



WAFCWG

WA Feral Cat Working Group

Protecting WA's Biodiversity

Meeting 10 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 (WG) meeting as well as other important information.

Date: 5th December 2023

Location: Online

Organisations represented: WAFCWG, Natural Resource Management WA (and PHCC), CSIRO, Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC), Bush Heritage Australia (BHA), Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA), Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), and Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).

The WA Feral Cat Working Group Meeting (#10) received information on Executive Officer activities and new educational videos, updates under the State Feral Cat Strategy, and an outline and plan of our successful state Feral Cat Management Grant (Round 1).

Summary of Matters for Decision:

Action: Ten (10) new educational videos will soon be published on our [webpage](#) and [YouTube channel](#). The videos will cover a range of topics coming out of our February 2023 Feral Cat Symposium from funding provided by Lotterywest and include:

- The WA Feral Cat Working Group
- Success stories of feral cat management in WA
- Caring for Country - Indigenous Ranger management of feral cats in WA
- Combined management of feral cats
- The benefits of pet cat containment

Action: Working Group will progress the grant process and enter Stage 2 Feral Cat Management Grant application for continued funding of the Working Group by the 20th January 2024 deadline.

Action: Working Group will submit a comprehensive community consultation report to the national draft Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by Feral Cats 2023 (TAP). The document and background/supporting documents can be accessed here: [Draft updated threat abatement plan for predation by feral cats. - Climate \(dceew.gov.au\)](#).

Action: Biosecurity Council will formally move to an *ex officio* role to the Working Group following a meeting held with the WG executive and Biosecurity Council Chair. The decision to maintain a strong partnership between the Council and Working Group was confirmed.

Summary of Matter for Discussion:

1. DBCA gave update on staffing, infrastructure upgrades, and increases in feral cat baiting program within Western Shield through funding from the state Feral Cat Strategy.
2. Members to identify aspects / projects for inclusion in future funding applications. Executive to meet in February/March 2024 to initially discuss, then bring ideas to the Working Group at the next meeting.
3. The WG have drafted an advocacy document for supporting permanent pet cat containment and for supporting binary cat definitions. This will require feedback from members and discussion on how member organisations will use the document/s within their organisation. This document is to be further condensed and potentially have graphic design input for circulation and potential co-badging opportunities. This may require additional funding to achieve.
4. The WG discussed ways to involve members of the advisory panel more effectively to assist in our actions. The executive will meet to discuss how best to utilise advisory body to the Working Group.

Summary of Matters for Noting:

- Scheduling is underway to seek a meeting with the WA Local Government Minister, Hon. Minister Beazley MLA to discuss the benefits of permanent pet cat containment and encourage changes to the Cat Act 2011 that would allow local government associations to be able to implement local laws that mandate cat containment.

Highlights of Working Group Activities:

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

- A new Feral Cat Strategy Coordinator has been appointed to the new role, Helen Zillman and will update the WG on developments under the strategy in future meetings.
- Limited availability of Felixer units and are therefore limited for projects currently.
- Eradecat® baiting in WA could be allowed under strict permitting approvals for conservation landscape-scale management if landholders work in collaboration with reputable organisations such as NRMs or Registered Biosecurity Groups.

Australian Wildlife Conservancy

- The efficacy of Eradecat® baiting research is ongoing at Mt Gibson and 4 years of data are currently being analysed.
- Continuing a Felixer deployment at Mt Gibson and Paruna Sanctuaries (15 feral cats have been fired at to date). Concurrently, research on mallee fowls and woylies using camera arrays are being undertaken at these sanctuaries.
- Data is being analysed for a 2-year feral cat shooting program at Yampi Sounds.
- Provided comment on TAP as AWC and via Kimberley Island Safe Havens Working Group.
- Discussing future opportunities for research students with various collaborators.
- Included data on cat activity at Mt Gibson and Paruna Ecohealth Reports, available here: <https://www.australianwildlife.org/ecohealth-reports/>

Bush Heritage Australia

- BHA will submit a response to the TAP.
- A new PhD student in the Fitz-Stirling landscape with Prof Trish Fleming, Dr Michelle Hall, Dr Sarah Comer, looking at faunal assemblages, occupancy, ecology and habitat connectivity areas. The research will include studying the movements of feral cat and foxes.
- Tenaya Duncan PhD student has commenced writing up her thesis.
- An intern has started analysing camera trap images of feral cats at Eurardy.

Indigenous Desert Alliance

- Continuing to support Kiwirrkurra Rangers with their Eradicat® baiting trials, monitoring the impacts of baiting on both predators and bilby populations over 3 years. Started with ground baiting in 2023 but have applied for a WA Feral Cat Management Grant to proceed to aerial baiting over the next two years.
- Supporting Ngururrpa Rangers to trial effectiveness of Felixers at Night Parrot roosting sites, monitoring impacts on both predators and night parrots.
- Supported Kiwirrkurra Rangers to present to National Feral Cat Taskforce in first round of the new “Cats on Country” standing item in October.
- Co-presented with 2 NT Ranger teams at a Cat Management Workshop at the Territory NRM conference in Darwin in November.
- Contracted by DCCEEW to produce a new Predator Management Strategy for Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park. In November we held a week-long predator management workshop with predator experts including 6 Ranger teams from 3 states to share knowledge about predator control methods to help shape the Uluru strategy. Training focused on leg hold trapping and setting up Felixers. Two cats were trapped in the caves of Uluru.

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

- Field work undertaken with DBCA on Felixers.
- Assisted DBCA in workshops (one internal and upcoming external stakeholders), utilising Dr Peter Adams (DPIRD) to provide update on policy relating to feral cats.

CSIRO

- CSIRO will submit a response to TAP.

Next Meeting

The next WAFCWG meeting (#11) will be held 19th March 2024 in person at CSIRO Floreat.

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