



Photo Colin Bishop

## HABITAT

Feral cats live in a wide range of habitats from farmland to forest. They tend to be solitary and territorial, with measured home ranges of more than 200 hectares. They mark their territory by secreting scent from anal glands, spraying urine, and droppings may be buried or left on the ground.

Feral cats are mainly active at night, preying on small mammals such as rodents, small birds and eggs, fish, lizards and insects. They have very good vision and hearing, but their sense of smell is less sensitive.

For more animal pest control information go to:

[www.nrc.govt.nz/pestmanagement](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/pestmanagement),  
[www.npca.org.nz](http://www.npca.org.nz) or [www.ermanz.govt.nz](http://www.ermanz.govt.nz)

## Contact us:

For further information contact  
 Northland Regional Council Biosecurity staff  
**0800 002 004** or **[www.nrc.govt.nz](http://www.nrc.govt.nz)**

**Facebook:**  
[www.facebook.com/NorthlandRegionalCouncil](http://www.facebook.com/NorthlandRegionalCouncil)

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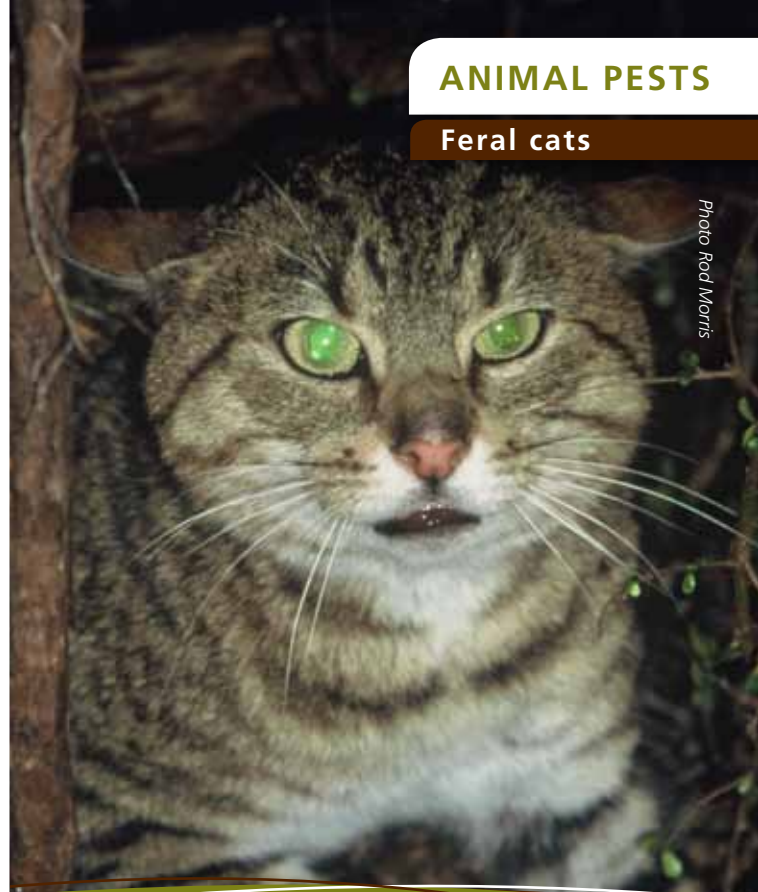


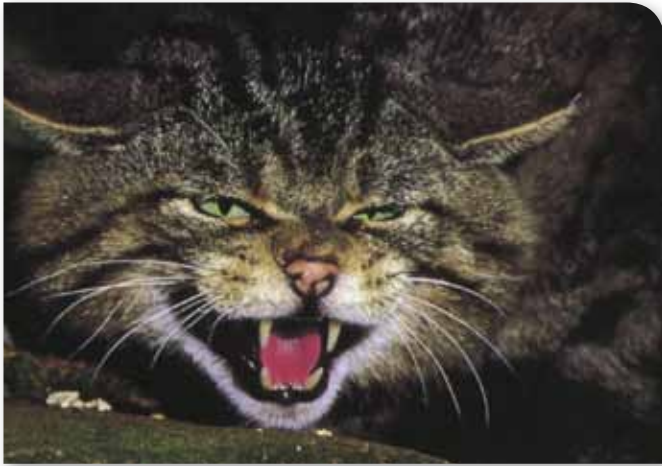
Photo Rod Morris

# Feral cats

## *Felis catus*

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Putting Northland first



It is estimated that cats kill up to 100 million birds in New Zealand each year. Many of the victims are natives such as tuis and kükupa. Feral cats can carry parasites and Toxoplasmosis, which can infect humans.

An average adult male cat weighs between two and seven kilograms, while females weigh between 1.6 and 4.6kg. Coat colours vary from pure black to orange tabby.

Feral and stray cats are widespread throughout New Zealand with dumped pets the cause of most populations.

The difference between companion, stray and feral cats is mostly to do with the amount of contact and reliance they have on humans to meet their needs.

Companion cats – domestic cats – live with humans as “companions” and depend on humans for their welfare. Stray cats have usually been lost or abandoned by humans, have many of their needs indirectly supplied by humans, and continue to live near humans.

Feral cats have none of their needs provided by humans, and their population size fluctuates largely independently of humans. Feral cats don't generally live near humans. The feral cat population is self-sustaining and requires no input from the domestic cat population.

Under the Northland Regional Council Pest Management Strategy it is illegal to liberate, release or dump any cat in Northland. It's a good idea to fit pet cats with collars to help people tell the difference between domestic and feral cats.

## TRAPPING

When trapping for feral cats you need to be careful to avoid trapping domestic cats. Pets can be released unharmed if live capture boxes or cage possum traps are used and fish is usually the best bait.

Feral cats can be difficult to trap as they are naturally cautious and a previous bad experience will make them shy. Sometimes it is best to fix the door open for two or three nights until the cat is comfortable entering the trap, before actually setting it.

Do not attempt to touch or pick up a wildcat, or even a kitten. They bite and scratch and can spread disease. See a doctor if you get bitten by a cat.

Contact Northland Regional Council Biosecurity staff for more trapping information and where you can buy traps.

Note: the Animal Welfare Act 1999 requires that all live capture traps must be inspected within 12 hours of sunrise the following day.



## BREEDING CYCLE

Females usually come in season – their breeding cycle – in July or August causing the males to become noisy and wander extensively. Gestation normally takes 58 days and two to four kittens are born in September or October. A second litter may be born later in the year.

At four to eight weeks, kittens emerge and play, at 10-12 weeks they accompany their mother on hunting trips and they are fully-grown at 10 months. Juveniles may move up to 10km from where they were born. Females are sexually mature at about one year old and males slightly older.