

Understanding Australia's national feral cat control effort

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Strategic online survey for organisations

NATIONAL FERAL CAT CONTROL SURVEY

Your organisation is invited to participate in a survey about feral cat control in Australia. The information provided in this survey will help generate a better understanding of feral cat management in Australia, including how to make improvements.

This survey is being conducted by Dr Alex Kusmanoff, Dr Georgia Garrard and Professor Sarah Bekessy at RMIT University (contact details are provided below). This project is funded by the Australian Government.

By completing this survey, you are helping us collect the highest quality data in a consistent manner. However, if you would prefer to provide data directly, rather than through this survey, you can send it to alex.kusmanoff@rmit.edu.au

What is the project about?

The aim of this project is to determine the extent to which feral cat control is occurring across Australia, and to estimate the number of feral cats that are removed from the environment each year. This project also seeks to understand how efforts to control feral cats are changing over time.

Previous research has highlighted the significant contribution that organisations make to feral cat control and threatened species conservation in Australia. We are interested to know about your organisation's activities related to feral cat control. We would like your organisation to complete this survey even if it does not actively participate in feral cat control.

We would also like your organisation to complete this survey even if it reported this information in the same survey conducted in 2016. To understand the national efforts around feral cat control, it is critical that we receive updated information from organisations about their feral cat control activities, including where they are not involved.

To complete the survey, please ensure that you have the permission of your organisation to provide the information, and that only one person from your organisation completes the survey. Before starting the survey, you should make sure that you have available to you summary information about the feral cat control efforts of your organisation, including, if possible, estimates of the number of feral cats killed in the 2016-17 and 2017-18 financial years. Approximations, including ranges, are acceptable.

Please try and answer all the questions. If you are unable to answer a question, please leave it blank and move to the next question. It is important that you go to the end of the survey to ensure that your answers are recorded, even if you leave some questions unanswered.

If you'd rather discuss this on the phone or send an email, you may contact Dr Alex Kusmanoff on (03) 9925 9944 alex.kusmanoff@rmit.edu.au
This survey will be open until Wednesday 22 August.

What will happen to the information the organisation provides?

Responses to the survey questions will be collated and stored in a spreadsheet, before being analysed. Results will be presented in a research report and may also be published in academic journals and presented at academic conferences.

Your organisation may remain anonymous if preferred. Once we have completed our data collection and analysis, data will be stored securely on the RMIT server for five (5) years before being destroyed.

Following your participation, you may contact Alex (alex.kusmanoff@rmit.edu.au) or Georgia (georgia.garrard@rmit.edu.au) to obtain a summary of the results (expected to be available in late 2018).

Whom should I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about your participation, please contact Dr Alex Kusmanoff on (03) 9925 9944 or alex.kusmanoff@rmit.edu.au.

Investigators:

- Professor Sarah Bekessy, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies RMIT University (03) 9925 1858 sarah.bekessy@rmit.edu.au
- Dr Georgia Garrard, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies RMIT University (03) 9925 9986 georgia.garrard@rmit.edu.au
- Dr Alex Kusmanoff, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies RMIT University (03) 9925 9944 alex.kusmanoff@rmit.edu.au

Q1 What is the name of the organisation for which you are completing this survey?

- Organisation name: _____
- Prefer not to say

Q2 What is the nature of your organisation?

- Local or regional council
- Sporting shooters association
- Farmers association
- Conservation organisation
- Indigenous Protected Area or indigenous ranger group administration
- Community group
- Scientific institution
- Other (please specify) _____

For the purposes of this survey, feral cats are defined as "cats that live in the wild and can survive without human reliance or contact".

Q3 Does your organisation remove feral cats from the environment?

By 'remove' we mean kill on site, catch and take to another location for euthanasia by you or somebody else, or receive feral cats from other parties and euthanize.

- Yes, we actively remove feral cats (note: this can include contracting third parties)
- Yes, we facilitate individuals removing feral cats from the areas we manage
- Yes, we sometimes remove feral cats as a by-product of other activities
- No (please skip straight to Q17 on page 9)

Q4 Does your organisation record its efforts and provide them to an organisation or regional database? (e.g. upload to www.feralscan.org.au, or with local council, Natural Resource Management organisations, Catchment Management Authorities, etc.)

- No, the organisation's efforts are not recorded
- Yes, the organisation's efforts are recorded (please specify where this is recorded)

Note: If you are unable to complete the survey, you may send your data to alex.kusmanoff@rmit.edu.au

Q5 How does your organisation remove feral cats from the environment (select all that apply)

- Shoot
- Trap and then shoot on site
- Trap and then take to a facility for euthanasia
- Bait
- Other humane method (please specify) _____

Q6 How long has your organisation been removing feral cats?

- 1 year or less
- For the last 2 years
- For the last 2 - 5 years
- For the last 5 - 10 years
- For the last 10 - 20 years
- For more than 20 years

Q7 How many cats did your organisation remove in the 2017-18 financial year?

- 1 - 5
- 5 - 10
- 10 - 20
- 20 - 30
- 30 - 40
- 40 - 50
- 50 - 75
- 75 - 100
- 100 - 200
- > 200
- We know exactly how many (please provide number) _____

Q8 How many cats did your organisation remove in the 2016-17 financial year?

- About the same as 2017-18
- 1 - 5
- 5 - 10
- 10 - 20
- 20 - 30
- 30 - 40

- 40 - 50
- 50 - 75
- 75 - 100
- 100 - 200
- > 200
- We know exactly how many (please provide number) _____

Q9 How variable from year to year is the total number of feral cats that your organisation removes?

- About the same each year
- It varies a little
- It varies a great deal

Q10 Approximately what area does your organisation cover in its feral cat removal?

- Less than 10 Ha
- 10 - 50 Ha
- 50 - 100 Ha
- 100 - 1000 Ha
- 1000 - 10 000 Ha
- 10 000 - 50 000 Ha
- 50 000 - 100 000 Ha
- > 100 000 Ha
- We know exactly (please specify) _____
- Don't know

Q11 How much time (person hours per month) does the organisation spend removing feral cats?

- 0 - 3 Hrs
- 3 - 5 Hrs
- 5 - 10 Hrs
- 10 - 20 Hrs
- 20 - 40 Hrs
- 40 - 60 Hrs
- 60 - 80 Hrs
- > 80 Hrs
- We know exactly how many hours (please specify) _____

Q12 Why does your organisation remove feral cats? (list all that apply)

- They are a pest
- They adversely affect the livelihood of the organisation and/or its members
- We are concerned about wildlife and this is one way we can help
- It is part of the organisation's role
- Removing feral cats is a component of our conservation management program
- It's just something that the organisation has always done
- Other (please specify) _____

Q13 What changes has your organisation observed as a result of removing feral cats? (select all that apply)

- There are less feral cats
- Feral cat numbers have increased
- Feral cat numbers have remained about the same
- There is an increase in native wildlife
- Less dead wildlife (birds, lizards, etc.)
- There are more mice and/or rabbits
- Fox numbers have increased
- No changes have been observed
- Other (please describe) _____

Q14 Is your organisation achieving what you hoped for by removing feral cats?

- Yes
- No

Q15 Please briefly explain your answer above

Q16 Over the past three years (since 2015), has your organisation's feral cat removal effort always been about the same, or has it increased or decreased over this time?

- About the same
- Efforts have increased
- Efforts have decreased
- I don't know

Q17 Do you have any other comments or suggestions that you believe would be helpful in further managing feral cats?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey on behalf of your organisation.

The information provided will be invaluable in helping us better understand the national effort towards feral cat control.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the survey, or noticed any problems, please email Alex at alex.kusmanoff@rmit.edu.au

Strategic online survey for individuals

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. Please read this page carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please contact one of the investigators.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Project Title: National Feral Cat Control Survey

You are invited to participate in a survey about feral cat control in Australia. The information provided in this survey will help generate a better understanding of feral cat management in Australia, including how to make improvements.

This survey is being conducted by Dr Alex Kusmanoff, Dr Georgia Garrard and Professor Sarah Bekessy at RMIT University, and has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee. Contact details for research investigators and ethics committee are provided below. This research project is funded by the Australian Government.

What is the project about?

The aim of this project is to determine the extent to which feral cat control is occurring across Australia, and to estimate the number of feral cats that are removed from the environment each year. This project also seeks to understand how efforts to control feral cats are changing over time.

Why have you been approached?

You have been invited to take part in this research because you are an Australian resident, and you are someone likely to be either engaged in, or exposed to, feral cat management activities. We would value your participation whether or not you are engaged in feral cat management, including your attitudes towards it. You must be aged 18 years or older to participate in the survey.

If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?

This is a voluntary online survey and should take around 5 to 10 minutes. We will not ask for any identifying information - you will remain completely anonymous (you do not need to give us your name and email address!). We will ask for some basic, non-identifying demographic information (e.g., age range, and state/territory of residence). The survey itself is made up of a number of short questions about feral cats and what, if any, measures you take to manage feral cats. We will ask you to answer the questions to the best of your knowledge. There are no right or wrong answers.

What are the possible risks and benefits associated with participation?

We do not perceive any risks to you as a result of your participation in this survey. As mentioned above, we will not be collecting any information that would allow you to be identified. We are using *Qualtrics*, a well-known and highly regarded program for online

surveys. This program allows us to block the collection of your computer's IP address, thereby providing additional security of your anonymity.

However, participants should be aware that the World Wide Web is an insecure public network that gives rise to a small potential risk that transactions are being viewed, intercepted or modified by third parties or that data which the user downloads may contain computer viruses or other defects. There are no direct benefits to you as a result of your participation in this survey. However, the results of this survey may contribute to improved feral cat management practices in Australia, which may benefit some participants.

What will happen to the information I provide?

Responses to the survey questions will be collated and stored in a spread sheet as group data, before being analysed. Results will be presented in a research report and may also be published in academic journals and presented at academic conferences. Only summary information will be provided in any resulting communications – you will not be identified or

identifiable. Once we have completed our data collection and analysis, data will be stored securely on the RMIT server for five (5) years before being destroyed.

Because of the nature of data collection, we are not obtaining written informed consent from you. Your consent to participate in this research is implied by the completion and submission of the survey.

Please try and answer all the questions. If you are unable to answer a question, please leave it blank and move to the next question. It is important that you go to the end of the survey to ensure that your answers are recorded, even if you leave some questions unanswered.

Following your participation, you may contact Alex (alex.kusmanoff@rmit.edu.au) or Georgia (georgia.garrard@rmit.edu.au) to obtain a summary of the results (expected to be available in late 2018).

What are my rights as a participant?

Participation in this survey is voluntary. As a participant, you have the right to:

- withdraw from participation at any time;
- have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase the risk for the participant;
- have any questions answered at any time.

Whom should I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about your participation, please contact Dr Alex Kusmanoff on (03) 9925 9944 or alex.kusmanoff@rmit.edu.au.

Investigators:

- Associate Professor Sarah Bekessy, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies RMIT University (03) 9925 1858 sarah.bekessy@rmit.edu.au
- Dr Georgia Garrard, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies RMIT University (03) 9925 9986 georgia.garrard@rmit.edu.au
- Dr Alex Kusmanoff, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies RMIT University (03) 9925 9944 alex.kusmanoff@rmit.edu.au

If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity,

Governance and Systems, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476 VIC 3001. Tel: (03) 9925 2251 or email: human.ethics@rmit.edu.au

Q2 I am at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in this survey

- I agree

Q3 Is this the only time you have taken this 2018 survey?

- Yes
- No

Q4 What is your age group?

- 18-35 years
- 36-45 years
- 46-55 years
- 55+ years

Q5 Which of the following best describes you?

- Farmer
- Hunter
- Sporting shooter
- Land manager
- Consultant / Contractor
- Ecologist / Conservationist
- Volunteer with a conservation group
- Traditional Owner
- Other (please describe) _____

Q6 (if farmer selected) What is the size of your farming property?

Q7 (if sporting shooter selected) Are you a member of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q8 Do you also identify with any other descriptions? (select all that apply)

If you do not also identify with any of these groups, please do not make a selection, and move to the next question.

- Farmer
- Hunter
- Sporting shooter
- Land manager
- Consultant / contractor
- Ecologist Conservationist
- Volunteer with a conservation group
- Traditional owner

Q9 What is your residential postcode?

Q10 For the purposes of this survey, feral cats are defined as "cats that live in the wild and can survive without human reliance or contact".

Q11 Do you remove feral cats from the environment?

By 'remove' we mean kill on site or catch and take to another location for euthanasia by you or somebody else.

- Yes, I actively go out to remove feral cats
- Yes, if I see one I'll try to remove it
- Yes, I sometimes remove feral cats as a by-product of other activities
- No (skip to Q25 below)

Q12 Do you record your feral cat control efforts and provide them to an organisation or regional database?(e.g. upload to www.feralscan.org.au, or with local council, Natural Resource Management organisations, Catchment Management Authorities, etc.)

- No, my efforts are not recorded
 - Yes, my efforts are recorded (please specify where this is recorded)
-

Q13 How do you remove feral cats from the environment (select all that apply)

- Shoot
 - Trap and then shoot on site
 - Trap and then take to a facility for euthanasia
 - Bait
 - Other humane method (please specify)
-

Q14 (if 3rd option above selected) To which organisation or facility do you take trapped feral cats to for euthanasia?

Q15 How many years have you been removing feral cats for?

- 1 year or less
- For the last 2 years
- For the last 2 - 5 years
- For the last 5 - 10 years
- For the last 10 - 20 years
- For more than 20 years

Q16 How many cats have you removed in the last 12 months?

- 1 - 5
 - 5 - 10
 - 10 - 20
 - 20 - 30
 - 30 - 40
 - 40 - 50
 - 50 - 75
 - 75 - 100
 - 100 - 200
 - > 200
 - I know exactly how many (please provide number)
-

Q17 How variable from year to year is the total number of feral cats that you remove?

- About the same each year
- It varies a little
- It varies a great deal

Q18 What area would you cover in your feral cat removal?

- Less than 10 Ha
 - 10 - 50 Ha
 - 50 - 100 Ha
 - 100 - 1000 Ha
 - 1000 - 10 000 Ha
 - 10 000 - 50 000 Ha
 - 50 000 - 100 000 Ha
 - > 100 000 Ha
 - I know the exact area (please list)
-

Q19 How much time (per month) would you spend removing feral cats?

- 0 - 3 Hrs
- 3 - 5 Hrs
- 5 - 10 Hrs
- 10 - 20 Hrs
- 20 - 40 Hrs
- 40 - 60 Hrs
- 60 - 80 Hrs
- > 80 Hrs

Q20 Why do you remove feral cats? (list all that apply)

- They are a pest
- They adversely affect my livelihood
- I am concerned about wildlife and this is one way I can help
- It is part of my work duties
- It is part of a conservation program that I am involved in
- It's just something that I've always done
- Other (please specify) _____

Q21 What changes have you observed as a result of removing feral cats? (select all that apply)

- There are less feral cats
- Feral cat numbers have increased
- Feral cat numbers have remained about the same
- There is an increase in native wildlife
- I see less dead wildlife (birds, lizards, etc.)
- There are more mice and/or rabbits
- Fox numbers have increased
- I haven't observed any changes
- Other (please describe) _____

Q22 Since you began removing feral cats, have your efforts always been about the same, or have you increased or decreased your efforts over time?

- About the same
- Efforts have increased
- Efforts have decreased
- I don't know

Q23 (if efforts have decreased) Please briefly explain when your efforts decreased, and why

Q24 (if efforts have decreased) Please briefly describe when your efforts increased, and why

Q25 What is your view about removing feral cats from the environment?

- I am not opposed to the removal of feral cats from the environment
- I am opposed to the removal of feral cats from the environment
- I have no strong opinion about the removal of feral cats from the environment

Q26 Please list the most important reasons why you do not support removal of feral cats from the environment

Q27 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Feral cats are bad for wildlife and cause a decline in native species	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feral cats are a threat to livestock	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feral cats can be dangerous and spread diseases to humans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feral cats harass and injure domestic cats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a predator, feral cats play an important role in food chains	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feral cats keep numbers of mice and rabbits down	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feral cats have a right to exist wherever they are and whatever impact they have	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q28 To what extent do you agree that the following would make you more likely to begin or increase your efforts to remove feral cats?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
If it were easier to get a permit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training on how to do it in a humane way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If a reimbursement fee was available	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If it was easier to rent or borrow traps	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If it was easier to access baits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If laws to enforce feral cat control were introduced	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If there was more information on the positives of feral cat control	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If there was more information available on the various methods to control feral cats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If there was more information about how feral cat control efforts help protect wildlife	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If there was an increase in the public acceptance of feral cat removal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nothing would encourage me to begin or increase efforts to control feral cats (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I currently have no capacity to increase my efforts to control feral cats (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q29 Did you participate in the 2016 National Feral Cat Control Survey?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Q30 Do you know that Australia has a Threatened Species Commissioner?

- Yes
- No

[next paragraph randomly alternates between participants – participants receive 1 of either Q31, Q32 or Q33 (this is a control with no paragraph)]

Q31 Please read the following statement from the Australian Government's Office of the Threatened Species Commissioner:

Feral cats are a significant threat to Australia's native wildlife. Conservation is everyone's business, and by controlling feral cats, we reduce harm caused to Australian animals and chance of extinction.

The Office of the Threatened Species Commissioner is working with State and Territory governments, natural resource management bodies, local Landcare groups, local councils and other partners to control feral cats.

Cat owners can also help fight extinction by following the RSPCA guidelines for responsible pet ownership, which also protects their cat's health. Recent successful outcomes of feral cat removal include:

- Protecting critical habitat in Kosciusko National Park
- Re-establishment of a western quoll population in SA's Flinders Ranges, and
- Protection of the critically endangered Gilbert's Potoroo in WA.

Q32 Please read the following statement from the Australian Government's Office of the Threatened Species Commissioner:

Feral cats are a significant threat to Australia's native wildlife. By controlling feral cats, we reduce harm caused to Australian animals and chance of extinction.

The Australian Government has a target to cull 2 million feral cats by 2020. We are removing feral cats, in targeted areas which are important to the protection and recovery of threatened species, in a way that is humane, effective and justifiable.

Since 2014, over \$38 million has been mobilised by the Australian Government to tackle feral cats. An additional \$5.1 million has been invested in the development of

the Curiosity bait. This includes over 105 Green Army projects have been approved that are tackling feral cats.

Q33 [control treatment with no text]

Q34 In your opinion, who is responsible for feral cat management (select all that apply)

- All land owners and managers
- Conservation organisations
- Cat owners
- Australian Government
- State and Territory governments
- Parks and wildlife services
- Local councils
- All members of the public
- Other _____

Q35 How willing are you to contribute to feral cat management?

- Not at all
- Willing, if it was relevant and convenient for me
- I am very interested in contributing to the control of feral cats
- I am already involved in feral cat management

Q36 Do you follow the Threatened Species commissioner on social media? (select all that apply)

- Yes - I follow her on Twitter (www.twitter.com.au/tscommissioner)
- Yes - I follow her on facebook (www.facebook.com.au/tscommissioner)
- Yes - I watch her YouTube videos
- No - I don't follow her on social media

Q37 Do you currently own a pet cat?

- Yes - I currently own a cat
- No - but I have previously owned a cat
- No - I have never owned a cat

Q38 Do you have any other comments or suggestions that you believe would be helpful in further managing feral cats?

Q39 Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

The information provided will be invaluable in helping us better understand the national effort towards feral cat control.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the survey, or noticed any problems, please email Alex at alex.kusmanoff@rmit.edu.au

Table S1. Workings and justifications for target populations for projections to local councils, farmers and shooters/hunters who engage in feral cat control.

	A Total National Population	B % Active in Feral Cat Control	C Total Active Population (AxB)	D # Already Included (responded to survey)	E Total # for Projections (C-D)
Local Councils	563 (ABS, 2016)	77% Extracted from organisational survey	434	158	276
Farmers	88,073 Total number of farms in Australia (ABS, 2018)	7% (Stenekes et al. 2017)	6,165	563	5602
Hunters / Shooters	190,050 Membership of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia	20% Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Matthew Godson, pers comm)	38,010	1073	36,937

References

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Stenekes N, Kancans R & Binks B (2017) *Pest animal and Weed Management Survey: National landholder survey results*, ABARES research report 17.5, May. CC BY 4.0.

Figure S1. Summary statistics for responses to the organisation survey. (a-b) Responses from all responding organisations ($n = 316$): a) organisation engagement in feral cat control; b) type of organisation. (c-f) Responses from organisations engaged in feral cat control ($n = 247$): c) preferred method of feral cat control (organisations can select more than one option); d) effort allocated to feral cat control (hrs/month); e) change in feral cat control effort over time; and f) interannual variability in number of feral cats removed.

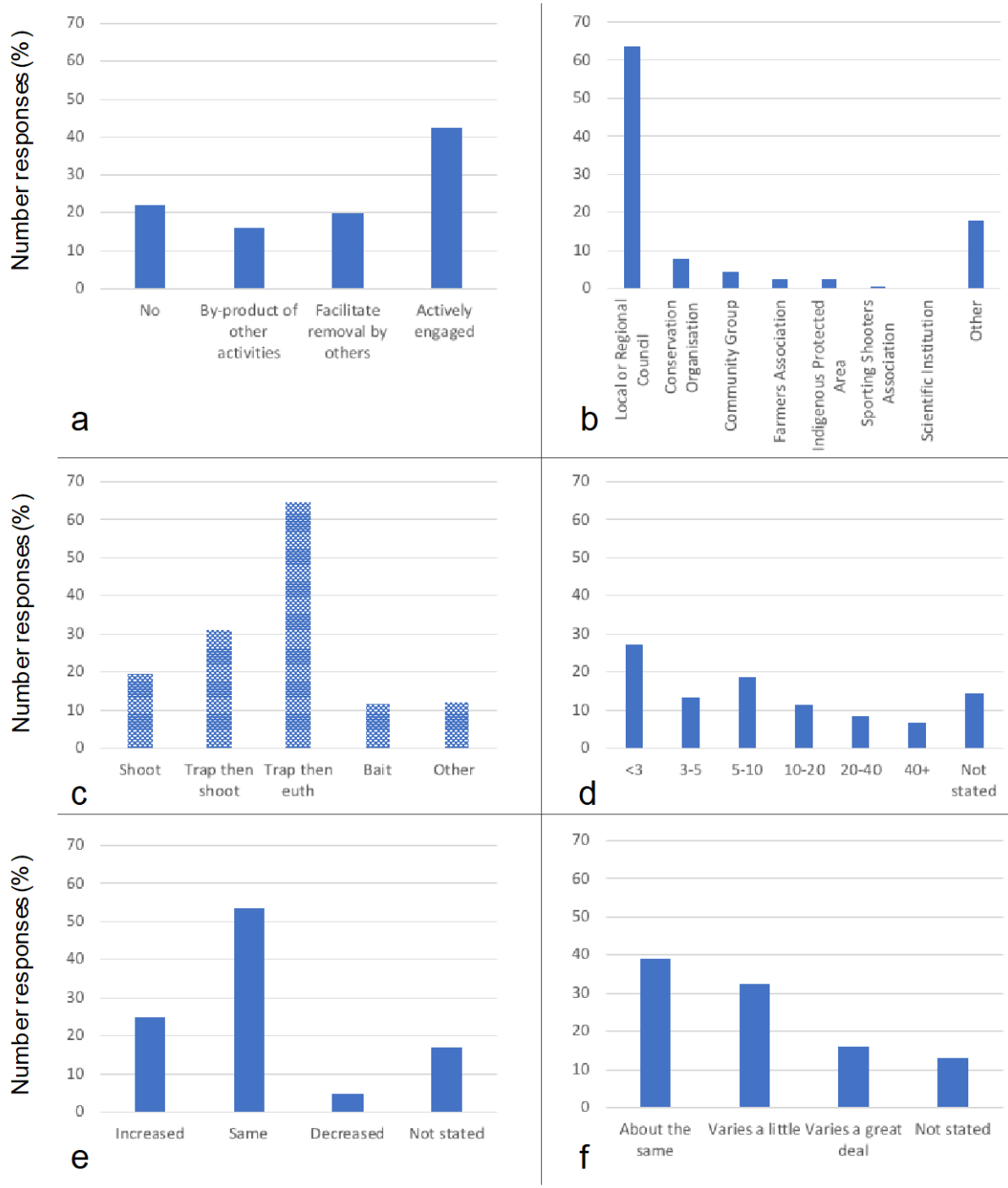


Figure S2. Fitted (L) and projected (R) distributions of the number of feral cats killed in the 2017-18 financial year by a) local councils, b) farmers and c) shooters and/or hunters.

