

Cat Management and Control

**Report of the Cat Management and Control
Sub-Committee to the Gore District Council**

June 2023

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Cat Management and Control Sub-Committee.
- 1.2 The Sub Committee was formed pursuant to a 15 March 2022 resolution of the Council. The Council also adopted a terms of reference (please see attachment 1).

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In April 2022, expressions of interest were advertised for community representatives to join the Working Party.
- 2.2 On 12 May 2022, Councillor Grant resigned from the working party.
- 2.3 Riki Parata representing the Hokonui Runanga together with Councillors Dickson, Bolger and Phillips, met as the Cat Management Working Party on 26 May 2022.
- 2.4 Councillor Dickson was elected Chair, and those who had submitted applications to become community representatives were reviewed.
- 2.5 In June 2022, Riki Parata advised that the Hokonui Runanga would be represented by Shelley Karena.
- 2.6 In June, members of the Committee interviewed four candidates to represent the community on the working party. Following the interviews, members of the Working Party unanimously resolved that all four candidates would provide valuable skills and experience to aid the Working Party in its activities.
- 2.7 On 7 July 2022, the following four community representatives joined the Working Party:
 - Andrea McMillan
 - Melanie Ferguson
 - Shona Willis
 - Angela McFall

On the same day, the Working Party adopted:

- A monthly meeting schedule.
- A work programme.
- A process to consult the wider Gore Community.

2.8 Through July and August, the consultation programme targeting Gore residents commenced utilising the Council's digital media. This programme was supported by various media initiatives undertaken by the Chair of the Working Party.

2.9 Furthermore, background reading was progressively distributed to members of the Working Party. The background reading covered:

- The regulatory environment, including legislation concerning animal welfare and nuisance;
- The Southland Region Pest Management Plan;
- The National Cat Management Strategy;
- Examples of local government regulatory and non-regulatory initiatives, including the provision of public information in New Zealand and overseas; and
- Research concerning stray cats.

2.10 The Working Party received presentations from the SPCA, Forest and Bird, Feline Rights, and the Stray Cats New Zealand Trust together with groups and individuals engaged in stray cat management within the Gore Community.

2.11 Prior to the October 2022 local government elections, the Council considered a progress report concerning the Working Party.

2.12 Following the 2022 election Councillor Keith Hovell joined the Working Party.

3.0 Cat Population

3.1 Consistent with the Companion Cats Code of Welfare (2018), the Working Party adopted the following definitions:

- A companion cat is defined as a cat that lives with humans as a companion and is dependent on humans for its welfare.

- A stray cat means a companion cat which is lost or abandoned and which is living as an individual or in a group/colony. Stray cats have many of their needs indirectly supplied by humans and live around centres of human habitation.
- A feral cat is defined as a cat which is not a stray cat and which has none of its needs provided by humans. Feral cats generally do not live around centres of human habitation. The feral cat population fluctuates largely independently of humans, is self-sustaining and is not dependent on input from the companion cat population.

3.2 It is not known how many cats reside within the Gore District. In common with New Zealand overall, no records are maintained. In order to gauge the size and nature of the Gore cat population, the Working Party considered recent periodic surveys undertaken elsewhere in New Zealand and derived the following estimates.

3.3 Companion Cats

- Companion Animals New Zealand Inc published the results of their 2020 survey of New Zealand households concerning ownership of companion animals.
- The survey found that 41% of households have a companion cat.
- These households have, on average, 1.7 cats each.
- Given that in 2018 the Gore District had 5,109 households, the District is likely home to some 2,100 cat owners and 3,560 companion cats.

3.4 Stray Cats

- Periodic studies in small urban locations in New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom estimate, on average, the stray cat population is some 15-20% of the local companion cat population.
- These numbers can vary – stray cat colonies are generally larger where food is readily available or where cats are regularly dumped.
- Given this ratio, it is estimated some 500 - 700 stray cats exist in Gore.

3.5 Feral Cats

- There is no data on feral cat numbers in New Zealand.
- Results of trapping programmes suggest that feral cats number in the millions – across New Zealand.

- As a whole, across New Zealand, it is considered that feral cats number at least as many as companion cats and stray cats combined.
- This ratio would suggest that some 4,000 – 4,300 feral cats exist in the Gore District.

3.6 The following table presents the Working Party’s gauge of cat numbers within the Gore District:

Companion Cats	3,560
Stray Cats	500-700
Feral Cats	4,000 – 4,300
Total	8,000 – 8,560

3.7 This estimate of the numbers of cats within Gore may initially appear high. However, the number seems more reasonable when considered in the light of the breeding capacity of cats.

For example, given the following assumptions:

- Begin with two de-sexed cats.
- Half all cats are male, half female (F)
- Breeding commences at six months
- Two breeding seasons/litters per year, with three kittens surviving from each litter.

The following table summarises how the population of cats will change:

0 months:	2 cats (1F), 0 kittens
6 months:	2 cats (1F), 3 kittens (2F)
12 months:	5 cats (3F), 9 kittens (4F)
18 months:	14 cats (7F)s, 21 kittens (10F)
24 months:	35 cats (17F), 51 kittens (25F)
30 months:	86 cats (42F), 126 kittens (63F)
36 months:	212 cats (105F), 315 kittens (157F)

3.8 The above analysis highlights how rapidly a de-sexed cat population can grow. Clearly, the model above takes not account of cat deaths but neither does it account for “additions” made to the population by people dumping their companion cats.

4.0 Problems and risks posed by cats

- 4.1 New Zealand research has found that cats are associated with a range of significant issues beyond simple nuisance. These include:
- Predation of wildlife including endangered species;
 - Spreading of disease in particular toxoplasmosis; and
 - Animal welfare and health in particular of stray and feral cats.
- 4.2 Given these problems, the uncontrolled breeding of cats is of significant concern. Female cats can reach sexual maturity at 4 months of age and then go on to have between 4-6 kittens and give birth twice a year.
- 4.3 The Working Party found that there is little or no data concerning cat-related problems in the Gore District.
- 4.4 Following consideration of published material and presentations as well as comments received via the consultation process, the Working Party identified the following problems/risks associated with cats resident in Gore District.

	Problem / Risk
Category 1	Nuisance behaviours
	Noise and fighting/injuries
	Entering property/houses
	Stealing other pets food
	Running across roads
	Uncontrolled breeding / unwanted kittens
Category 2	Feral cats
	Conservation - predation of wildlife
	Fighting/predation of domestic animals (e.g. chickens)
	Spreading disease (e.g. toxoplasmosis)
	Uncontrolled breeding / unwanted kittens
Category 3	Public health
	Toileting in neighbours gardens, lawns, buildings etc
	Getting into & spreading rubbish
	Spreading disease (e.g. toxoplasmosis)
Category 4	Conservation
	Predation of wildlife

Category 5	Animal welfare
	Welfare and health of stray cat colonies
	Welfare and health associated with poor owners and hoarding of cats
Category 6	Irresponsible / poor cat ownership
	Cat owners lacking resources to fund de-sexing and proper care of their animals.
	Dumping of cats
	Welfare and health associated with poor owners and hoarding of cats
	Roaming cats
	Uncontrolled breeding / unwanted kittens
Category 7	Management / Governance
	Lack of a clear national direction / policy regarding cat management in general. Lack of public awareness as to the nature and extent of the “cat problem” in Gore.
	Lack of awareness or understanding among Gore residents of SPCA services available in Gore via the partnership model following the closure of the SPCA facility. SPCA partnership model not working effectively in Gore.
	Lack of a local "shelter" - a base for community groups undertaking management of cats in Gore that is known and supported by the community.
	Lack of shared data / knowledge base concerning the location and extent of stray cats in Gore.
	Distinguishing owned and un-owned cats when carrying out pest control activities.
	Active engagement of Veterinary service firms within Gore

4.5 The Working Party gleaned the following information data concerning the situation in Gore District:

In the year to February 2023, vet firms operating within the District reported that the number of cats de-sexed were:

Male castration	154
Female spayed	208
Total	362

- 4.6 The Working Party noted that given the estimated size of the cat population in Gore, the number of cats being de-sexed by local vets is small. The low numbers of cats being de-sexed leaves a large proportion of the population able to reproduce.
- 4.7 Normally the cost of de-sexing is some \$100 each. In the Gore District, this cost has been reduced to \$30 for male castration and \$50 for a female spay due to:
- A subsidy available for up to 60 operations via the SPCA funded SNAPS (Spay, Neuter Assistance) Programme available through a partnership with a local vet firm.
 - A subsidy provided by a volunteer within the local community who also regularly manages stray cats in the District.
- 4.8 The Working Party notes that given the application of these funds, the cost to the owner of de-sexing cats in Gore is low compared to other locations in New Zealand.

5.0 Stray cat management

- 5.1 Within the District, 3-5 individuals/community groups are regularly, if informally engaged in the management of stray cats. This activity involves capture, de-sexing, socializing and re-homing.
- 5.2 Generally these individuals/community groups “target” particular areas of the District. These ‘hot spots’ include:
- Areas at the town / rural boundary such as Waimumu where cats are often dumped.
 - The Gore A&P Showground’s.
 - Near the “Ram Statue” in the town centre.
 - West Gore.
 - Ontario Street business district.
 - East Gore – Wentworth Street.

In addition these individuals / community groups respond to requests for help.

- 5.3 Some 170 stray cats were captured de-sexed and re-homed by these individuals / community groups over two years to end of 2022. In addition, an unknown number of individuals, households and firms residing in the District adopt or informally foster cats until they are re-homed or regularly feed / support stray cat colonies.
- 5.4 The Council receives a small number of public complaints regarding cats – estimated to be 5-7 in 2022. The Council does have available to residents of the Gore District, two traps suitable for the live capture of cats. These traps are available for hire – a \$50 deposit and \$10 a week.
- 5.5 The traps have received limited use. Nine traps were hired out loans in 2022 and just one thus far in 2023. The Working Party notes the availability of such traps has received limited proactive marketing and as a result public awareness of this service is low.

6.0 Cat Shelters

- 6.1 Following the closure of the Gore SPCA the district was left without a shelter. Three informal private “cat shelters” have subsequently been established on private property within the District.
- 6.2 The average occupancy over the last six months of these shelters is estimated to be 35-40 animals with a peak greater than 100 animals during the 2022-23 holiday season. Awareness and access to the shelters is informal, largely via word of mouth.
- 6.3 In addition to the shelters individuals and households residing in the District “take in” stray / sick cats. The number and extent of this activity is unknown.
- 6.4 The Working Party notes that Gore District Council is considering the establishment of a shelter for dogs. Consideration does not extend to including within the shelter provision for cats.
- 6.5 While some animal shelters in New Zealand do provide for both dogs and cats, the Working Party accepts the view that this is not desirable from a cat welfare perspective.

- 6.6 The welfare of cats, in particular stray cats, which have been exposed to worrying by dogs in the streets, is adversely impacted by the noise and smell of dogs. The presence of dogs is thus an adverse factor in the successful “socialization” and re-homing of cats.

7.0 Volunteer overload

- 7.1 During its consultation the Working Party became aware of the impact upon the lives of those who volunteer to undertake stray cat management and operate informal cat shelters. Key issues identified include:
- Stress arising from concern for animal welfare and the growing number of cats in Gore requiring support.
 - The financial burden associated with operational costs such as feeding, caring, de-sexing and re-homing cats.
 - Lack of space to temporarily house or shelter cats.
 - Time available to liaise with people – neighbours of stray cat colonies as well as people seeking to host re-homed cats.
 - Personal vulnerability of volunteers who often operate at night picking up dumped cats and managing stray cats.
- 7.2 With respect to operational costs, the Working Party heard that the cost of feeding cats in a shelter costs \$10-15 per week while health/vet costs for each cat averages \$80-120.

8.0 Feral cats

- 8.1 Within the District, a community initiative involving volunteers associated with the Hokonui Runanga, Hokanui Tramping Club and the Gore District Council has recently established multiple trapping lines for pest management on Crown Land in the Croydon Bush / Haumuri area.
- 8.2 To date, five feral cats have been trapped within Haumuri. It is not currently known what pests have been trapped within Croydon Bush. Anecdotally, the Working Party is aware that property owners in both rural and urban areas of the District undertake, from time to time, the destruction of feral cats. The extent of this activity is not known.

9.0 Priorities

Following discussion, the Working Party consider that the following prioritisation of problems / risks posed by cats are appropriate within Gore District.

Priority One

- Irresponsible/poor cat ownership

Priority Two

- Management / Governance
- Animal welfare

Priority Three

- Feral cats

Priority Four

- Conservation
- Nuisance behaviours
- Public health

10.0 Evaluation of initiatives and policies introduced in other communities or reserve areas in regard to the control of cats – both feral and domestic.

10.1 Introduction

The Working Party found it useful to classify initiatives to manage or control cats as being either regulatory or non regulatory. Regulatory initiatives are laws and bylaws enacted nationally by Parliament or locally by Regional or District Councils.

10.2 Non regulatory initiatives include a range of actions, including education, provision of grants and other means to encourage targeted behaviour.

10.3 Regulatory initiatives

10.3.1 National legislation

Animal Welfare Act 1999

- Management of cats is the subject to the general provisions of the Animal Welfare Act 1999.
- The Act places obligations on people who own or are in charge of animals to provide for the welfare of their animals.
- The Act includes provisions for Inspectors with enforcement powers.
- Inspectors include staff working for the Ministry of Primary Industry, the SPCA and the Police.
- Veterinarians do not have the powers of an Animal Welfare Inspector unless they have undergone the specific training required and have been warranted.
- The Working Party is not aware of any enforcement action that has been undertaken within the Gore District about cats.
- Developed under the Animal Welfare Act 1999, the Companion Cats Code of Welfare (2018) provides information to owners and persons in charge of companion cats about the standards they must achieve in order to meet their obligations under the Animal Welfare Act 1999.
- These standards are captured under the term “principles of responsible cat ownership”, which the SPCA defines as:
 - Ensuring that their animal(s) are microchipped and, where practical, equipped with a collar and tag for identification purposes. They also ensure their animal(s) is de-sexed before it is able to start reproducing (before reaching puberty).
 - Finding an appropriate companion animal based on careful deliberation and reflection on what qualities will suit the animal to the owner’s home and lifestyle.
 - Providing appropriate health care for their animal in accordance with veterinary advice and support for the animal’s lifetime. Companion animals require both preventive and therapeutic health care (e.g. vaccinations, parasite control, and treatment and monitoring of health problems).
 - Companion animal owners should also be able to recognise the decline in an animal’s quality of life, and decisions should be made in consultation with a veterinarian regarding appropriate end-of-life care (e.g. palliative care, hospice, euthanasia).
 - Providing food, water, and shelter as appropriate for the individual animal.

- Providing adequate socialisation, training, exercise, mental stimulation, and social companionship appropriate to the individual animal.
- Investing time and money for food, containment, and provision of care when the owner is away or when it is no longer possible for the owner or carer to look after the animal.
- Companion animal owners should be prepared to ensure their animal's well-being in the case of an emergency or disaster, including assembling an animal-specific evacuation kit.
- Preventing him/her from negatively impacting other people, animals, and the environment. Companion animal owners should ensure that the animal does not stray and obey all relevant laws, including licensing, leash requirements, and noise control.
- While focusing on companion cats, the Code also provides the following information concerning stray cats:
 - A person who merely feeds stray cats is not the “person in charge” in terms of the Animal Welfare Act, and is not legally responsible for the cats in the colony.
 - Where a colony of stray cats is cared for by people under a management plan agreed with the landowner and/or the local council, the management plan should include:
 - Means of identification.
 - Provision of food, water and access to shelter.
 - A vaccination and parasite programme.
 - Provision of veterinary treatment.
 - A de-sexing programme.
 - A long-term management strategy including continuity of care.

Biosecurity Act 1993

- Cats are not a protected species.

Trapping of cats

- The Animal Welfare Act 1999 provides that for any trapped cat, the following obligations apply:
 - Any traps set must be checked daily within 12 hours after sunrise, commencing from the day after the trap is first set; and
 - Any cats caught must be attended to without delay.

- Any trapped cat must be provided with basic care or be released if it is uninjured or be killed humanely if it is a feral cat.
- Any cat released back into a colony must be in good health.
- Where a stray cat is trapped and placed in the care of an approved organisation the organisation must take reasonable steps to identify the owner of the cat, and may take steps to prevent or mitigate any suffering of the cat. If the owner of the cat cannot be identified, then, after seven days, the cat may be sold, rehomed or euthanised.

10.2.2 New legislation

The Working Party is aware that the Environment Committee of Parliament in November 2021 considered a petition which sought the creation of legislation mandating the registration (micro-chipping) and de-sexing of companion cats.

The Committee has yet to report back to Parliament or the Minister.

10.2.2 Local regulation

- A number of Acts permit local Council's to make local regulations applicable to their Districts.
- For example, the Biosecurity Act 1993 enables the Southland Regional Council to enact the Southland Regional Pest Management Plan 2019-29.
- The Southland Regional Pest Management Plan defines “feral cats” as pests and “domestic cats” as pest agents.
- A further example is the Dog Control Act 1996 which provides a national regulatory framework that enables Councils such as the Gore District Council to enact and enforce bylaws relating to the management of dogs.
- Unlike the situation pertaining to dogs, there is no specific national legislation dealing with cats.
- Given this lack of a national legislation framework, any local regulation or bylaws concerning cats enacted by Council's relies upon the “nuisance” provisions of the Local Government Act 2002 and the Health Act 1956.

Local Government Act 2002 and the Health Act 1956

- The Gore District Council may create bylaws under provisions of the Local Government Act 2002 and the Health Act 1956.

- Bylaws created by the Gore District Council generally seek to protect public health and safety as well as minimising impacts of animals upon neighbors and prevent damage to land and property.
- Establishing obligations for animal owners is the primary means to target these objectives. Given this, while domestic cats may be the subject of bylaw management, stray and feral cats are not.
- In general obligations for animal owners include:
 - Ensuring animals do not cause a nuisance to any other person; and
 - Ensuring animals do not cause a risk to public health and safety.
- Nuisance within Council bylaws generally has the same meaning as Section 29 of the Health Act 1956 and includes a person, animal, thing or circumstance causing unreasonable interference with the peace, comfort or convenience of another person.
- A nuisance is deemed to be created:
 - Where any accumulation or deposit is in such a state or is so situated as to be offensive or likely to be injurious to health;
 - Where any premises, including any accumulation or deposit thereon, are in such a state as to harbour or to be likely to harbour rats or other vermin;
 - Where any premises are so situated, or are in such a state, as to be offensive or likely to be injurious to health;
 - Where any buildings or premises used for the keeping of animals are so constructed, situated, used, or kept, or are in such a condition, as to be offensive or likely to be injurious to health;
 - Where any animal, or any carcass or part of a carcass, is so kept or allowed to remain as to be offensive or likely to be injurious to health;
 - Where any noise, odour or vibration occurs in or is emitted from any building, premises, or land (from an animal) to a degree that is likely to be injurious to health;
 - Where there exists on any land or premises any condition giving rise or capable of giving rise to the breeding of flies or mosquitoes or suitable for the breeding of other insects, or of mites or ticks, which are capable of causing or transmitting disease.
 - Nuisance is defined with reference to people and takes no account of adverse impacts upon wildlife or indigenous species.

- The Local Government Act 2002 and the Health Act 1956 includes provision for Enforcement Officers and Environmental Health Officers with powers to enter property collect evidence and bring cases to court.
- The Gore District Council employ staff and contractors which are qualified as Enforcement Officers and Environmental Health Officers.
- The Working Party is not aware of any enforcement action that has been undertaken within the Gore District with regard to cats.

10.3.3 Cat bylaws

The Working Party found that the Gore District Council along with most Councils across New Zealand has no bylaw provisions specifically targeting cats or cat owners.

- Cat management is undertaken under the general nuisance provisions of the Local Government Act 2002 and the Health Act 1956.
- This situation is however changing. Over the last 2-3 years as Councils across New Zealand review their animal management bylaws, a number have adopted specific rules relating to cats and cat owners in addition to general nuisance provisions.
- These provisions vary from Council to Council but include one or more of the following:
 - A bylaw that limits cat ownership per property;
 - A bylaw that requires companion cats to be micro-chipped and registered with the Companion Animal NZ Trust database;
 - A bylaw that requires companion cats, except those owned by registered breeders, to be de-sexed;
 - A bylaw that requires all companion cats and kittens to be de-sexed, micro-chipped and registered with the Companion Animal NZ Trust database prior to adoption or sold;
 - A bylaw that define all cats which are not micro-chipped / registered as feral; and
 - A bylaw which makes it illegal to feed cats on Parks, Roads and Council land.
- Following discussion with staff from across a number of Councils the effectiveness in achieving outcomes sought by this regulation is difficult to determine.

- The bylaws are newly promoted and do not appear to be the subject of pro-active or strong enforcement.
- Staff of Councils which have enacted such bylaws advise that the primary outcome of the regulation was to:
 - Clarify expectations of the Council concerning the responsible management of cats;
 - To act as a “fall back” where other approaches fail and the individual situation demands a legal approach;
 - To act as an element of a package of initiatives that include non regulatory approaches which act together to provide a comprehensive means to manage cats.
- The Working Party is aware of initiatives in Australia to enhance cat management.
- The Australian bylaws reflect those considered / adopted by New Zealand Councils (see above). In at least one District in Australia the bylaw requires all cat owners to restrain their animals to their property by, for example, fencing.

10.4 Non-regulatory initiatives

- Non regulatory initiatives targeting enhanced cat management and adopted by Councils reflect local circumstances and vary widely.
- The Working Party are aware of the following examples:
 - Provision by Council of information and advice relating to responsible cat ownership;
 - Provision and management of Council animal management shelters that includes provision for cats;
 - Provision of Council of support (e.g. access to Council owned property & buildings, provision of services such as waste removal, rates relief) to community agencies such as the SPCA to undertake animal welfare activities;
 - Provision by Council of funding to subsidise trapping, de-sexing and re-homing of stray cats undertaken by appropriate community groups. Priority is often given to groups relocating stray cats away from sensitive ecological areas;
 - Provision of information including signage (1) identifying sensitive ecological areas and (2) advising cat owners to do all possible to respect

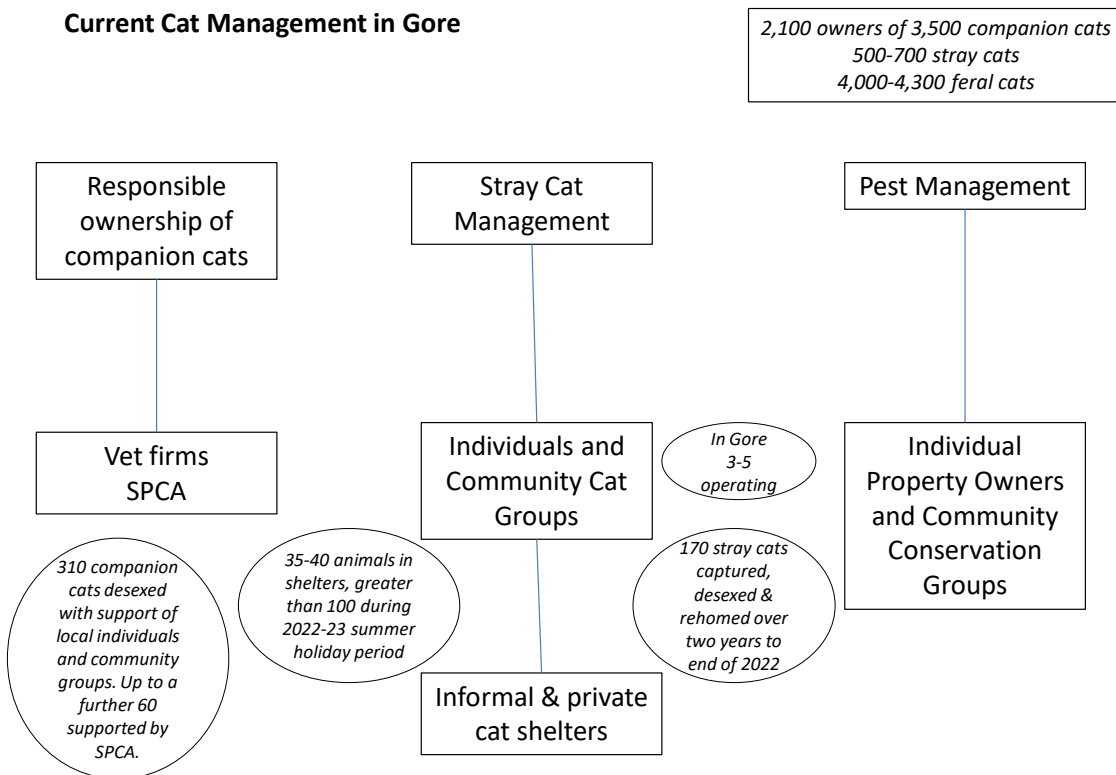
- these areas and (3) describing the nature of cat control measures being undertaken within the area;
- Provision by Council of funding to subsidise micro-chipping and de-sexing of all companion cats;
 - Leadership / support by a Council to bring together and ensure effective communication across community agencies, vets, Council with respect to the effective management of stray cats;
 - Provision by Council of funding to support activities of community groups to trap and kill feral cats, especially within and adjacent to sensitive ecological areas; and
 - Provision by Council of funding to trap and kill feral cats, as part of a pest control programme on Council owned / managed land.

11.0 Cat Management in Gore Today

- 11.1 Up until 2020 / 21 the SPCA played a direct and significant role in cat management on the ground within Gore District. With the closure of the SPCA shelter and elimination of staff and volunteer roles, the Working Party considers that a gap has emerged between an appropriate level of cat management and what can be provided.
- 11.2 It is noted that the Gore District Council historically supported the Gore SPCA with the provision of land upon which the SPCA owned and operated a shelter. Furthermore a level of grant funding was provided by the Council to euthanise cats in the interests of animal welfare where no alternative existed. This grant was discontinued following advice by the SPCA.
- 11.3 Today the SPCA is represented within Gore District via a “partnership model” with a local vet firm. The SPCA through this model, provided 60 vouchers in 2022 to subsidise the de-sexing of companion cats.
- 11.4 Where appropriate animals may be transferred to SPCA shelters in Invercargill or Dunedin. However, given its history, the Working Party are of the view that the SPCA remains “top of mind” among the public as the organisation to approach regarding cat management issues. The Working Party considers that with the closure of the SPCA shelter, Gore residents have struggled to find an agency in a position to help resolve their issues.

- 11.5 Public awareness of the “SPCA partnership” model is low and many may be reluctant to deal with a vet given concerns as to potential cost.
- 11.6 The Working Party found that today the management of cats within the Gore District is impacted by:
- Lack of awareness among Gore residents as to “who to contact” or “where to go” when faced with cat management issues;
 - Multiple agencies working without the benefit of effective governance including:
 - An agreed strategy with priorities and outcomes sought;
 - Day to day coordination concerning activities being undertaken and information sharing; and
 - Lack of resources in particular funding for operations and a “base” or “shelter”.

The diagram below attempts to summarise this:



12.0 Future Cat Management in Gore

12.1 The Working Party is confident that local problems and risks associated with cats can be mitigated by building upon the current initiatives by individuals, community groups and firms with effective:

- Public information and education;
- Improved coordination through effective governance; and
- Additional resources including funding.

The Working Party considers that the Council has a role in achieving effective cat management.

12.2 Beyond the issue of nuisance as defined by the Local Government Act 2002 and the Health Act 1956, there is no legislative requirement for the Gore District Council to engage in the issue of effective cat management.

12.3 The Working Party considers that given the issues impacting the community, the Council should choose to take an active role with regard to effective cat management.

12.4 Section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002 defines the purpose of local government to:

- Enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and
- Promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future.

12.5 As the representative of the Gore community, via democratic decision making the Council is empowered to undertake actions aims at mitigating or resolving local issues.

12.6 Cat management issues impact the following wellbeings.

Social

- Nuisance arising from cat behaviour
- Potential impact of the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii* toxoplasmosis on humans, in particular pregnant women and immunocompromised people (see attachment two)

Economic • Potential impact of the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii* toxoplasmosis on the primary industry (please see attachment two)

Environment • Predation of wildlife including endangered species.

12.7 In addition the Working Party considers the following matters are factors the Council may consider when choosing to take an active role with regard to effective cat management.

- Poor animal health & welfare outcomes associated with the present approach; and
- The capacity of existing community-based efforts to maintain existing services.

13.0 A path toward effective cat management

The Cat Management Working Group considers that the following initiatives would create the foundation for effective management of cats in Gore.

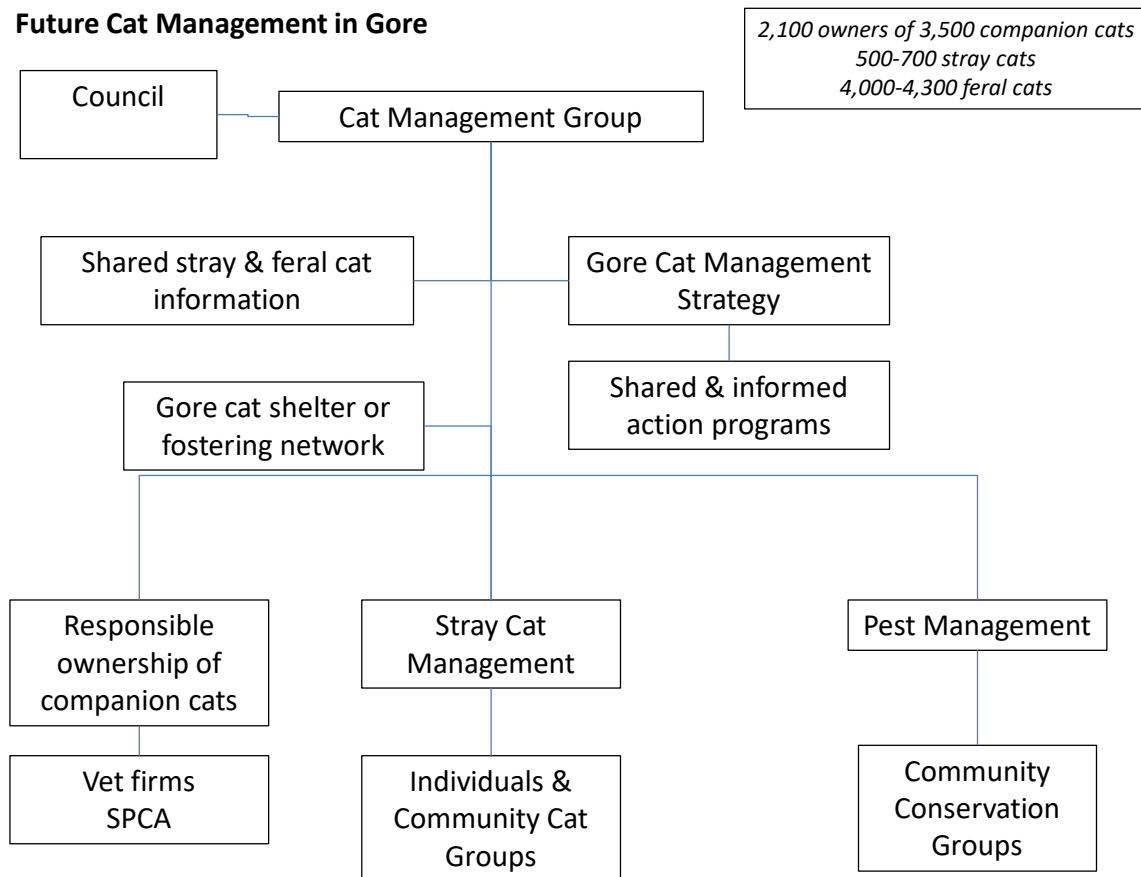
- Adoption by the Gore District Council of a Cat Management Policy outlining the Council's rationale, approach and priorities regarding cat management.
- Effective cat management which is led and undertaken by the community, building upon the foundation established by existing individuals, community groups and firms and supported by the Council.
- Creation of a formal structure such as a "Cat Rescue" Trust or Association with charity status that brings together existing initiatives and acts as a "vehicle" to receive funds and own / lease property such as equipment or land.
- Establish a Cat Management Group which brings together key parties to:
 - Develop a shared strategy including management plans for stray cat colonies.
- Shares information and awareness concerning day to day actions undertaken by the parties to implement the strategy

- A shared information base concerning the location and size of stray cat colonies.
- A shared public information and awareness programme.
- Membership of a Cat Management Coordination Working Party to include:
 - The new Trust / Association / Charity representing community groups involved with stray cat management;
 - Local vet firms (Vet South, CVS Combined Veterinary Services)
 - SPCA;
 - Hokonui Runanga, in particular, the team involved with pest management; and
 - The Gore District Council
- Enhance education and awareness among Gore residents regarding “what to do” and “where to go” when faced with cat management issues;
- Enhanced education of cat owners regarding responsible ownership;
- Additional resources/funding to enhance trapping, de-sexing and re-homing of stray cats;
- Additional resourcing to provide and operate a cat shelter and or a cat fostering network;
- Additional resources/funding to enhance de-sexing and micro-chipping of companion cats;
- Additional resourcing to provide for pest management especially within and adjacent to sensitive ecological areas.

13.1 Until Parliament enacts enabling legislation, the Working Party consider that it is not effective for the Council to introduce bylaws concerning such matters as numbers of cats, de-sexing, registration/tagging etc.

The diagram below attempts to summarise this approach:

Future Cat Management in Gore



14.0 Role of the Council

14.1 The Working Party considers that a Council policy concerning effective cat management provides for:

- Administration and support for the Cat Management Group.
- Provision of education and public information targeting cat owners concerning responsible companion cat ownership.
- Provision of education and awareness among Gore residents regarding “what to do” and “where to go” when faced with cat management issues. This includes promoting what services are available including traps etc.
- Consideration by the Council’s Grants Sub-committee of applications for funding by a formal organisation such as a Trust or Association to support:

- Trapping, de-sexing and re-homing of stray cats.
- De-sexing of companion cats.
- The operation of a cat shelter and/or a programme of fostering.
- Advocacy with Central Government concerning legislation designed to enhance effective cat management, in particular registration (micro-chipping) and de-sexing of companion cats.
- Advocacy with Environment Southland, concerning support and funding of effective pest management, including feral cats, within the Gore District.
- Advocacy with local firms, community groups and others to jointly participate in means to achieve effective cat management.

14.2 In order to aid the Council's consideration of these initiatives the Working Party makes the following comments concerning costs and implications.

Initiative	Cost/implication
Administration and support for the Cat Management Group.	Elected member/staff time.
Provision of education and public information targeting cat owners concerning responsible companion cat ownership.	Staff time to access information from other local government agencies and publish via existing Council communication channels
Provision of education and awareness among Gore residents regarding "what to do" and "where to go" when faced with cat management issues. This includes promoting what services are available, including traps etc.	Staff time to develop messages appropriate to the Gore community given local services. Messages will require updating as services change over time.
Consideration by the Council's Grants Subcommittee of applications for funding by individuals and community groups to support: ● Trapping, de-sexing and re-homing of stray cats as well as cats which are surrendered or unwanted. ● De-sexing of companion cats. ● The operation of a cat shelter and or a programme of fostering.	Excluding time, direct costs of current operations in Gore are in the order of \$20,000 annually for food and \$16,000 for de-sexing and health costs. The Working Party considers a contribution to the value of half these costs would significantly enhance effective cat management.
Advocacy with Central Government concerning legislation designed to enhance effective cat management, in particular registration (micro-chipping) and de-sexing of companion cats.	Elected member/staff time.

Advocacy with the Environment Southland, the Southland Regional Council, concerning support and funding of effective pest management, including feral cats, within the Gore District.	Elected member / staff time.
Advocacy with local firms, community groups and others to jointly participate in means to achieve effective cat management.	Elected member / staff time.

15.0 The Future

- 15.1 The Working Party considers that the path to effective cat management in Gore will take time. The findings outlined in this report represent initial steps and there remains uncertainty.
- 15.2 For example, it may be appropriate to establish a cat shelter in Gore but a strong programme of fostering may be a first step or indeed an alternative. This is an issue that can be worked through and resolved by the new governance structure.
- 15.3 Similarly, the Working Party is confident that enhanced volunteer contributions and funding sources will be identified and mobilized by the new governance structure. A successful programme acts to attract additional resources from households, firms and other agencies.

16.0 Recommendations

That the Council:

- Receive the Report.
 - Thank those who represented the community and the Hokonui Runanga on the Working Party.
- Delegates to the Policy and Planning Committee the development and adoption of a cat management policy outlining the Council's rationale, approach and priorities regarding cat management.
- Enables the Council's Grants Sub-committee to consider applications for funding by individuals and community groups to support:
 - Trapping, de-sexing and re-homing of stray cats.
 - De-sexing of companion cats.
 - The operation of a cat shelter and or cat fostering network.

- Support the establishment and operation of a community-based Cat Management Group with a focus upon:
 - Developing a shared strategy, including management plans for stray cat colonies;
 - Sharing information and awareness concerning day-to-day actions undertaken by the parties to implement the strategy
 - Creation of a shared information base concerning the location and size of stray cat colonies; and the
 - Development and deployment of a shared public information and awareness programme.
- Support the development and deployment of public information in order to raise awareness:
 - Among residents regarding “what to do” and “where to go” when faced with cat management issues;
 - Among cat owners regarding responsible cat ownership;
- Advocates for the enactment of national legislation by Parliament mandating the de-sexing and registration (micro-chipping) of companion cats; and
- Advocates to Environment Southland for additional support and funding of effective pest management, including feral cats within the Gore District.

Attachment 1: Terms of Reference

Formal name: Cat Management and Control Sub-Committee

Common name: Cat Management Working Party

Reporting to Council

Constitution

- Four Councillors (two urban, two rural)
- One representative of Hokonui Runanga
- Two community representatives (to be appointed by four Councillors and Hokonui Runanga)

Chair: To be appointed by the Sub-Committee

Meeting frequency: As required

Reporting frequency: Quarterly to the Council

Scope of activity

- (a) To analyse and receive advice on the regulatory environment in regard to the keeping and control of cats.
- (b) To identify and evaluate the extent of, problems and risks posed to the environment and community by feral and domestic cats.
- (c) To investigate and evaluate initiatives and policies introduced in other communities or reserve areas in regard to the control of cats – both feral and domestic.
- (d) To recommend to the Council, regulatory and/or incentive based initiatives that can be adopted to address and mitigate the problems and risks identified in (b) above.

Authority to act

The Sub-Committee only has recommendatory power. It has no authority to implement any recommended initiatives or regulatory control, without Council approval.

Delegation: The Sub-Committee has no powers of delegation.

Adopted by the Gore District Council at its meeting held on Tuesday, 15 March 2022.

Attachment 2: Toxoplasmosis

Please note the following information concerning toxoplasmosis has been sourced from public sources provided by Health Navigator Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand and the New Zealand Food Safety Authority Ministry of Primary Industry.

The information is provided to raise awareness only and is not full and complete.

1: Health Navigator New Zealand, Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand

Toxoplasmosis is a common infection that usually occurs by eating infected meat or by exposure to the faeces (poo) of infected cats including contaminated soil / sand.

It is usually harmless but can cause serious problems if you are pregnant or have a weak immune system.

Key points

- Toxoplasmosis is a disease caused by infection with the *Toxoplasma gondii* parasite, one of the world's most common parasites.
- It can cause serious problems for babies born to infected mothers and people with a weakened immune system.
- Toxoplasmosis may cause flu-like symptoms but most people affected do not develop any symptoms so don't realise they have it.
- Toxoplasmosis infection can be detected by a blood test.
- If you are diagnosed with toxoplasmosis and you are pregnant or have lowered immunity you will be prescribed medicine.

Who is most at risk of toxoplasmosis?

Toxoplasmosis is normally harmless but in rare cases it can cause serious problems. Your risk is increased if:

- you get infected when you are pregnant – toxoplasmosis can cause miscarriage. If it spreads to your baby it can cause serious complications, especially if you catch it early in pregnancy.
- your immune system is weakened – for example, if you have HIV, have recently had an organ transplant or you are having chemotherapy.

How do I know I have toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasmosis doesn't normally cause symptoms and most people won't know they have had it. Some people get flu-like symptoms, which normally get better on their own within about 6 days.

Symptoms are more common and more severe in people with weakened immune systems. In these cases, symptoms may include confusion, seizures, poor coordination, blurred vision and lung pain.

If you have a weakened immune system, or are pregnant, and think you may be infected by toxoplasmosis, see your doctor. Once you have had toxoplasmosis you are normally immune for the rest of your life.

2: Risk Profile Update: *Toxoplasma gondii* in red meat and meat products, Food Safety Technical report No: 2020/19, New Zealand Food Safety February 2020

This document is an update of the risk profile published in 2015.

New international research data published recently prompted the reassessment of the risk for New Zealand consumers, especially to understand if the risk of toxoplasmosis from the consumption of red meat and meat products has changed in New Zealand.

Toxoplasma gondii is an intracellular protozoan parasite that infects warm blooded animals. In humans, *T. gondii* infections are mostly asymptomatic, but severe health outcomes can occur for pregnant women, for babies through congenital infection and for immune compromised people. A correlation between a seropositive status and diverse neurologic disorders has also been demonstrated.

Although toxoplasmosis is not a notifiable disease in New Zealand, 142 cases have been reported for the period 2007-2016 including 15 cases with a primary diagnosis of congenital toxoplasmosis.

No toxoplasmosis outbreaks have been reported in New Zealand.

Seropositivity rates of 28% and 43% reported in two recent surveys indicate that New Zealanders are being exposed to *T. gondii* during their lifetime.

Data demonstrating livestock exposure to the parasite are limited, with only information available for farmed deer, goat and sheep. However, there are no data on the prevalence of *T. gondii* in meat products available to the New Zealand consumer.

Although red meat and meat products are only one of several possible sources of *T. gondii* infection for humans, it is important to measure their contribution to the global burden caused by *Toxoplasma* infection in New Zealand.

New information published by the European Food Safety Authority identified a lack of correlation between the seropositive status and the presence of *T. gondii* cysts in cattle. Compared to other farmed meat animals, cattle were thought to be infrequently, and not persistently infected with *T. gondii*, on the basis of serological results. However, if serology is not a suitable methodology to assess the infectious status of these animals, then the consumption of beef meat may represent an under-estimated risk.

Nevertheless, although seroprevalence may be a poor indicator of cattle meat contamination with *T. gondii*, further studies using direct detection of the parasite by PCR and bioassay confirmed that overall, meat and meat products from beef and veal carry a lower risk of containing viable *T. gondii* compared to other meat products.

In conclusion, this updated profile does not change our understanding of the risk presented by *T. gondii* infection in New Zealand and the same major knowledge gaps are still identified.

In particular, the human health burden from *T. gondii* infection in New Zealand and the contribution of red meat and meat products compared to other foods and to other transmission routes are still unknown.

Epidemiological surveys are needed to assess the prevalence of the parasite in livestock and in their meat products in New Zealand. This research is necessary to fully assess and manage the *Toxoplasma* risk in New Zealand and can be included in future research projects assessing the red meat safety in New Zealand.

Furthermore, the effect of cooking practices and freezing regimes on the survival of the parasite in meat needs to be studied to be able to propose efficient mitigation options.

3: New Zealand Food Safety Authority July 2010

Animal:

Cats are the primary hosts, and the only animals known to shed oocysts. Flies, earthworms and cockroaches that have come into contact with infected faeces may harbour and spread oocysts (Dubey, 1996).

There is a wide range of intermediate hosts including pigs, sheep and goats, birds, horses, game animals (e.g. deer), mice and rats, marsupials and dogs.

Piglets can be killed by toxoplasmosis, but older infected pigs are asymptomatic. Most sheep abortions in New Zealand are caused by *T. gondii*, *Salmonella* Brandenburg or *Campylobacter* fetus infection (MAF Biosecurity, 2010).

A live *Toxoplasma* vaccine is commonly used to reduce the risk of abortion in ewes. Disease in cattle is rarely reported (Smith, 1991).

Food:

Meat can contain *Toxoplasma* cysts; particularly pork, as well as sheep and goat meat. Beef is rarely contaminated.

Unpasteurised goat milk has been implicated in outbreaks (Skinner et al., 1990; Sacks et al., 1982). Although cysts have been found in chickens and pigeons there is no evidence for transmission to humans by these foods.

Environment:

Oocysts from cat faeces can contaminate the environment (e.g. soil, sand pits and water supplies) and may be transmitted to humans.

Transmission Routes:

There are five recognised modes of transmission to humans (Leroy and Hadjichristodoulou, 2005):

- 1) ingestion of the oocyst – directly from cat's faeces or indirectly e.g. via unwashed vegetables,
- 2) consumption of the cyst originating from animal tissue, e.g. from undercooked pork,
- 3) human organ transplant or blood transmission,
- 4) accidental inoculation e.g. contaminated needles from work with infected animals, and
- 5) congenital transmission.

Appendix**Members of the Cat Management and Control Sub-Committee (Cat Management Working Party)**

Shelley Karena, Hokonui Runanga

Angela McFall, Community Representative

Shona Willis, Community Representative

Melanie Ferguson, Community Representative

Councillor Glenys Dickson

Councillor Keith Hovell

Councillor Neville Phillips