



Animal Welfare.
Worldwide.

FOUR PAWS Response to Questions on Notice

1 The UNSW project focused on a TNR program implemented over nine years. The program aimed to reduce the free-roaming cat population on campus by catching, sterilizing, and rehoming socialisable cats and kittens.

Key Findings

- Population Reduction: The free-roaming cat population decreased from 69 to 15 cats over the course of the program.
- Improved Health: The health status of the remaining cats improved significantly.
- Community Support: The program received strong institutional support due to the reduction in complaints from campus staff and students, as well as the minimal costs involved¹

2 A number of studies have shown that cats wearing bells are less likely to catch and bring home prey, with one study in New Zealand reporting a reduction of up to 50%. Bells provide a warning to wildlife, allowing them more time to escape the cat's approach²³.

3.

While cats are often accused of causing extensive harm to native wildlife, population studies in urban, peri-urban, and small rural areas have yet to demonstrate a measurable impact on native bird and mammal populations. Habitat loss, rather than cat predation, has been identified as the predominant threat to these species^{4 5}

NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation dashboard -2019-20⁶

Threatened species –reasons for rescue

402 loss of suitable environment

290 collisions with motor vehicles

¹ Application of a Protocol Based on Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) to Manage Unowned Urban Cats on an Australian University Campus: 2018 Helen Swarbrick Jacquie Rand

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29772788/>

² Bells reduce predation of wildlife by domestic cats (*Felis catus*) 2006 Graham Ruxton Sarah Thomas Jessica Wright <https://zslpublications.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1017/S0952836902000109>

³ Should I attach a bell to my Cat's Collar 2019 Ada McVean <https://www.mcgill.ca/oss/article/general-science/should-i-attach-bell-my-cats-collar>

⁴ Barratt, D.G. Predation by House Cats, *Felis catus* (L.), in Canberra, Australia. I. Prey Composition and Preference. *Wildl. Res.* **1997**, *24*, 263–277

⁵ Lilith, M.; Calver, M.; Garkaklis, M. Do cat restrictions lead to increased species diversity or abundance of small and medium-sized mammals in remnant urban bushland? *Pac. Conserv. Biol.* **2010**,

⁶ <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/nativeanimals/rehabilitating-native-animals/wildlife-rehabilitation-reporting/wildlife-rehabilitation-data>

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127 dog attacks

31 cat attacks

It should be noted that there is currently no direct evidence that domesticated cats (owned and unowned) in urbanised areas have directly caused the decline of threatened species in Australia. Threats such as land clearing, development and other human activity have a greater impact and threat to endangered native wildlife than domestic cats.⁷

FOUR PAWS also refers to the work of Professor Jacquie Rand from the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation on the 'myth of domestic cats and urban wildlife' that demonstrate the many studies that have used flawed methodology to estimate the number of native animals preyed upon by cats.⁸

4. Studies have shown that that over 85% of animals preyed upon were introduced species, and that although some native animals were caught, the total number was low and mainly consisted of skinks and lizards⁹

Additional research suggests that cats may selectively prey on sick or old animals, which can have neutral or even positive ecological effects, as noted in studies of black rat predation, which benefited tree-nesting birds in Sydney bushland areas. This study is in line with a global analysis undertaken where there is evidence that cat predation is generally upon whatever species is available to them within their environments¹⁰, in many areas where cats reside this means that a majority are non-native species.

Concerns about the impact of pet dogs and cats on native wildlife populations have significantly influenced pet control legislation, despite limited research on their actual impact in urban areas. A study involving 662 Australian dog and cat owners revealed that both pets catch prey, but the numbers are relatively low. Dogs caught a median of 2 mammals, 2 birds, 2 reptiles, and 3 amphibians, while cats caught a median of 3 mammals, 2 birds, 4 reptiles, and 2 amphibians over six months.

The majority of mammals caught by both dogs (88%) and cats (93%) were introduced species like mice, rats, and rabbits.¹¹

⁷ Grayson et al 2007 ;Lilith et al 2010; Cogger et al 2017 As cited in Australian Pet Welfare Foundation. Key Issues in 24/7 Cat containment

⁸ [https://petwelfare.org.au/publications/pets and native wildlife](https://petwelfare.org.au/publications/pets%20and%20native%20wildlife)

⁹ Franklin M, Rand J, Marston L Morton J 2021 Do Pet Cats Deserve the Disproportionate Blame for Wildlife Predation Compared to Pet Dogs? <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/veterinary-science/articles/10.3389/fvets.2021.731689/full>

¹⁰ Lepczyk C. A. et al 2023 'A global synthesis and assessment of free-ranging domestic cat diet' - <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-023-42766-6>

¹¹ Do Pet Cats Deserve the Disproportionate Blame for Wildlife Predation Compared to Pet Dogs? 2021 Michael Frankin, Jacquie Rand, Linda Marston, John Morton <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34760957/>