

Department of Conservation
PO Box 10420
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30 June 2025

By Email

Submission on behalf of the New Zealand Veterinary Association Te Pae Kīrehe regarding PF2050 consultation

The New Zealand Veterinary Association Te Pae Kīrehe (NZVA) is the largest professional body representing veterinarians in Aotearoa New Zealand. We support our members through leadership, education, standard setting, and wellbeing initiatives. The Companion Animal Veterinarian Branch (CAV) is a special interest branch of the NZVA representing companion animal veterinarians.

As stakeholders in the National Cat Management Group, our members support evidence-based approaches that protect animal welfare, public health, and native biodiversity. We are in favour of the content of the latest Department of Conservation consultation document; however, we also strongly support inclusion of feral cats as a target species in the Predator Free 2050 (PF2050) programme.

Feral cats are self-sustaining animals living independently of humans, typically outside urban centres. They are distinguished from domestic cats (stray and companion cats) who rely on human care to varying degrees. Our submission focuses solely on feral cats.

While veterinarians recognise the important role cats play in many people's lives, we also acknowledge the significant threat feral cats pose to Aotearoa New Zealand's native wildlife, including birds, reptiles, bats, and invertebrates. Even at low densities, feral cats can cause ecological harm.

Veterinarians are well placed to advise on science-based, humane approaches to animal population management. We also acknowledge the ethical complexity of managing feral cats and advocate for continual improvement in control methods. We would like to see a greater focus on more humane practices for control of all pest species.

Feral cats are already classified as pests in many areas and are managed by the Department of Conservation, local authorities, and conservation groups. Their formal inclusion in PF2050 would align national efforts, improve clarity, and support responsible domestic cat management practices such as desexing, microchipping, and containment.

The recently updated National Cat Management Group Report highlights the need for a coordinated, humane, and integrated national approach across all cat populations. Cat populations are fluid, and cats can move between feral, stray, and companion categories. Siloed responses for cat categories or by individual organisations are often ineffective. National leadership is needed to support local authorities and conservation organisations in implementing effective and ethical management strategies.

Including feral cats in PF2050 would reflect a growing consensus across ecological, veterinary, and conservation sectors. It would strengthen biodiversity protection efforts and ensure alignment with current cat management recommendations.

In summary, NZVA and CAV support the inclusion of feral cats in the Predator Free 2050 target species list. This is not a call for indiscriminate culling of all unowned cats, but a call for national leadership

regarding feral cats, which are recognised as pests, and accordingly ought to be included in PF 2050. Having a coordinated national approach, and the development of humane, science-informed control strategies will help balance conservation goals with animal welfare.

Nāku iti noa, nā,



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