

## Frequently asked questions – feral cats

### What is a feral cat?

Feral cats are defined as cats that are living and reproducing in the wild. They are not owned or socialised and survive on their own in the wild by hunting.

### How are feral cats different to stray and domestic cats?

Feral, stray, and domestic cats are the same species but differ in how and where they live.

Domestic cats are owned and cared for.

Stray cats are found in and around towns, cities, and rural properties. These cats are semi-feral and not owned because they have become lost or abandoned. They live in the wild undomesticated and fend for themselves, although some may be provided food by people.

Feral cats survive and reproduce in the wild without human reliance or contact.

### Why are feral cats a problem in Western Australia?

Feral cats are found across Western Australia (WA) inhabiting forests, woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, and arid areas.

A Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions review of Western Australia's threatened and priority fauna species found that that 36 mammal, 22 bird, and 11 reptile species are vulnerable to predation by feral cats and a wide range of other native animals are adversely affected by them.

Australia-wide, feral cats have played a major role in the extinction of at least 27 mammal species and presently endanger 147 Australian mammals, birds, reptiles, and frogs.

Feral cats are recognised by the Environment and Invasives Committee as an extreme threat category for Australia (the highest threat) (IPAC 2015).

Predation by feral cats is recognised as a key threatening process under the [Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(Cth\)](#).

### How does declaring feral cats a pest animal help with their control?

Declaring feral cats a declared pest under the [Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007](#) (BAM Act) provides a mechanism for effective and humane management of this pest animal to reduce numbers in a sustained manner.

By having the feral cat a declared pest under the BAM Act, it enables local conservation groups and other organisations to receive funding to undertake control and/or management programs.

## **What control measures are being used to control feral cats in WA?**

Recognised control methods for feral cats include exclusion fencing, baiting, trapping using cage traps, and shooting.

Control of feral cats must be humane and undertaken in accordance with the [Animal Welfare Act 2002](#).

## **Are stray cats covered by the declaration?**

Only feral cats will be targeted, not stray or domestic cats.

## **I own a cat. How can I be a responsible cat owner?**

Cat owners must comply with the [Cat Act 2011](#) (Cat Act) and any requirements, such as curfews imposed on cats by local government.

The Cat Act requires all cats to be sterilised, microchipped, and registered by 6 months.

Cat owners should refer to the RSPCA Australia information on cats, and keep domestic cats inside, particularly at night, or have an outdoor cat enclosure, especially if living in rural or remote areas.

Cats should wear their registration tags on their collar when outside so they can be clearly identified as a domestic cat.

## **My pet cat sometimes goes outside. Is there a chance it might be mistaken for a feral cat by authorities?**

Only feral cats will be targeted, and mainly in reserves and areas away from urban areas.

Domestic cat owners should ensure their cats are microchipped, and their registration tag is worn on their collar, per requirements of the Cat Act. This will allow them to be identified as domestic cats.

Refer to the department's policy on minimising risk to domestic cats, available on the website at [dpird.wa.gov.au](http://dpird.wa.gov.au).

## **Where can I find more information about feral cats?**

The Centre for Invasive Species' [PestSmart](#) website.

The Australian Government [Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water](#)

## **Contact**

### **Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS)**

+61 8 9368 3080 | [Email Pest and Disease Information Service \(PaDIS\)](#)

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