

Tasmanian Cat Management Plan

2017-2022



FOREWORD

Cats are an important part of our lives as companion animals that are very much part of families. However, cats also play a complex role in the Tasmanian community from loved family pets, to potential nuisances and at worst, invasive animals impacting on our native wildlife and spreading disease. Problems arise when pet owners fail to understand their responsibilities.

To address the complexity of issues surrounding cat management, the Tasmanian Government is taking a new, all-encompassing approach. The Tasmanian Cat Management Plan represents the first comprehensive and collaborative approach to managing cats in Tasmania. The Plan recognises that cat management is a shared responsibility across all levels of government, business and the community and includes actions under seven objectives that are summarised below:

- Improve our knowledge of feral cats to better inform management, recognizing that state-wide eradication of feral cats is not feasible;
- Encourage responsible ownership;
- Minimise impacts of cats in areas of important conservation value and agricultural land;
- Increase community awareness;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities between State and Local government and the broader community; and
- Amend existing legislation to create a more workable regulatory framework.

The Tasmanian Cat Management Reference Group consisting of stakeholders with a direct interest in cat management have overseen development of the Plan. The Plan also reflects feedback from submissions made during the public consultation period in 2016. Without contributions from the Tasmanian community and everyone involved in the Reference Group, this Plan would not be as comprehensive. For that reason, I wish to thank everyone who have been involved in its development.

I look forward to real progress being made in cat management in Tasmania and encourage all Tasmanians to support the initiatives contained within this Plan.

Jeremy Rockliff MP

MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND WATER

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. OVERVIEW and SCOPE	2
3. ACHIEVING BETTER CAT MANAGEMENT in TASMANIA	3
3.1 Creating an Effective Legislative Framework for Managing Cats	3
3.2 Roles and Responsibilities	3
3.3 Managing Environmental Impacts of Cats	3
3.4 Managing the Impacts of Cats on Agriculture	4
3.5 Reducing the Adverse Impacts of Cats on Human Health	4
3.6 Recommendations for Future Regulatory Change	4
3.7 Guidelines for More Effective Decision-Making	5
4. OBJECTIVES and ACTIONS	5
4.1 Objective 1: Tasmanian pet cat owners manage their cats responsibly .	6
4.2 Objective 2: Increased community awareness, participation and commitment in cat management	7
4.3 Objective 3: Best practice techniques are used to guide the planning, management and control of stray and feral cats	9
4.4 Objective 4: Improved knowledge about feral, stray and domestic cats to better inform management	11
4.5 Objective 5: Minimise impacts of cats in areas with important conservation values and agricultural assets.	12
4.6 Objective 6: Undertake legislative change to create an effective framework for managing cats and support other objectives	13
4.7 Objective 7: The roles and responsibilities related to cat management are clearly defined and understood by the Tasmanian community	16
5. Glossary	18
References.....	19

Published by: the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
June 2017

Recommended Citation:

Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (2017). *Tasmanian Cat Management Plan*, Tasmanian Government.

To enquire about this plan, please contact the Invasive Species Branch, Biosecurity Tasmania: catmanagementplan@dpiwve.tas.gov.au.

This plan and supporting documents are available on the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment website: <http://dpiwve.tas.gov.au/invasive-species/cat-management-in-tasmania>.

Disclaimer: To the extent permitted by law, the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (including its employees and consultants) excludes all liability to any person for any consequences, including but not limited to all losses, damages, costs, expenses and any other compensation, arising directly or indirectly from using information or material (in part or in whole) contained in this publication.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Tasmanian Cat Management Plan* has been developed with the Tasmanian Cat Management Reference Group. In May 2015, the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Jeremy Rockliff invited a number of organisations with a direct interest in the management of cats in Tasmania to be represented on a Reference Group, with the primary task of developing this Plan. Those organisations include:

Ten Lives Cat Centre (formerly the Hobart Cat Centre)

The RSPCA

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association

The Tasmanian Conservation Trust

The Australian Vets Association

The Cat Association of Tasmania

Landcare Tasmania

Local Government Association of Tasmania

Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Regional bodies (represented by NRM South)

University of Tasmania

In addition to the Reference Group members, a number of individuals with expertise in particular areas were also invited to participate in working groups to look at the issues related to socialised cats and feral cats – contributions from Nick Mooney, Eric Woehler (Birds Tasmania), John Toohey (Clarence City Council), Kaylene Allan (Kingborough Council), Bruce Jackson (DPIPWE), Sue Robinson (DPIPWE) and Danielle Madden-Hallett are greatly appreciated. Thanks also to Jack Davies who wrote much of the information on cat-borne diseases as part of a study placement to DPIPWE from the Charles Sturt University. The Plan includes significant writing contributions from Tom Jackson, Eric Schwarz, Jack Davies, Craig Elliott, Michael Askey-Doran, Samantha Schaap and Elise Dewar.

Thanks is also extended to all those who provided feedback on the Draft Plan. The feedback was very constructive and where possible, incorporated into this final Plan.

I. INTRODUCTION

This *Tasmanian Cat Management Plan* (the ‘Plan’) describes how the management of cats in Tasmania should occur. It has been prepared with consultation and input from a range of stakeholders, including recommendations provided to the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) from the Tasmanian Cat Management Reference Group, and addresses the management of feral (wild), domestic and stray cats. A draft of this Plan was also publically advertised and received 102 public submissions. Those submissions have contributed to this completed Plan.

Supporting this Plan is a separate document, the *Tasmanian Cat Management Plan - Background Paper*, which provides important additional information on all of the issues covered in the Plan and in particular, additional detail relating to the recommendations proposed in the Plan. The *Background Paper* is a living document that will be edited from time to time as necessary and can be found on the *Tasmanian Cat Management Plan* webpage (DPIPWE, 2016).

This Plan and the *Background Paper* have been prepared to be consistent with the Australian Government’s *Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by Feral Cats* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015), which establishes a national framework to guide and coordinate Australia’s response to the impacts of feral cats on biodiversity.

The Plan recognises that cats are an integral part of Tasmanian society but the role they play is a complex one. This one species can be many things to different people, including much-loved pets; useful animals that control vermin; nuisance animals that annoy neighbours, and invasive animals that spread disease and impact on native wildlife and agriculture. The polarised view of cats in the community makes cat management a difficult and often emotive issue.

The Plan also recognises that the management of cats is a shared responsibility and that the community plays a key role in the management and control of stray and feral cats. Without community support and participation, the stray and feral cat problem will remain a significant one. The Plan recognises that Tasmania has a self-sustaining feral cat population and therefore eradication of feral cats state-wide is not feasible with current resources and techniques. Whilst removing the feral cat threat is an important objective, so too is putting in place other measures that protect the values and assets that feral cats threaten. Proposed legislative amendments will provide an improved framework to support the roles and responsibilities of State and Local government in cat management.

Furthermore, the Plan aims to build on the scientific knowledge about cat impacts to develop and improve management initiatives. Existing research about cats in Tasmania cannot be applied to all ecosystems and environments, thus gaps exist in our knowledge of the role and impacts of cats across different landscapes, particularly stray and feral cats. This limits the effectiveness of attempts to manage many cat-related issues. Addressing these knowledge gaps in the landscape is a key element of this Plan, because understanding how cats interact and relate to wildlife and agriculture is integral to designing effective programs to manage cats and protect vulnerable species and agriculture.

2. OVERVIEW and SCOPE

The Plan sets out a range of actions that aim to increase the levels of responsible ownership, clarify roles and responsibilities, improve our knowledge and understanding of various aspects of cats, and improve the effectiveness of legislation. Actions that will contribute to achieving improved management of cats in the areas of the environment, agriculture and human health are described. For further detail regarding any of the issues discussed in this Plan refer to the *Background Paper*.

The Plan is built around seven objectives, although a number of the issues identified cross multiple objectives. The objectives are summarised below, and discussed in detail in Section 4.

Objective 1: Tasmanian pet cat owners manage their cats responsibly

Objective 2: Increased community awareness, participation and commitment in cat management

Objective 3: Best practice techniques are used to guide the planning, management and control of stray and feral cats

Objective 4: Improved knowledge about feral, stray and domestic cats to better inform management

Objective 5: Minimise impacts of cats in areas with important conservation values and agricultural assets

Objective 6: Undertake legislative change to create an effective framework for managing cats and support other objectives

Objective 7: The roles and responsibilities related to cat management are clearly defined and understood by the Tasmanian community

Categories of cats

It is important for public debate that it is recognised that all cats in Tasmania are the same species (*Felis catus*) and the categorisation of domestic, stray and feral are labels of convenience. The categories and definitions used in the Plan are:

- Feral cats are those that live and reproduce in the wild, largely or entirely removed from humans, 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 have no identifiable owner.
- Domestic cats are those which are identifiable as owned; most of their needs are supplied by their owners. They may roam beyond their owner's property, including into bush and park land, but they spend most of their time with a specific person/family/property.

3. ACHIEVING BETTER CAT MANAGEMENT in TASMANIA

3.1 Creating an Effective Legislative Framework for Managing Cats

Managing cats through a single, specific piece of legislation such as the *Cat Management Act 2009* increases regulatory complexity and confuses roles and responsibilities. It is proposed that the regulatory management of cats in Tasmania occurs through a legislative framework that includes both the *Cat Management Act 2009* and the proposed Biosecurity Act. Domestic cats and stray cats in urban and peri-urban environments will continue to be dealt with under the *Cat Management Act*. Feral cats will be dealt with through the proposed Biosecurity Act as pests or a biosecurity risk and managed to reduce the biosecurity impact they create.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Cat management is a shared responsibility of Local and State Government, industry and the broader community. Vital to improving responsible cat ownership in Tasmania and implementing an effective legislative framework, will be ensuring there is a clear understanding and agreement about the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in relation to cat management, in particular that of State and Local Government.

State Government will have responsibility for the roll out of the Plan and will administer legislation associated with cat management in which stakeholder responsibilities are clearly defined. Local government will have responsibility for enforcement of the relevant legislative instruments in their municipalities to the degree they consider necessary or relevant and can resource.

3.3 Managing Environmental Impacts of Cats

All cats, domestic, stray and feral, can have some level of environmental impact. Whilst some in the community regard cats (particularly feral cats) negatively due to environmental concerns, others have a positive perception of cats due to their role as a companion animal and predator of other invasive species. In developing management responses for cats it is essential to acknowledge the diversity of views of the community towards this animal.

Tasmania has a self-sustaining feral cat population. Eradication of feral cats state-wide is not feasible with current resources and techniques, although eradication may be achievable in limited circumstances such as offshore islands or fenced (predator proof) reserves. Therefore, the focus for managing and controlling feral cats is on 'asset protection': the Plan identifies that a key management priority is to control (or eradicate in the case of offshore islands) cats in areas containing important conservation values or priority assets. This

includes areas where measurable declines have occurred in native fauna populations that are vulnerable to predation by cats (e.g. burrowing seabird colonies and coastal strips with shore birds) or disease spread by cats (e.g. *Toxoplasma gondii*).

In parallel with managing impacts, the Plan aims to limit the number of cats entering the feral population through a range of community education and awareness programs, and enforcement of effective cat management legislation.

The *Background Paper* to the Plan provides a fuller discussion of the environmental impacts of cats and the current knowledge of managing the environmental impacts of cats.

3.4 Managing the Impacts of Cats on Agriculture

As a host to a number of significant diseases which impact on livestock, management of the interactions between cats and agriculture is an important component of cat management in Tasmania.

Common disease-causing parasites utilize the cat as a host to reproduce and propagate disease: *Toxoplasma gondii* (*T. gondii*), *Sarcocystis* and *Cryptosporidium* species are the most prevalent of the various cat-borne diseases affecting livestock. These parasites have a range of negative effects on the livestock industries including abortion and infected meat leading to carcass trimming or condemnation. Consequently, a focus of the Plan is on increasing the awareness of appropriate management strategies and control programs that the community, and particularly farmers, can implement to reduce the impact of cat-borne diseases on agriculture in Tasmania.

3.5 Reducing the Adverse Impacts of Cats on Human Health

In terms of the human impact, *T. gondii* is probably the most notable cat-borne parasite that has significant potential disease implications. Cats are the primary (or 'definitive') host for this parasite and as such, the Plan recognises that the appropriate management of all cats (feral, stray and domestic cats) is important in the control of *T. gondii*. However, control programs must be implemented on a strategic, systematic and ongoing basis to be effective. A number of other parasites can also be transmitted to humans via cats, including *Cryptosporidium* (*C. felis*) and *Giardia*. Cats can also be a source of cat scratch disease (*Bartonella henselae*), ringworm and roundworm (*Toxocariasis*).

3.6 Recommendations for Future Regulatory Change

A number of regulatory changes have been identified as necessary to facilitate improved cat management in Tasmania. The Tasmanian Cat Management Reference Group reviewed the existing legislation and has put forward recommendations that will improve the effectiveness and functionality of the regulatory arrangements governing cat ownership. The proposed

amendments to legislation related to the management of cats are detailed in Section 4.6 of the Plan with additional information in the *Background Paper*.

Other current Tasmanian legislation that relates to cat management activities includes the *Wildlife (General) Regulations 2010* in reference to trapping animals (Section 48); the *Firearms Act 1996* regarding the discharge of a firearm for control or euthanasia of an animal on private property (Section 113); and the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* outlining all regulations relevant to the welfare and ethical treatment of cats in wild, captive or domestic circumstances.

3.7 Guidelines for More Effective Decision-Making

It is important that where public funds and resources are allocated to projects and programs, there are clear and achievable outcomes identified. It should be demonstrated that proposed management actions are capable of delivering the planned outcomes and they are sustainable into the long term.

The Plan will seek to ensure formal criteria are used to guide decision-making based on appropriate principles. The Plan will also seek to ensure government and community stakeholders use the criteria in undertaking project development and when seeking funding.

4. OBJECTIVES and ACTIONS

There are seven broad objectives in the Plan (summarised in Section 2), with actions to achieve the objectives. Performance indicators are given for each objective. All actions have been assigned a priority as: Low, Medium, High or Very High, whereby 'Low' represents actions of lowest priority and 'Very High' represents the actions deemed to be of highest priority in achieving the given objective.

It is recognised that some actions, such as effective monitoring and control activities, are reliant on others, such as the delivery of research projects and high levels of community support. The objectives and actions should be considered and implemented recognising these dependencies.

Nine stakeholder categories have been identified and each action lists the 'Invested Stakeholders' that may be responsible for or hold a vested interest in implementing that action. It is important to note that where 'Invested Stakeholders' are identified it assumes that they have an active interest in the action outcome, not necessarily an expectation that they have the responsibility for delivering the action.

Table I Stakeholder categories

ID	INVESTED STAKEHOLDERS
1	State government
2	Landholder, owner or manager (private and government)
3	Industry (including veterinary clinics) and environment groups
4	Cat owners, breeders and sellers
5	Local Government
6	Non-government organisations, community groups and charities including animal welfare organisations
7	Research institutions
8	Australian Government
9	Cat Management Facilities

4.1 Objective 1: Tasmanian pet cat owners manage their cats responsibly

This objective focuses on educating and increasing awareness in cat owners about their responsibilities and the potential impacts of their pets on the environment, with the intention of improving levels of responsible cat ownership. This objective is also linked to Objective 2 (community awareness) and Objective 6 with some of the amendments being proposed to the legislation for the management of cats.

Desired Outcome: Pet cat owners have a higher level of awareness of the potential negative impacts of roaming owned cats and stray cats and, act responsibly to prevent their cats contributing to those impacts.

Performance indicators:

1. Measurable decline in the annual number of domestic and stray cats entering shelters and the number of complaints regarding domestic and stray cats.
2. Measurable increase in the number of cats desexed and microchipped annually.
3. State and Local Governments develop and implement cat management plans; actively using their regulatory powers under the legislative framework for cats and *Local Government Act 1993* to respond to community concerns.

Performance Indicator	Action	Priority	Invested stakeholders
1, 2	4.1.1 Collate baseline data for measuring: (i) The number of reported complaints relating to domestic and stray cats annually; (ii) The number of non-microchipped and non-desexed cats seized/surrendered to cat management facilities annually.	High	1, 5, 9

Performance Indicator	Action	Priority	Invested stakeholders
1, 2	4.1.2 Develop and distribute existing informative material in relation to responsible pet ownership, including health and safety of domestic cats; awareness of and how to minimise the environmental impacts cats can have; strategies and resources for keeping cats indoors.	High	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
3	4.1.3 Identify key locations with the highest impact of roaming domestic cats and target those areas with information materials and awareness campaigns. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Location data from surrendered cats (postcodes), mapping, investigation of demographics and impacts of stray/domestic cat populations are used to identify priority areas. 	Medium	1, 5, 9
2	4.1.4 Provide incentive to cat owners wherever possible to ensure that cats are microchipped and desexed; encouraged through funded community support programs such as low cost desexing and microchipping, where feasible.	Very High	1, 3, 5, 6, 9
3	4.1.5 Where necessary enforce legislative requirements that support responsible cat ownership.	Very High	1, 5 *
3	4.1.6 State Government to provide councils with advice, assistance and coordination to develop by-laws and/or cat management policies to manage and control cats at the municipal level.	Very High	1, 5

Invested Stakeholder Group Codes – 1-State Government; 2-Land owner or manager; 3-Industry & environment groups; 4-Cat owners, breeders and sellers; 5-Local Government; 6-NGO's, community groups, charities and animal welfare organisations; 7-Research institutions; 8-Australian Government; 9-Cat Management Facilities

**It will be at the discretion of individual councils to enforce statutory requirements.*

4.2 Objective 2: Increased community awareness, participation and commitment in cat management

Successful management of cat impacts requires community support and involvement. The nature of the issue requires the community to understand the most effective approaches to managing the impacts from the feral and stray cat populations in Tasmania. This in turn relies on an awareness of those impacts, the range of techniques available and ultimately adoption of those techniques through community led and supported cat management initiatives.

This objective is closely linked with the other objectives of this Plan, in particular responsible cat ownership (Objective 1) and the development of a Communications Plan described in Objective 7. The actions to achieve increased community awareness, involvement and commitment in broader cat management focus on integrating effective information development and delivery.

Desired Outcome: The Tasmanian community is aware of the Plan and is actively participating in programs that help reduce the impacts of feral and stray cats.

Performance indicators

1. Community awareness of the nature and scale of impacts of cats is increasing on an annual basis.
2. Community awareness is demonstrated through an increase in community led and supported cat management programs.

Performance Indicator	Action	Priority	Invested stakeholders
1	4.2.1 Information materials and other communication methods, such as television advertising and social media campaigns, are developed and disseminated to support and promote: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) a better understanding of the role cat owners can play to reduce problems associated with stray and feral cats; (ii) a broad understanding of the threat to biodiversity, the agricultural sector and human health posed by stray and feral cats and support for their control; (iii) the specific actions to be implemented under this Plan; and (iv) humane practices for managing and controlling stray and feral cats. 	High	All
1	4.2.2 Monitor change over time in; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The level of information about cats in the public domain (E.g. adverts, stakeholder websites); (ii) Comments relating to cat management in social media such as DPIPW's facebook page; and (iii) How frequently key online information and websites about cats are visited (E.g. the number of times the DPIPW cat management webpage is accessed). 	High	1, 5
2	4.2.3 Cat management programs targeting stray and feral cats are developed and supported by local communities.	High	All

Invested Stakeholder Group Codes – 1-State Government; 2-Land owner or manager; 3-Industry & environment groups; 4-Cat owners, breeders and sellers; 5-Local Government; 6-NGO's, community groups, charities and animal welfare organisations; 7-Research institutions; 8-Australian Government; 9-Cat Management Facilities

4.3 Objective 3: Best practice techniques are used to guide the planning, management and control of stray and feral cats

Best practice refers to the most effective techniques based on sound ethical, scientific and technical principals that will produce outcomes superior to those achieved by other means. The Plan will facilitate the adoption of best practice decision-making and control methods for stray and feral cat management programs and will ultimately contribute to achieving more effective and sustainable outcomes in Tasmania.

It is important that management and control programs consider all options and have a good understanding of the extent and nature of the impacts being caused; what the program aims to achieve and how; the likely outcomes of any given program; the most effective and efficient methods to employ; and the level of community and stakeholder support. Approved biosecurity programs under the proposed Biosecurity Act can be used to formalise such programs for the management of feral cats as a biosecurity risk or impact. Such programs can be initiated by industry, landowners or the community or by Government.

The Plan will seek to ensure formal criteria are used to guide decision-making based on appropriate principles, and the Plan will also seek to ensure relevant government, community and industry are aware of and implement these criteria in undertaking project development and funding.

Animal welfare and the humane treatment of cats will be addressed through the development of a Welfare Standard for Cats which will include best practice for trapping and euthanasia and be linked to a Code of Practice for cat management facilities. A code of practice would formalize the operation of cat management facilities, better defining their roles and responsibilities and operational requirements in relation to legislation. The code of practice could also provide guidance for the operation of cat refuge and rescue organisations.

Desired Outcomes: Effective, efficient and humane control and management techniques are developed and implemented to manage stray and feral cats.

Performance indicators

1. Control programs demonstrate strategic, long term approaches to reducing the impacts of feral cats, including impact assessments.
2. Agreed criteria are used to guide decision-making for allocating funding and undertaking cat management projects by government, community and industry groups.
3. A Welfare Standard for Cats is developed using the *Model Code of Practice for the Humane Control of Feral Cats* including related standard operating procedures.

4. Increased use of alternatives to lethal control techniques over time where appropriate.
5. Expansion and improvement of cat management facilities in the state including a code of practice.

Performance Indicator	Action	Priority	Invested stakeholders
1	4.3.1 Monitoring to be undertaken before, during and after cat management and control programs to assess the impact on affected species and guide further research and management.	Medium	1, 3, 6
2	4.3.2 Disseminate decision-making criteria to guide project development and funding by government, community and industry groups.	Medium	1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9
1, 2	4.3.3 Ensure that cat control programs are coordinated strategically across different land-tenures, are integrated with local control programs of other species, complement relevant local cat management plans and are reviewed regularly and are formalised under the proposed Biosecurity Act where appropriate and necessary.	High	All
All	4.3.4 Maintain and utilise expertise from the Cat Management Reference Group to guide the planning, management and control of stray and feral cats and the implementation of these actions.	Medium	1
4	4.3.5 Provide information on the use of adaptive cat management practices to land owners and managers, including effective and cost viable alternatives to trapping and shooting that adhere to recognised welfare standard operating procedures.	High	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8
3	4.3.6 Education and training is made available to landholders and community in humane cat control methods.	High	1, 5, 3, 6
3	4.3.7 Develop, implement, revise and update as necessary model codes of practice for the humane treatment of stray and feral cats, including development of a Welfare Standard for Cats in Tasmania.	Medium	All
5	4.3.8 Develop, implement and revise as necessary a code of practice for the operation of cat management facilities.	Medium	1, 3, 5, 6, 9
5	4.3.9 Include the development and resourcing of cat management facilities in business and funding plans.	Medium/Low	1, 5, 9

Invested Stakeholder Group Codes – 1-State Government; 2-Land owner or manager; 3-Industry & environment groups; 4-Cat owners, breeders and sellers; 5-Local Government; 6-NGO's, community groups, charities and animal welfare organisations; 7-Research institutions; 8-Australian Government; 9-Cat Management Facilities

4.4 Objective 4: Improved knowledge about feral, stray and domestic cats to better inform management

Despite current research findings there are still significant knowledge gaps in the role cats play in the Tasmanian environment. Research projects have published a range of findings related to the impact of cats in Tasmania, yet these often relate to defined geographic areas and cannot be reliably applied to other environments. There is an evident need to expand data to different ecological systems and environments to improve the efficacy of cat management projects. Where cat management actions are employed based on assumptions from other study areas, the reliability of projects and their outcomes may be limited.

A key objective of this Plan is improving the knowledge of feral cats, their impacts and the most effective control techniques, both direct and indirect, to ensure resources are used effectively and efficiently.

Desired outcome: Knowledge gaps about the distribution, impacts and behavior of feral cats are addressed.

Performance indicators:

1. Key research priorities and knowledge gaps are identified.
2. All funded feral cat management programs in Tasmania involve pre- and post-control monitoring of:
 - (a) Feral cat distribution, abundance and movement;
 - (b) Feral cat impacts on native species and other values; and
 - (c) Other invasive species.
3. Pathways of transmission and methods of preventing cat-borne diseases are identified, including assessment of the effectiveness of these methods.
4. Alternative methods to lethal control of feral cats assessed and compared in different landscapes.
5. Publication of resources related to feral cat impacts and management.

Performance Indicator	Action	Priority	Invested stakeholders
1, 5	4.4.1 Participate in citizen science projects for data collection related to cat home ranges and impacts in urban environments.	Medium	All
1, 5	4.4.2 Promote the use of reporting portals such as FeralCatScan for monitoring feral cats and to facilitate community data collection.	Medium	1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9
1	4.4.3 Undertake a thorough review of available literature, validated local information and/or workshops with experts to identify key knowledge gaps and research priorities.	Medium	1, 3, 5, 7, 8
2	4.4.4 Develop feral cat monitoring strategies that can be employed before, during and post management or control activities.	Medium	1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
3	4.4.5 Continue research into the role of feral and stray cats in the transmission of disease to livestock and native species; identify pathways and effective methods of limiting transmission.	Medium	1, 3, 5, 7, 8
4	4.4.6 Development of new, improved methods of lethal control of feral and stray cats.	Medium	3, 5, 7, 8
1, 5	4.4.7 Determine and publish the financial impacts on primary industry caused by feral cats.	High	1, 3, 7, 8
5	4.4.8 Publish, collate and disseminate current and new research findings relating to feral cats.	Medium	1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

Invested Stakeholder Group Codes – 1-State Government; 2-Land owner or manager; 3-Industry & environment groups; 4-Cat owners, breeders and sellers; 5-Local Government; 6-NGO's, community groups, charities and animal welfare organisations; 7-Research institutions; 8-Australian Government; 9-Cat Management Facilities

4.5 Objective 5: Minimise impacts of cats in areas with important conservation values and agricultural assets.

Environmental assets will be assessed, and where they coincide with the presence or likely occurrence of feral cats, become priorities for cat management programs. A similar process will be undertaken for agricultural areas that are particularly sensitive to cat-related impacts. Consultation will be initiated with industry groups in relation to protecting primary industry assets, and environmental stakeholders in relation to protecting important conservation values.

Once priority areas have been identified, targeted control programs can be developed. Community-led action has a clear role in ensuring this objective can achieve the on-ground goal of protecting values and assets.

Desired Outcomes: The impact of feral cats on areas containing important conservation values and priority agricultural assets is reduced.

Performance indicators

1. Feral cat management programs are implemented as a priority in areas containing important conservation values (eg. listed threatened species) and/or in proximity to agricultural assets where cats are seen to be a direct threat.
2. Land owners, managers, community and conservation organisations are active and supported in managing cats within identified priority areas and using approaches consistent with the principles identified in this Plan.
3. No new feral cat populations are established on off-shore islands.

Performance Indicator	Action	Priority	Invested stakeholders
1	4.5.1 Identify key areas cats are known to, or likely to have, a significant impact on important conservation values.	High	1, 3, 5, 7, 8
1	4.5.2 Identify important agricultural assets in areas where cats are known to, or likely to have, a significant impact.	High	1, 3, 5, 7, 8
1, 2	4.5.3 Prioritise localised cat management and control programs in areas defined in 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 above.	High	1, 2, 5
1, 2	4.5.4 In regions containing priority agricultural assets, cat management and awareness activities are focused on cat/livestock interactions to minimise parasite transmission and impacts, including targeted management activities around 'barn cats' on farming properties.	High	1, 2, 3, 5, 6
3	4.5.5 Feral cat control for off-shore islands will occur within an integrated pest management framework. Any new reports of cat incursions on offshore islands will be investigated by the state government where practicable.	Medium	1, 2, 5, 7

Invested Stakeholder Group Codes – 1-State Government; 2-Land owner or manager; 3-Industry & environment groups; 4-Cat owners, breeders and sellers; 5-Local Government; 6-NGO's, community groups, charities and animal welfare organisations; 7-Research institutions; 8-Australian Government; 9-Cat Management Facilities

4.6 Objective 6: Undertake legislative change to create an effective framework for managing cats and support other objectives

Strengthening existing regulatory powers for the management of cats will occur through a new legislative framework that includes both the existing *Cat Management Act* and the proposed Tasmanian Biosecurity Act. Under this framework, feral cats will be dealt with under the proposed Biosecurity Act, whilst all other cat management would remain under

the existing legislation. It is expected that this framework will provide greater clarity around roles and responsibilities and facilitate better management outcomes for all stakeholders. The amendments will also support a process to facilitate involvement by relevant statutory authorities.

Desired Outcome: To improve the legislative framework that underpins effective cat management to support greater levels of responsible cat ownership.

Compulsory desexing of cats

Amendments will be made so that all cats, unless otherwise prescribed, must be desexed. Penalties will apply if owners of cats fail to comply.

Amending the age to desex

Cats will be required to be desexed once they reach an age of 4 months or a weight of 1kg, whichever comes first (except where the animal is not deemed in physically suitable condition by a veterinarian). Until now, the legislation has prescribed that cats should be desexed before 6 months of age, even though cats are capable of breeding from as young as four months.

Compulsory microchipping of cats

All cats, unless otherwise prescribed, must be microchipped. Clear penalties will apply where the owner of the cat fails to do so. Microchip registration will be managed through existing microchip databases. All cat owners will receive appropriate information material at the time of microchipping.

Remove the option of a Care Agreement

Care agreements allow for the sale of a cat to occur without the animal being desexed or microchipped on the understanding the new owner will ensure it happens. Care agreements are difficult to enforce and create a loop-hole and will be removed from the legislation.

Registration of cats

Cat registration will not be compulsory. Existing microchip databases will be managed with owner contact details to replace the need for registration. The legislative framework will however, allow for individual councils to introduce registration through by-laws if desired within the municipality.

Confining cats to premises

There will be no enforced compulsory confinement of cats under the legislative framework. Individual councils will retain existing capacity to introduce by-laws requiring owners to confine their cats to their properties within the municipality if they desire.

Limiting the number of cats allowed at a property without a permit

As with the *Dog Control Act 2000*, the number of cats allowed on a single property will be limited. A permit would be required to keep more than four cats per household, excluding registered cat breeders.

Improve arrangements to support landholders undertaking cat management actions

Amendments will be made to provisions relating to the protection of property from roaming cats, including:

- Owners or managers of primary production land (see glossary), or a person acting on their behalf, will be able to trap, seize or humanely destroy cats on their property;
- Nominated persons will be allowed to trap, seize or humanely destroy a cat on reserves, private reserved land and cat prohibited areas; and
- Trapping or seizure of cats (but not humanely destroy) will be allowed on private land regardless of the proximity to other residence, provided the cat is returned to the owner if possible or handed in to a cat management facility.

Any property protection action under these amendments must also be compliant with other legislation such as the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* and the *Firearms Act 1996*.

Improving arrangements for registered cat breeders

The breeding of cats by unregistered breeders is an offence under existing legislation. Those wishing to breed cats can currently either be registered by the cat breeder associations which focus on pedigree animals, or by the State Government which focuses simply on the breeding of cats, pedigree or non-pedigree. These current arrangements are not effective and difficult to enforce. Subsequently, amendments will be made to remove cat breeder registration through the State Government meaning cat breeder associations will be the only means of registering a cat for breeding. The proposed amendments to the *Cat Management Act* will provide for a permitting system to enable breeding of cats by individuals who are not members of breeder associations under conditions specified in the permit.

Legislative changes covering administrative components

The following changes are designed to improve administrative arrangements for the legislative management of cats and in some cases, make the intent clearer:

- The definitions for feral cats and stray cats will be amended;
- The term “breeding” in relation to cats will be defined;
- Ensure cats are microchipped and desexed before being reclaimed from a cat management facility;
- Minimum holding time requirements at cat management facilities will be simplified;
- The reference to ‘working days’ for holding times at cat management facilities will not be included in the amended *Cat Management Act*;
- Notification of owners in writing by cat management facilities will be amended to allow for verbal notification;
- The term “primary production” as it relates to undertaking cat management action will be defined;

- Authorised persons can issue a notice requiring a person to undertake cat management action.

Performance indicators

1. There is community support for and understanding of amendments to the *Cat Management Act*.
2. Amendments related to the legislated management of cats occur within an acceptable timeframe.
3. Amendments related to the legislated management of cats are enforced where applicable and complied with.

Performance Indicator	Action	Priority	Invested stakeholders
1, 2	4.6.1 Commence the necessary changes for an improved legislative framework for cat management.	Very High	1
3	4.6.2 State and Local Governments are responsible for regulating compliance for the management of cats.	Very High	1, 5*
3	4.6.3 Councils are supported in the development of by-laws or cat management policies that improve the effectiveness of managing cats through legislation.	Very High	1, 5

Invested Stakeholder Group Codes – 1-State Government; 2-Land owner or manager; 3-Industry & environment groups; 4-Cat owners, breeders and sellers; 5-Local Government; 6-NGO's, community groups, charities and animal welfare organisations; 7-Research institutions; 8-Australian Government; 9-Cat Management Facilities

**It will be at the discretion of individual councils to enforce statutory requirements.*

4.7 Objective 7: The roles and responsibilities related to cat management are clearly defined and understood by the Tasmanian community

Cat management should be a shared responsibility amongst the Tasmanian community, both Local and State Government, industry bodies, landowners, pet owners and broader community groups. Having a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholder groups, particularly Local and State Government, is crucial in achieving effective cat management outcomes.

The proposed legislative framework for managing cats will ultimately provide for State and Local Government to determine the highest priorities for individual councils in relation to enforcement. The State Government will have responsibility for administering the proposed Biosecurity Act along with the *Cat Management Act*. Local Government has the power to enforce the legislation along with other animal control responsibilities within their municipality to the degree they consider necessary or relevant and can resource.

Desired Outcome: All stakeholders have a clear understanding of, and are able to exercise, their responsibilities in relation to the legislative framework for the management of cats.

Performance indicators

1. State and Local Government roles and responsibilities in relation to cat management are clearly defined within the proposed legislative framework.
2. Roles and responsibilities in relation to the legislated management of cats and the Plan are well communicated and understood.
3. Resourcing for cat management activities and associated legislative changes is addressed and where possible, funds acquired to deliver the Plan.

Performance Indicator	Action	Priority	Invested stakeholders
1	4.7.1 The proposed legislative framework clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders regarding cat management in Tasmania.	Very High	1, 5
2	4.7.2 Develop a communications plan to ensure timely implementation of objectives in the Plan and that the Tasmanian community and stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities in regards to cat management, including legislative changes.	Very High	1, 5
3	4.7.3 Develop a business plan that ensures those responsible for delivering cat management in Tasmania are adequately resourced and authorised to do so.	Very High	1, 5

Invested Stakeholder Group Codes – 1-State Government; 2-Land owner or manager; 3-Industry & environment groups; 4-Cat owners, breeders and sellers; 5-Local Government; 6-NGO's, community groups, charities and animal welfare organisations; 7-Research institutions; 8-Australian Government; 9-Cat Management Facilities.

5. Glossary

In this document, unless the contrary appears –

Act means the *Cat Management Act 2009*;

Background Paper refers to the *Tasmanian Cat Management Plan - Background Paper*: the supporting document to this Plan.

Barn cat refers to any cat that lives predominantly out of doors on agricultural properties, sheltering and defecating in outbuildings.

Best practice refers to the most effective techniques, based on sound ethical, scientific and technical principals, that will produce outcomes superior to those achieved by other means;

By-law refers to a regulation made by a Local Government authority, relevant within that municipality only;

Cat management facility is a facility, as defined in the *Cat Management Act 2009*, operated by council, the RSPCA Tasmania or the Hobart Cat Centre Incorporated for handling and holding cats; or a facility operated by a person or organisation prescribed under the *Cat Management Act 2009*;

Desex means to render temporarily, as prescribed, or permanently incapable of reproduction;

Domestic refers to cats that are identifiable as owned; most of their needs are supplied by their owners. They may roam beyond their owner's property, including into bush and park land, but they spend most of their time with a specific person/family/property.

Eradication means to remove all animals from a population with no prospect for any moving into the area;

Feral refers to an introduced animal with an established, self-supporting population in the wild (see below for description of feral cat; 1.1.2);

Humanely destroy means to destroy quickly and without undue suffering;

Land tenure refers to the legal rules, rights and arrangements under which land is owned;

Livestock refers to goats, oxen, sheep and swine;

Plan refers to this *Tasmanian Cat Management Plan*;

Primary Production Land as defined by section 7 of the Land Tax Act 2000 is land that is –

(a) used substantially for the business of primary production; or

(b) declared a private timber reserve under the *Forest Practices Act 1985*; or

(c) permanent timber production zone land within the meaning of the *Forest Management Act 2013*; or

(d) land in respect of which there is in effect a certified forest practices plan, being a plan certified by the Forest Practices Authority under section 19 of the *Forest Practices Act 1985* in accordance with the State Permanent Forest Estate Policy.

Primary production as defined in the *Land Tax Act 2000*, means any one or more of the following carried out in a business-like manner with a reasonable expectation of profit:

- (a) cultivating land to sell the produce of the cultivation;
- (b) maintaining animals or poultry for sale or selling their natural increase or bodily produce;
- (c) keeping bees to sell their honey;
- (d) commercial fishing and cultivating aquatic plants or animals, including the preparation for fishing and the storage and preservation of fish and fishing gear;
- (e) cultivating or propagating for sale plants, seedlings, mushrooms or orchids.

Tasmanian Cat Management Reference Group is an advisory group consisting of representatives from a number of organisations with a direct interest in the management of cats in Tasmania (refer to page iii).

Stray refers to cats that are found in and around cities, towns and rural properties; they may depend on some resources provided by humans but have no identifiable owner.

References

- Commonwealth of Australia (2015). [*Threat abatement plan for predation by feral cats.*](#) Department of the Environment, Canberra.
- DPIPWE. (2016). Draft Tasmanian Cat Management Plan. Retrieved November 29, 2016, from <http://dPIPWE.tas.gov.au/invasive-species/cat-management-in-tasmania/draft-tasmanian-cat-management-plan>.
- Sharp, T., & Saunders, G. (2012). *Model code of practice for the humane control of feral cats.* [Invasive Animals Corporative Research Centre](#).