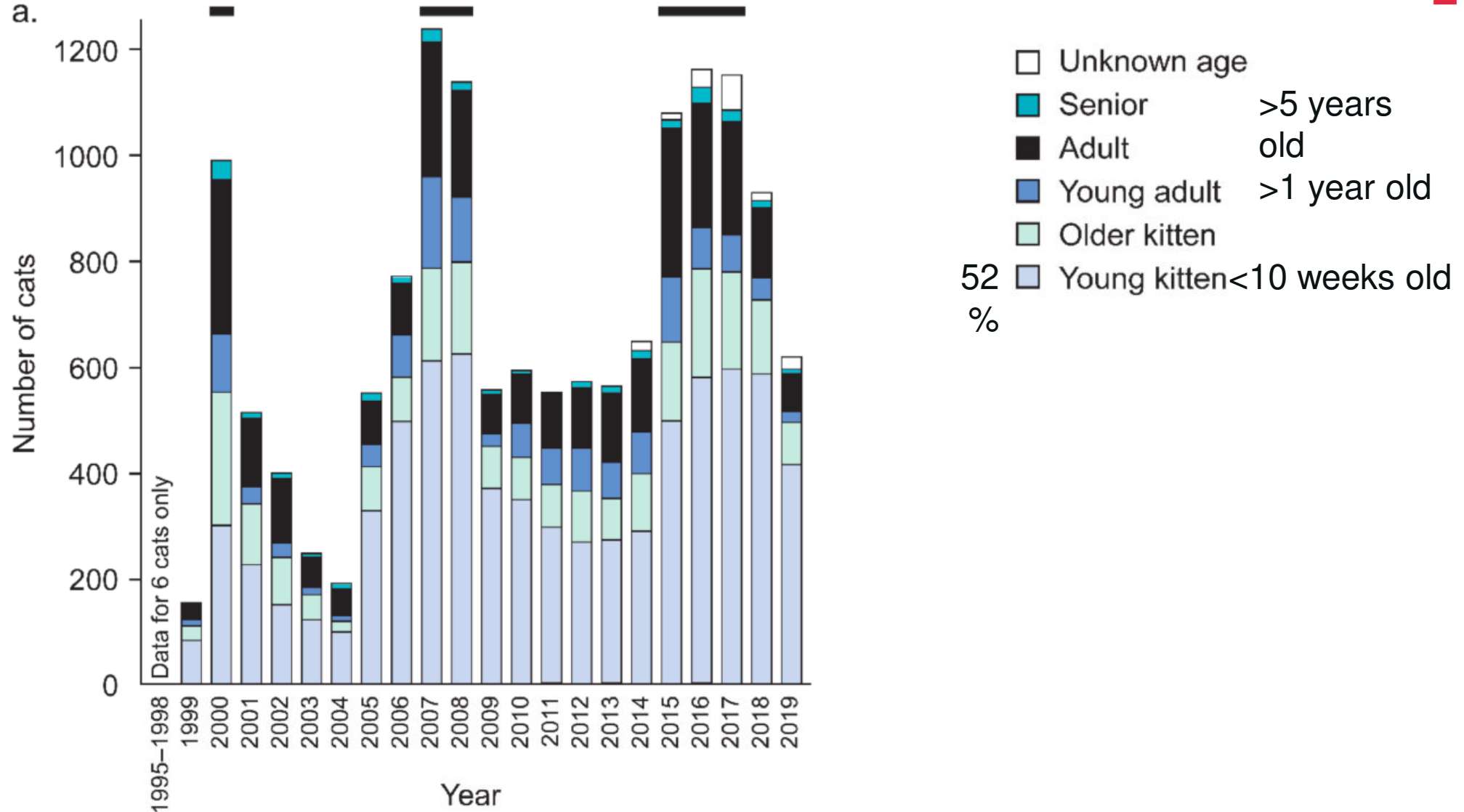
**Rehome**



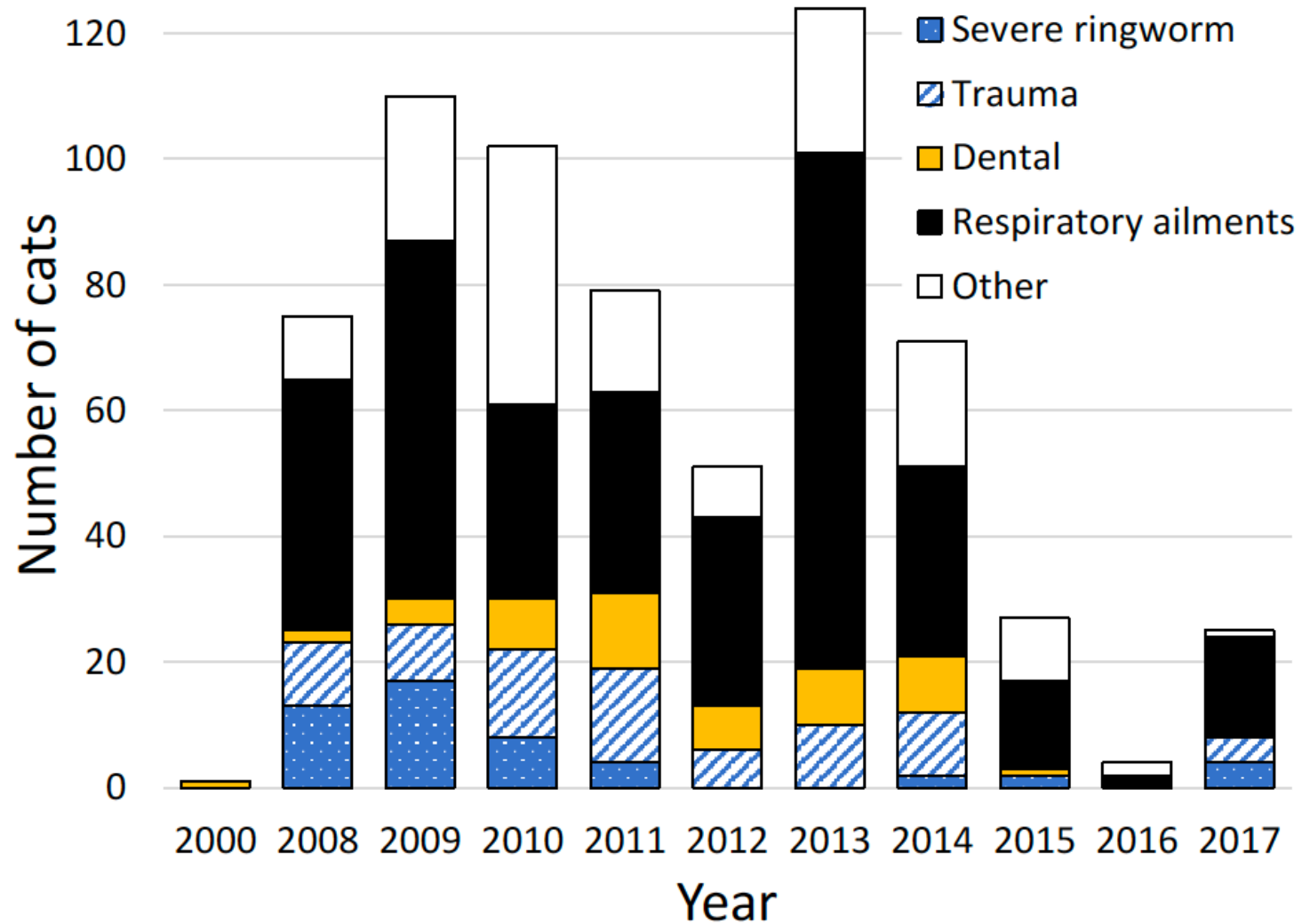
**Assist**



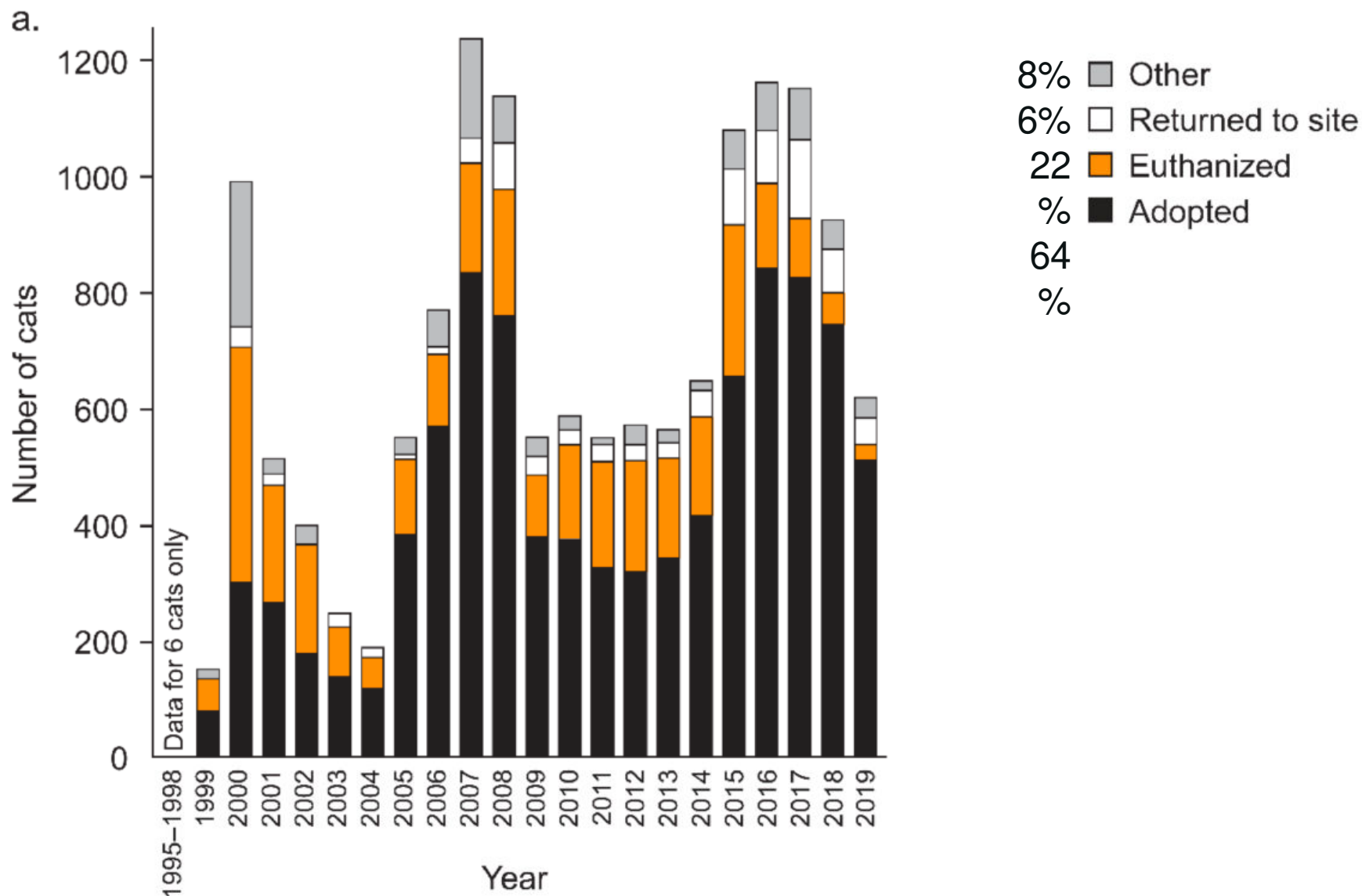
Only 20% of cats were older than 1 year, and <2% were older than 5 years of age



# 22% of trapped cats required veterinary treatment on capture



# Two thirds (but up to 80% in some years) of trapped cats were adopted





# 4. Management options

It isn't just a choice between culling or putting them back



Option	Welfare	Wildlife	Public Health
Trap and remove	Human euthanasia prevents a distressing death on the streets	Fully protected	Fully protected

# 4. Management options

It isn't just a choice between culling or putting them back



Option	Welfare	Wildlife	Public Health
Trap and remove	Human euthanasia prevents a distressing death on the streets	Fully protected	Fully protected
Trap, neuter, return	Fighting reduced, vaccination and worming improve welfare. Some are adopted; most still at risk	No protection, desexed cats still hunt and may spread disease to wildlife	Limited, desexed cats may still transmit zoonoses

# 4. Management options

It isn't just a choice between culling or putting them back



Option	Welfare	Wildlife	Public Health
Trap and remove	Human euthanasia prevents a distressing death on the streets	Fully protected	Fully protected
Trap, neuter, return	Fighting reduced, vaccination and worming improve welfare. Some are adopted; most still at risk	No protection, desexed cats still hunt and may spread disease to wildlife	Limited, desexed cats may still transmit zoonoses
Trap, assess, resolve	Most cats adopted into private homes, where their welfare is a high priority	Fully protected if the cat is contained, some risk otherwise	Risks low if the cat is contained, but disease can still be spread if the cat roams freely



# Thank you

**Michael Calver, Emeritus Professor in Animal Ecology**

**[m.calver@Murdoch.edu.au](mailto:m.calver@Murdoch.edu.au)**