

Cat Management Bill 2009

FACT SHEET

There is currently no State-wide, integrated approach to cat management in Tasmania. The Government has committed to developing legislation to manage domestic cats, while also allowing for the humane removal of stray and feral cats.

The *Cat Management Bill 2009* has been developed in consultation with animal welfare associations and shelters, vets, environmental organisations, and local government. It essentially implements the Position Paper of August 2008, which generated 171 submissions and showed strong support for the proposals outlined. Where appropriate, it also uses provisions similar to those already familiar in the Dog Control Act.

The Purpose of the Bill is to:

- promote the welfare and responsible ownership of cats, including the desexing and microchipping of domestic cats;
- provide for the effective management of cats, allowing for the humane handling and management of unidentified, stray and feral cats; and
- reduce the negative effects of cats on the environment.

As a first step to reduce the number of cats that become unwanted and are euthanased each year, the Bill includes approaches to reduce the unplanned breeding of cats. A register of cat breeders will be established and the Bill allows only registered breeders to breed cats.

The Bill also aims to encourage the responsible ownership of cats, including microchipping and desexing of domestic cats. To assist new cat owners, the Bill requires that cats must be at least 8 weeks of age, microchipped and desexed prior to sale. However, where there are genuine reasons as to why this can not occur, a care agreement may be entered into allowing this to happen at a later date.

These measures may also reduce the flow of unwanted cats that add to the feral cat population. Stray and feral cats pose significant threats to Tasmania's native animals, as is well known, and also to farm stock through the spread of toxoplasmosis.

The Bill therefore clarifies the powers necessary to continue controlling stray and feral cats in "prohibited areas", which include land reserved mainly for the protection of natural values. The rights of farmers with livestock and managers of rural properties in remote areas are also set out.

The Bill significantly clarifies the rights and powers of cat management facilities. Among other things, it specifies minimum holding times for cats, allowing cat owners time to look for lost pets, while also providing a framework for shelters dealing with unidentified, stray and feral cats.

Local Councils have no additional obligations under the Bill, but voluntary action is facilitated. They will now be able to make by-laws in relation to cat management. They may also declare council-controlled land as prohibited areas, or declare "cat management areas" to support local initiatives.

The Bill is much simpler than similar legislation in other States, although it will require some detail in Regulations. The whole package is expected to commence in mid-2010.