

June 24, 1996

American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians Resolution on Management of Feral Cats

Background: Feral cats (Felis domesticus) are defined in this resolution as free-roaming or non-pet domestic cats. Feral cats are common worldwide and constitute a non-native, detrimental predator of native wildlife including birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Animal welfare, animal rights and humane groups have become active proponents of managed cat colonies which are groups of feral cats that are trapped, disease tested, vaccinated, neutered, and released (TTVNR) back to the original capture site. The feral cat colony is then maintained by routine provision of food and health care, including revaccination, when and if possible. The ultimate goal of a managed cat colony varies from continual perpetuation to extirpation of the colony through no replacement or recruitment.

The control and management of feral cat colonies is of concern to wildlife management and public health agencies and humane groups. This resolution is offered in support of efforts by governmental agencies and public or private organizations to regulate and control feral cats in a humane manner on public lands managed for natural resources.

Whereas: Feral cats are present worldwide and are considered an exotic or non-native species in all habitats in which they occur;

Whereas: Governmental wildlife agencies are charged with the management, conservation and preservation of native flora and fauna and the habitats in which they exist;

Whereas: Feral cats can exert significant, detrimental predatory effects on native birds and small mammals in local ecosystems and the maintenance of feral cat colonies does not eliminate predation on native birds and small mammals by feral cats;

Whereas: There are no standard guidelines for the quality of care or maintenance provided to feral cat colonies and the effectiveness of TTVNR programs for management, control or elimination of feral cat colonies is largely unknown;

Whereas: Bites, scratches, and feces from feral cats can be a significant risk for exposure to several zoonotic diseases to the people that care for feral cats as well as the general public;

Be it resolved: That the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians support actions by governmental wildlife agencies, public health agencies, and public and private organizations to ban or eliminate feral cat colonies in a humane manner on public lands managed for natural resources and discourage feral cat colonies on private lands.

Be it further resolved: That the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians recognizes the need for further scientific study of the feral cat issue; encourages cooperation and positive discussion between groups involved in the feral cat issue; and supports efforts by the American Veterinary Medical Association and animal welfare groups to increase public awareness of and initiating programs to decrease cat overpopulation and the abandonment of unwanted cats in urban and rural areas.