



Feral Cat Taskforce

COMMUNIQUÉ

Meeting 14 on 11 and 12 October 2023

Feral Cat Taskforce

The Feral Cat Taskforce is an advisory and coordinating group supporting action to reduce the impact of feral cats on Australia's native wildlife. It provides information and support to the Threatened Species Commissioner, the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and other members on best practice feral cat management. The Taskforce was established in 2015 and is chaired by the Threatened Species Commissioner. Membership is by invitation of the Chair.

National Feral Cat and Fox coordination

Gillian Basnett, the National Feral Cat and Fox Coordinator let Taskforce members know a new website is being developed as a dedicated platform for landholders and managers to access information on feral cat management, and a series of webinar forums on aspects of feral cat management were conducted earlier this year and are available at www.youtube.com/c/centreforinvasivespeciesolutions.

A joint piece of work between the Coordinator and the Commonwealth has been to update a table of regulatory requirements for undertaking feral cat management by each state/territory. It has been identified that landholders and managers often have difficulty in obtaining clear information about what management techniques are permitted. Feral Cat Taskforce members have committed to an annual check of this information to ensure currency.

Revised Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by Feral Cats

Taskforce members were provided with further briefing on the new draft Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by Feral Cats that may be made under the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Members provided immediate feedback to the Commonwealth and Plan authors. Members were invited to also submit comments via the statutory public comment process until 11 December 2023. <https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/draft-updated-threat-abatement-plan-for-predation-by-feral-cats>. Further, the Commonwealth invited states and territories to consider the joint making of the Threat when it is finalised in 2024.

Managing feral cats on Country

The Feral Cat Taskforce has established a new standing item focused on sharing Indigenous knowledge, perspectives and challenges with managing feral cats on Country. Members heard from Kiwirrkurra Women Rangers on feral cat projects in desert areas to protect Ninu (Greater Bilby) and Tjakura (Great Desert Skink) and an update from the Li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers on a feral cat eradication project on West Island in

the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria. A video was shown from Tjpani Desert Weavers using animated fibre artwork. The Taskforce is grateful for Dr Paltridge facilitating this exchange.

National Environmental Science Program: Best-practice management for feral cats and red foxes

NESP Resilient Landscapes Hub researchers provided the Taskforce with an update on feral cat management projects underway and in the planning phase. The project to work with expert practitioners to describe the elements that constitute best-practice management of feral cats and provide an online decision tool is nearing completion for feral cats. A new project on feral cat management in several priority places is in the final planning stages and scoping is occurring for further projects in coming years.

Impacts of toxoplasmosis and sarcocystosis on the livestock industry

The Taskforce was provided with information on how these parasites that rely on feral cats as part of their transmission cycle affect sheep and goat industries, and other livestock to a lesser degree. Toxoplasmosis predominantly affects reproduction in the livestock while sarcocystosis reduces the meat available on each carcass for sale. The combined economic costs are estimated at approximately \$11.75 million annually. The only effective control is the removal of cats as the parasites will not survive in their absence.

Christmas Island Feral Cat Eradication Program

Parks Australia presented on the eradication program for feral cats on Christmas Island. The island is complex due to the dense rainforest, limestone geology, and unique animals meaning normal methods for feral cat eradication have been adapted to be effective in this environment. A bespoke monitoring and eradication tracking system is demonstrating the program is on track with reductions in key indicators of feral cat abundance.

Updates from Members

Members provided updates to the Taskforce on action within their jurisdiction or organisation. The updates reflected the complex range of legislative requirements related to feral cats across the country and within individual jurisdictions. State and territory governments highlighted where there are reviews or amendments of their legislation or policies occurring.

Members shared outlines of research to improve our understanding of feral cats currently being undertaken and shared research papers published.

The necessity of clearly communicating with stakeholders and the public on the impacts of cats on native wildlife and the importance of continuing and improving management was recognised by the Taskforce.

Members touched on the interface to domestic cat management with updates to campaigns that encourage responsible pet ownership, including promotion of cat containment programs.

Demonstrations of new technologies

Members who were able to attend in person were provided with demonstrations of new technologies that are proving useful for feral cat management and eradication programs. Felixers by Thylation and Celium Trap Alert systems by Encounter Solutions.

Note

This communiqué presents a synthesis of the meeting and should not be taken to represent the position of any individual Feral Cat Taskforce member.

Dr Fiona Fraser
Chair, Feral Cat Taskforce

Members

Threatened Species Commissioner (Chair)

Government

Australian Government:

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Parks Australia

Department of Defence

ACT Government: Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

NSW Government: National Parks and Wildlife Service

NT Government: Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security

Qld. Government: Department of Environment and Science

SA Government: Department of Environment and Water

Tas. Government: Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

Vic. Government: Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

WA Government: Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

Australia Local Government Association

First Nations peoples: Kimberley Land Council

National and Regional coordination:

National Feral Cat and Fox Coordinator

WA Feral Cat Working Group

Research and Innovation:

Centre for Invasive Species Solutions

National Environmental Science Program: Resilient Landscapes Hub

Thylation

Invited scientists

Land management:

NRM Regions Australia

Australian Land Conservation Alliance

Welfare:

RSPCA Australia

Veterinary experts

Advocacy and public communication:

Invasive Species Council

Zoos Victoria

Guests invited to this meeting

Bush Heritage Australia

Encounter Solutions

Kiwirrkurra Women Rangers

Indigenous Desert Alliance

Kangaroo Island Landscapes Board

Melbourne Water

Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority