

18/574: Draft ACT Cat Management Plan

Summary of Impacts	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About a quarter of Canberra households own cats, which are socially important as companion animals. At the same time, our suburbs and many nature reserves are rich in wildlife which are vulnerable to predation by wandering cats (domestic and feral). The draft plan is proposed as a basis to engage the community on how government and community can work together to improve laws, services and programs to improve animal welfare through responsible pet ownership and reduce the impact of cat predation on native wildlife. Community consultation will elicit views from both cat owners and non-cat owners and is expected to attract a high level of community interest. The initiative has the potential to have a significant and positive impact on biodiversity, while recognising that there may be impacts on cat owners and neighbours.

Key to impacts: Red – negative, Blue - neutral and Green - positive.

Social

Community and Individual Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About a quarter of Canberra households own cats, which are socially important as companion animals. Expanding cat containment into established suburbs is a topic of discussion, which if implemented, will place additional conditions on cat owners. However, the current practice of declaring new suburbs to be cat containment areas may raise a social equity issue where some within the community are required to contain cats and others are not. Noting that cat containment can also provide a number of social benefits such as reduced nuisance by wandering cats, more local wildlife and reduced injury to cats and other animals. The draft Plan is a comprehensive plan and includes risks of infection from cats to human health, with a focus on prevention of animal-borne diseases, rather than direct health benefits.
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Economic

Productivity and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation on feral cat control is referred to in the draft plan (Strategy 6 Reduce impacts of feral cats), however, proposed actions focus on ACT participation in regional and national research and trials, as innovation is largely being driven through research in other jurisdictions. Following community feedback, implementation of a final plan may have minor and positive impacts on innovation.
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Environmental

Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Draft plan recognises that all cats have a natural instinct to hunt other animals and feral cats need to hunt for survival. Cats are known to hunt native animals and insects for recreation and food which reduces biodiversity and ecosystems services. Greater adoption of responsible pet ownership (microchip, desex and contain pet cats) will reduce the impact of cats on native wildlife and have a positive impact on ACT wildlife and biodiversity. Improved management of domestic cast and innovation in feral cat control methods will enable improved control of feral cats. Strategy 6 “Reduce impacts on feral cats” recognises that predation by feral cats is a major threat to biodiversity in Australia.
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