

Feral Cats

Felis Catus

Feral cats are domestic cats that have gone wild. They often look scruffy and may be very wary of people. Wild cats are widespread throughout New Zealand, including most offshore islands. In many cases, populations have been established by people dumping unwanted pets. They are very territorial animals which have a home range from 30 to 80 hectares. Feral cats are mainly active at night.

Why are Feral Cats a pest?

- It is estimated that wild and pet cats kill up to 100 million birds in New Zealand each year. Many of the victims are natives such as tuis and pigeons.
- Cats also eat lizards and frogs.
- Feral cats can carry tuberculosis with the potential to infect cattle.
- They also carry parasites and toxoplasmosis which causes abortions in sheep and illness in humans.

Control

Trapping is the best control method for feral cats. They can be difficult to trap as they are naturally cautious and a previous bad experience will make them shy. Because care must be taken to avoid trapping domestic cats, live capture boxes are preferred. Horizons supports the neutering of pet cats to reduce the breeding of cats in the wild should pets later be abandoned.

Horizons provide advice and information to assist the control of these troublesome cats. We also have cage traps available for loan.

Live cage traps or leg hold traps can be used. Both can be purchased from stock and station agents. The main advantage of live capture traps is that if you catch a pet it can be released unharmed. We remind you that the animal should be euthanized in a quick and humane manner. Your local vet may be able to dispose of the animal for you if you are unable to euthanize it yourself.

The Feral Cat is identified in Horizons Animal Pest Management Strategy as a 'Non- Strategy problem animal'. This means that it is an animal which is undesirable, but has not met all the criteria for inclusion as an animal pest. Where values in High Value Conservation Areas (HVCA) are at risk and in other exceptional circumstances these animals may be controlled by Horizons. HVCA's are important areas of native bush and wildlife habitat in the Region.



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