



WAFCWG

WA Feral Cat Working Group

Protecting WA's Biodiversity

Meeting 9 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: 9th August 2023

Location: WABSI – WA Trustees Building, Level 2, 133 St Georges Terrace Perth and online

Organisations represented: WAFCWG, Natural Resource Management WA (and PHCC), National Feral Cat Taskforce, CSIRO, Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC), Bush Heritage Australia (BHA), The WA Biodiversity Science Institute (WABSI), Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).

The WA Feral Cat Working Group Meeting (#9) received information on Executive Officer activities and the WG had a workshop session to unpack the idea of a WAFCWG demonstration site. We heard from RSPCA around feral cat baiting concerns.

Summary of Matters for Decision:

There have been some changes to personnel of the WG including a new DBCA representative Tony Mennen, who is the new Manager, Ecosystem Health Branch. We have also extended the invitation to the previous WG EO, Dr Judy Dunlop to join the advisory panel.

Action: The Executive will meet with Chair, Justin Bellenger of the Biosecurity Council to discuss withdrawal from the WG prior to amending the Terms of Reference.

Decision: WG in agreement of minor updates to the Terms of Reference document.

Action: With some underspent funds from Lotterywest following the Feral Cat Symposium, the WG applied for a variation to use the funds and undertake:

1. Detailed Symposium Feedback analysis of delegate survey (which has been completed)
2. Development of additional 10 informative videos for further social outreach.

The WG discussed the problems for managing both pet and feral cats with stray cats defined by the policy statement document; Feral cat declared pest – minimise risk to domestic cats, that supports the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007. We discussed the problems for managing stray cats as they fall outside legislation. This category also makes managing pet and feral cats challenging. The WG discussed the importance of developing a binary cat definition position. The issue will be taken to the October 2023 National Feral Cat Task Force meeting.

Action: Prepare a position statement which defines the two categories the WAFCWG will use for advocacy.

Summary of Matter for Discussion:

1. Messages from the delegate survey report will be rolled out via social media and will be included in a poster presentation at the upcoming Biodiversity Conference.
2. Develop an advocacy plan that identifies the key steps required to achieve changes to removing the ambiguity of the “stray cat” category
3. Discussion for the development of a future WAFCWG “demonstration site” was had and included reasons, potential locations, site focus and funding options.
4. To open communication between Government departments and other organisations including RSPCA and the Working Group in the development of the revised/updated Code of Practice for use of 1080, PAPP and Strychnine.

Summary of Matters for Noting:

- The WG revised the suggested edits and agreed on our Strategic Planning Document objectives and directions that was produced from a special June 2023 strategic planning day meeting.
- Concerns were heard from RSPCA around the use of 1080 baiting and an increase in public perception and concerns with media attention resulting from the State Feral Cat Strategy release in June 2023. The WG heard about current pen-trials and future trials using PAPP in Felixer devices. Discussion around the advantages and disadvantages of PAPP in relation to the cost, humanness matrix and toxicity to other animal species compared to 1080.
- There is a new Code of Practice for the safe use and management of registered pesticides being developed by government agencies.

Highlights of Working Group Activities:

Indigenous Desert Alliance

- Have worked with the Kiwirrkurra Rangers to conduct their first toxic Eradicat® Baiting next week, after a successful non-toxic bait uptake trial in June 2023.
- Assisted 4 Indigenous Rangers and 2 coordinators to undertake the online 1080 training and have gained relevant permits. Additionally, a monitoring program has commenced using cameras to monitor predators and DNA scat analysis to monitor bilby populations over the next few years, in both the 400sqkm baited area, and another unbaited area.
- Worked with the community to adapt the 1080 Warning Signs to include information in language and with some pictures.
- IDA have supported the Ngurrpa Rangers through the process of getting approval to use Felixers around a Night Parrot population. Non-toxic photo trial has been done, and monitoring has been set up. Two Rangers have been supported to complete the Felixer online training, and they are nearly ready to submit the 1080 permit application.

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

- Recruitment for two new positions under State Government Funding Feral Cat Strategy; Research scientist position and Operator position.
- Aerial baiting to start next week (south-coast).

Natural Resource Management WA / PHCC

- PHCC and DBCA and EO of WG met to discuss cat-definition problems when managing cats on private property around DBCA managed land.

Australian Wildlife Conservancy

- AWC are midway through a Felixer trial, with five Felixers deployed (3 at Mt Gibson and 2 Paruna). Photo-only trial period went well with several cat detections, of which about 50% were identified as targets. The units have been deployed in toxic mode for about 6 weeks now.
- Regular targeted cat trapping and Eradicat® baiting program is implemented over ~70,000ha.
- Chuditch reintroduced to Mt Gibson appear to be settling in well. Females have pouch young and some individuals have established relatively consistent home ranges. There is also further evidence of woylies re-establishing outside the fenced sanctuary.
- Future feral cat shooting trials are planned for northwest region, following the data presented at the Feral Cat Symposium in February 2023 ([Presentation can be viewed here](#)).

Next Meeting

The next WAFCWG meeting (#10) will be held 5th December 2023 online.

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