



Cat Management in Tasmania

Biosecurity Tasmania

Submission of the
Australian Veterinary Association Ltd
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ava.com.au

About the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA)

The AVA is the peak professional body representing veterinary professionals and students across Australia. For more than 100 years we have been the united voice of the veterinary profession.

Veterinarians are among Australia's most trusted and respected professionals, dedicated to safeguarding animal health and welfare and supporting the communities they live in.

Our vision and purpose

Vision *A thriving veterinary profession*

Purpose *Building a vibrant future for veterinary professionals.*

At the AVA we champion the veterinary community, advance professional excellence, foster connectivity, and deliver exceptional member experiences to achieve our vision of a thriving profession.

Essential role of the veterinary profession

Veterinary services are essential to Australia's animal health, food security, and economy. They help secure Australia's animal health and livestock supply chain, protecting hundreds of thousands of jobs and easing cost of living pressures through a safe and reliable food supply.

Beyond agriculture, veterinarians support companion animals and their owners, strengthening the human-animal bond and promoting the associated mental and physical health benefits of pet ownership. Animals are not just a part of the Australian way of life; they are deeply embedded in it - socially, culturally, environmentally, and economically, and veterinarians are an essential part of every vibrant Australian community.

Veterinarians play a pivotal role in maintaining the social licence of animal industries, ensuring animal health and welfare meets community expectations. Like human healthcare and education, veterinary services provide both private benefits to individuals and critical public benefits to society, in areas like biosecurity surveillance, wildlife treatment and health and emergency animal disease management.

Recognised among Australia's most ethical and trusted professionals, veterinarians are highly respected and trusted members of their communities. The Governance Institute of Australia's 2025 Ethics Index ranked veterinarians among the nation's top 5 ethical occupations¹.

¹ [Governance Institute 2025](#)



Executive Summary

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Tasmanian Cat Management Plan*.

The AVA supports a coordinated, nationally harmonised approach to cat management that delivers improved animal welfare, environmental protection and community outcomes. The AVA advocates for the adoption of clear, consistent and evidence-based definitions of cat populations as a foundation for effective policy development and implementation.

The AVA calls for improved reporting of programs designed to manage cat populations, across environmental protection and cat welfare aspects.

Cat containment approaches should be informed by evidence, centred on animal welfare, and applied with the understanding of local conditions. Appropriate guidance and education for cat owners is also essential.

In making this submission, while the AVA recognises that enforcement is essential, it does not provide comment on the setting or recovery of cat registration fees, nor on operational enforcement or compliance mechanisms

Question responses

Question 1. Good and bad aspects of compulsory cat registration compared with microchipping only

The AVA supports nationally consistent approaches to cat identification and management, acknowledging that these must be appropriately tailored to meet the specific requirements of local areas. Registration may assist governments to understand cat populations and support policy planning where it aligns with harmonised national systems. However, registration alone does not improve outcomes unless it is integrated with effective enforcement, education, containment and desexing, and welfare-focused programs.

Microchipping remains the most direct tool for reuniting cats with owners. Any system should prioritise outcomes rather than administrative burden and avoid unintended consequences for cat welfare or veterinary practices.

Question 2. Should cat owners have to register their cat, like dog registration?

The AVA does not take a jurisdiction-specific position on mandatory registration. If registration is pursued, it should be implemented consistently across Australia and integrated with microchipping, desexing and responsible ownership education.

Question 3. Should owners have to pay a registration fee?

The AVA does not provide comment on the setting or recovery of cat registration fees.



Question 4. What should registration fees be used for?

Funds obtained through registration should contribute to programs supporting; research, review and evaluation, population and welfare management, education.

Question 5. What could help ensure breeding and selling of cats is legal?

Improved traceability and clearer accountability across jurisdictions would support legal breeding and sales. The AVA supports nationally consistent breeder identification or registration and improved public education for buyers.

There is a need for systems that reduce illegal or unethical breeding while prioritising animal welfare. This includes guidance about breeding standards and an emphasis that breeders must take appropriate steps to ensure the health and wellbeing of the animals in their care.

Veterinary expertise should inform standards and guidelines relating to health, welfare, breeding and desexing requirements.

Question 6. Should sellers state in advertisements that cats meet all legal requirements?

Yes. Transparency requirements that are consistent across jurisdictions would support informed purchasing decisions, discourage illegal breeding and improve cat welfare outcomes.

Question 7. Role of cat owners in reducing impacts on wildlife, neighbours and the community

Cat owners have a responsibility to meet their duty of care by providing appropriate identification, desexing, enrichment and management that reduces risks to cats, wildlife and the community. Evidence-based containment, when properly implemented and supported, can reduce injury, disease and wildlife impacts while enhancing cat longevity and welfare. Veterinary expertise should inform any settings that are developed.

Question 8. Challenges households may face with stronger cat management rules

Challenges may include costs, housing limitations (particularly in rental properties), owner knowledge gaps and ensuring cats' behavioural needs are met. Where confinement is conducted without education and support, cat welfare may be impacted resulting in potential physical and behavioural issues. This can lead to increased burdens on households where additional veterinary intervention may be needed or in extreme cases cats may be surrendered where behavioural issues cannot be managed. These challenges reinforce the need for education, transition periods and guidance developed with veterinary expertise.

Question 9. Other ways to encourage responsible ownership without containment

Education, early desexing, identification, enrichment and feeding guidance and veterinary-led behaviour advice all support responsible ownership. These measures should be used alongside, not instead of, appropriate containment policies where evidence supports their benefit.



Question 10. Fair and practical monitoring or enforcement methods

The AVA does not provide advice on enforcement or compliance mechanisms.

Question 11. When stronger cat management rules would be reasonable

Stronger rules may be reasonable where there is clear evidence they benefit cat welfare, wildlife protection and community outcomes, are proportionate to risk, and are supported by education, resourcing and veterinary input.

Question 12. Should feeding stray cats be banned?

The AVA does not support simplistic or punitive approaches to feeding bans. Management of unowned and semi-owned cats should recognise human–animal relationships and prioritise humane, coordinated, evidence-based strategies rather than focusing solely on prohibition.

Question 13. Challenges with banning feeding

Challenges include community resistance, welfare risks to cats, enforcement difficulties and the risk of driving behaviours underground. Feeding bans alone do not address breeding, health or long-term population growth.

Feeding of unowned or semi-owned cats by the public can be a compassionate or empathetic response. Research and education on ways to support those behaviours that are not detrimental to animal welfare, the environment, or local wildlife would be beneficial.

Question 14. Solutions to these challenges

Effective solutions require coordinated, whole-of-community approaches, including desexing programs, education, veterinary involvement and clear assignment of responsibility to governments rather than individual carers.

Question 15. How cat colonies should be managed

It is imperative to recognise that managing cat populations themselves are the symptom – there is a need to identify root causes (eg overpopulation/abandonment, etc) for sustainable management programs.

Consideration should be given to incorporating innovative population assessment tools to support the collection of more accurate, reliable, and verifiable data on cat populations. Improved data quality will strengthen the design, targeting, and evaluation of cat population management programs, enabling more effective and evidence-based outcomes.

Cat colony management should be humane, strategic and evidence-based, recognising distinct cat populations and their differing welfare needs. The AVA supports approaches where veterinary expertise is embedded in planning and delivery and are aligned with a One Welfare framework - where the interconnectedness of cats, humans and the environment is recognised and applied to understand impacts and solutions to mitigate these impacts.



Question 16. Supporting rural landowners to manage feral cats

Rural landowners should be supported through access to humane, evidence-based control programs, veterinary expertise, and nationally aligned guidance. Programs must prioritise animal welfare, protect non-target species, consider potential public health implications and be integrated with conservation objectives.

Question 17. Should the 1 km euthanasia distance be reduced?

Evidence based guidance should be employed to determine the appropriate distance for any “euthanasia exclusion zone”. This distance must retain safeguards that minimise the risk of owned or semi-owned cats being misidentified as feral as this is critical to maintaining animal welfare and community confidence.

The AVA believes further consideration should be given to factors such as roaming distances, which would vary based on location. This may indicate that distance in itself is not a sufficiently objective measure for this purpose. Identification of feral cats requires practical criteria that include environmental and behavioural considerations - using distance alone may be an over simplified criteria.

Question 18. Suitable alternative distance

Not applicable.

Question 19. Education, rewards or support programs to encourage responsible ownership

Education programs developed with veterinary input, accessible desexing initiatives, guidance on enrichment and containment, and targeted support for vulnerable communities are key to improving responsible ownership.

Question 20. Should cat management differ across urban, peri-urban and rural areas?

Yes. Management should be risk-based and context-specific while remaining under a harmonised national framework. Different environments present different welfare, wildlife and public health risks that require tailored but consistent responses.

The AVA supports the undertaking of baseline research and data collection at local levels to inform local practice under a harmonised national framework.

Question 21. Additional comments on improving cat management in Tasmania

The AVA strongly encourages Tasmania to align cat management reforms with national approaches, adopt consistent definitions of cat populations (see below), and embed veterinary expertise at all stages of policy development and implementation. Humane, evidence-based and coordinated strategies are essential to improving outcomes for cats, wildlife, communities and the veterinary profession.



Cat populations:

There are distinct populations of cats in Australia based on their interaction with humans:

- Owned - these are cats who live in a domestic household, are usually named, have a form of identification, depend on humans for their food
- Semi-owned and Unowned – these cats, or their antecedents, were once owned by people. Their or their antecedents' origins were as abandoned, wandering or lost owned cats.
- Feral - these cats live independently of humans

Although the populations overlap to varying extents, each requires a distinct management strategy.

AVA Policies:

[Management of cats in Australia](#)

[Control of native and introduced animals causing damage to agriculture or habitat](#)

[AVA Statement of principles – animal welfare and ethics](#)

[Considering welfare of target and non-target animals in planning vertebrate control programs](#)

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