

POSITION STATEMENT

Management of *Felis catus* (Domestic free-roaming, abandoned and feral cats)

INTRODUCTION

BirdLife South Africa recognises that the management of feral and domestic cats is a highly sensitive issue. While BirdLife South Africa recognises that feline pets provide many benefits to people, we also recognise that all types of domestic cats (free-roaming outdoor access, abandoned, and feral cats) around the world have been shown to kill millions of birds and other wildlife annually. towards the birds they admire, but also towards themselves and others.

BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA POSITION STATEMENT

Feral cats are considered an invasive threat to native fauna by means of direct killing of wild animals such as birds, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. It is estimated that there are four to seven feral cats for every one domesticated cat. Cats kill millions of wild birds every year, and this may be a factor contributing to declining bird populations.

BirdLife South Africa supports:

- Projects that aim at decreasing the continued abandonment of domestic cats through positive community engagement as this contributes significantly to the perpetuation of the problem.
- The fitment of a bells and collars to all pet cats which would significantly reduce predation rates (a correctly fitted collar and bell can reduce cat predation of birds by more than 50%).
- The phasing out of feeding at feral cat colonies. Feeding is likely to increase the transmission of diseases where cats congregate and contribute to the growth of the feral cat populations.
- Research into Trap, Neuter and Release (TNR) programs at feral cat colonies as well as other humane but lethal forms of control.
- The removal of feral cat colonies from protected areas.
- The placement of captured cats at a local animal control or humane society, or for these cats to be

neutered and given homes.

- A prohibition on the establishment of new feral cat colonies.
- Educational and research efforts within the agricultural industry that highlight environmentally-sustainable rodent control measures that do not rely on cats.

BirdLife South Africa also encourages:

- Efforts to educate pet owners about responsible cat ownership.
- The dissemination of information regarding the impacts of cats on birds and wildlife to pet owners, policy makers, welfare organisations and veterinarians.
- Pet owners to keep their cats indoors or to allow outdoor access only via fenced-off controlled outdoor enclosures that will help to prevent the escape and free roaming of cats, ensuring 24 hours cat containment.
- The assessment of cat bibs (as marketed in New Zealand and Australia) to reduce predation by cats.
- Pet owners to have no more than two cats per household. All pet cats should be microchipped.
- Further research on the impact of cats on all forms of native wildlife in South Africa.