



Protecting staff and vet wellbeing: Keeping cats out of shelters and pounds

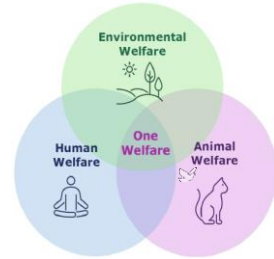
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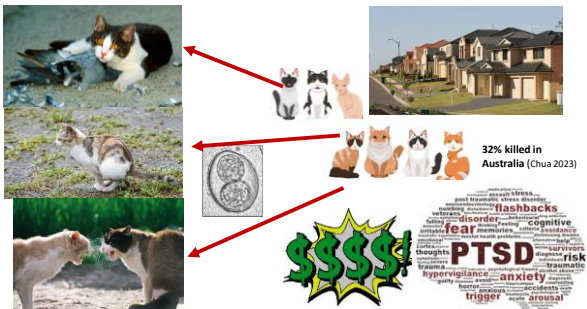
One Welfare concept

Balancing and
optimising the wellbeing
of animals, people and
their environments



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Community concerns with free-roaming cats



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What are our management options for stray cats?

Do nothing OR accept strays from public & council officers trap nuisance cats &/or provide traps for complainants

- Removing approx. 5%-10% of urban stray cat population annually
 - BUT at least 3% of adults feeding average 1.5 cats they don't own
- City of 100,000, 1,800 female cats producing average of 5 kittens/yr = 9,000 kittens (75% free-living kittens die before 6 mths) = same number or even more kittens & cats next year

= sustainably farming cats & harvesting juveniles

Who is tasked with doing the killing?



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Victorian state data – 2024 (2018 =27% euthanized)

Cat admissions	Reclaimed	%	Rehomed	%	Transferred	%	Euthanised	%
45,119	3,170	7	19,429	43	7,794	17	12,666	28

Lost Dogs Home - 2024

Cat admissions	Reclaimed	%	Rehomed	%	Transferred	%	Euthanised	%
11,445	687	6	5,898	52	278	2	4,190	37

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IT'S NOT JUST THE ANIMALS

"I have seen so many people's lives damaged by having to kill a never ending stream of kittens and cats"

"The effect on mental health is a very real problem, and veterinarians were the most affected – it was terrible to see the impact on them"

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What can we do?



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Strategy 1: Anti-nuisance laws NOT mandated containment

Strongly encourage containment on property & provide practical tips

Promote bedtime feeding – feed cat as go to bed & close windows

Practical support for individuals living in vicinity of vulnerable wildlife – it is a state asset!



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Strategy 2: Stop the kittens!

>50% cats entering shelters and pounds were born in previous 6 mths

Stop birth of kittens to become stray or surrendered

Stop problematic behaviours – fighting, yowling, less roaming



→ Targeted (microtargeted) free desexing programs

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Community Cat Programs:
Reduce complaints, shelter intake and euthanasia

Targeted & microtargeted

- Desexing owned cats to stop kittens being born to become strays or surrendered to shelter
- Converting semi-owners to owners to stop timid and shy cats and kittens coming into shelter
- Managing multi-cat sites Desexing & microchipping cats for caregivers (semi-owners) to stop timid and shy cats & kittens coming into shelter
- Protecting human & animal lives - Working cat programs and Return to field (RTF) - Working cats – horse barns, farms, factories, etc
RTF = return to home location of healthy cats unlikely to be adopted (they are getting care)
- Assisting and supporting cat owners and carers to care for their cats – rather than enforcement & punishment first
- Resolving cat-related nuisance issues

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Guess what? It works!!

Number of cats observed per camera deployment (every 6 mths)

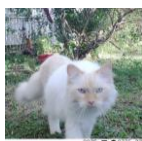


Rosewood Camera Placement 2021 WINTER

33% decline in free-roaming cats over 4 years

Shelter intake down 60%, euthanasia 86% and cat related complaints by 39% in 3 years

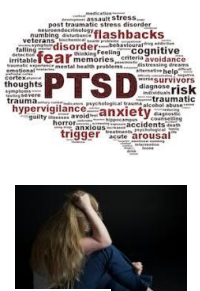
Rand et al. 2025; Ma 2025, 2026, Cotterell 2024



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Without Community Cat Programs

- Someone has to kill the kittens and cats
- Killing healthy animals damages people's lives, and some cases, killing animals kills people too.
- Suicide rate for animal rescue sector in USA reached number 1 with first responders (police & fire fighters)



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