



## Free-Ranging Domestic Cats (March 2010) Position Statement by the NWRA Veterinary Committee

Considering the following:

- Free-ranging domestic cats, both pets and feral, are those that roam freely for periods of time from a few minutes to their entire lives; and
- Free-ranging domestic cats are a non-native, frequently invasive predator species; and
- Free-ranging domestic cats annually kill, injure or alter the natural behavior of millions of native birds, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians; and
- Free-ranging domestic cats ~~are~~ can be a significant threat to the survival of rare, endangered and threatened species, those designated as being of special concern, and other native wildlife; and
- Free-ranging domestic cats kill many of the species that serve as prey for a variety of native wildlife which, by depriving these native species of valuable food compounds the difficulty of their survival, and places unnecessary stress on the larger ecosystem; and
- Supplemental feeding and the trap-neuter-release of feral domestic cats does not significantly reduce the negative impacts on natural resources, as even well-fed cats kill native wildlife; and
- Domestic cat colonies are sometimes established in areas that are considered to be of little wildlife value but, in fact, these areas can provide temporary, essential resting and foraging areas for migrant species, especially birds; and
- Any time large numbers of animals congregate in one area, as in domestic cat colonies, there is an increased risk for the concentration and spread of infectious diseases, including feline leukemia, toxoplasmosis, and rabies, among others, which not only affect domestic cats but can spread to susceptible wildlife species; and
- Food provided for free-ranging cats also attracts skunks, raccoons, foxes and other species that are capable of contracting and/or spreading rabies through interactions with vector species; and
- These diseases not only endanger native wildlife, but rabies, toxoplasmosis and other diseases also pose significant health risks to people; and
- The National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians has stated that there is no evidence that feral cat colony management programs will reduce diseases; the NWRA does not support domestic cats being allowed to roam freely.

NWRA supports (recommends) that all domestic cats be kept indoors, or if allowed outside they be securely restrained physically (by means of a harness and leash, for example) or kept in a fully secured enclosure. NWRA does not support feral domestic cat colonies unless they are actively managed in a secure enclosure to prevent movement of any animals, including wildlife species, in or out of the colony. Allowing domestic cats, whether pets or feral, to be free-ranging is not supported or condoned by NWRA in any manner.