
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO INVASIVE SPECIES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that feral cats
2 contribute to widespread ecological disruptions that threaten
3 native wildlife, particularly in island jurisdictions. Once
4 feral cats are introduced to islands, they prey on a variety of
5 native species, many of which lack evolved defenses against
6 mammalian predators, resulting in severe population declines and
7 extinction. Worldwide, feral cats on islands have contributed
8 to over thirty endemic bird, mammal, and reptile extinctions,
9 including the extinction of the Lāna'i Hookbill and Hawaiian Rail
10 and extinction in the wild of the Hawaiian crow ('alalā), and are
11 the principal threat to almost eight per cent of the critically
12 endangered birds, mammals, and reptiles on the International
13 Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened
14 Species (Red List).

15 As one of the most harmful invasive species, feral cats
16 represent a direct threat to Hawaii's native wildlife
17 populations, particularly its native bird populations. The



1 legislature further finds that Hawaii has the highest per-capita
2 number of endangered birds in the United States, due to
3 introduced predators, habitat loss, and disease. At least
4 sixteen bird species classified as threatened on the Red List,
5 as well as other federally- and state-listed endangered bird
6 species, are affected by the predation of feral cats on the
7 Hawaiian Islands. These include the critically endangered
8 palila, Newell's shearwater ('a'o), Laysan duck, puaiohi,
9 'akikiki, and 'ākohekohe. Since Hawaii's native birds evolved
10 without mammalian predators, they have no natural defenses
11 against feral cats. Many exhibit little fear of potential
12 predators and often lack avoidance behaviors. Although the
13 exact number of birds killed by feral cats in the Hawaiian
14 Islands is unknown, a 2015 study conducted at Hanalei National
15 Wildlife Refuge found that over the course of two years cats
16 killed two hundred fifty-two native birds -- ninety-four per
17 cent of which were endangered species.

18 The legislature also finds that predation among cats is
19 instinctive, meaning that even well-fed cats will hunt and kill
20 wildlife. In 2020, a single cat killed twelve critically
21 endangered Newell's shearwaters, which is particularly



1 devastating for the species since breeding does not occur until
2 age six or seven. In the same year, another single,
3 free-roaming cat killed at least nine endangered Hawaiian petrel
4 ('ua'u) chicks over the course of three days in a remote area of
5 the Hono O Nā Pali Natural Area Reserve on Kaua'i. These recent
6 examples illustrate the harmful impact a single cat can have on
7 Hawaii's fragile native bird populations.

8 The legislature additionally finds that feral cats are
9 responsible for the spread of diseases such as *Toxoplasma*
10 *gondii* -- a potentially lethal parasite shed exclusively in the
11 fecal matter of cats that contaminates terrestrial, freshwater,
12 and marine environments and has been shown to negatively impact
13 birds, humans, and other mammals that may become infected with
14 toxoplasmosis. Toxoplasmosis among humans is considered to be a
15 leading cause of death attributed to foodborne illness in the
16 United States and is particularly harmful for individuals who
17 are pregnant or have a compromised immune system. In Hawaii,
18 toxoplasmosis is also an identified threat to the conservation
19 of native species such as the nēnē, Hawaiian crow, and Hawaiian
20 monk seal. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
21 Administration, toxoplasmosis is a leading cause of mortality



1 among endangered Hawaiian monk seals, with at least twelve
2 Hawaiian monk seal deaths since 2001 attributable to the
3 infection.

4 The legislature further finds that there is strong support
5 among Hawaii residents for effective management to reduce the
6 abundance of feral or free-roaming cats in the Hawaiian Islands.
7 According to a 2013 University of Hawaii survey, nearly
8 eighty-seven per cent of Hawaii residents agreed that feral cat
9 abundance should be decreased. The three most common
10 explanatory variables for respondents' stated desires were the
11 dislike of seeing feral cats, lack of intrinsic value of feral
12 cats, and risk feral cats pose to native fauna. Approximately
13 seventy-eight per cent of respondents supported permanently
14 removing feral cats from areas with threatened or endangered
15 fauna. Responses indicated that the most preferred technique
16 for managing feral cats was the live capture and lethal
17 injection technique, whereas the trap-neuter-release method was
18 the least preferred technique.

19 The legislature additionally finds that the use of
20 techniques such as the trap-neuter-release technique or other
21 efforts that support the feeding or re-release of feral cats



1 into the wild or public spaces are not recommended by the Hawaii
2 invasive species council, since these efforts are not an
3 effective strategy to reduce the number of feral cats in an area
4 or the predation and disease impact of feral cats. Instead, the
5 Hawaii invasive species council recommends that proposed methods
6 for mitigating the impacts of feral cats on native wildlife and
7 humans should be humane and supported by peer-reviewed,
8 scientific evidence demonstrating the efficacy of such methods.

9 The legislature recognizes that the Australian government
10 is at the forefront in developing humane, effective, and
11 justifiable methods to cull invasive feral cat populations.
12 Australia's Threatened Species Strategy identifies a wide and
13 flexible kit of science-based tools for controlling feral cats
14 in different settings, including baiting, which Australian
15 researchers recognize as the most effective method for
16 controlling feral cats when there is no risk posed to non-target
17 species. Utilizing the specially designed Curiosity and
18 Eradicat feral cat baits, the Australian government has been
19 able to humanely control feral cats in conservation areas on a
20 broad-scale level. Over the course of five years, Australia
21 made significant inroads into tackling the impacts of feral cats



1 with the establishment of many new predator-free safe havens and
2 initiated feral cat control across more than eighteen million
3 hectares of Australian landscape.

4 The legislature believes that the State must also actively
5 manage its invasive feral cat population in the interest of
6 public safety and for the protection of critically endangered
7 native wildlife. Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to
8 require:

9 (1) The department of land and natural resources to
10 conduct a point-in-time count of feral cats per island
11 by June 30, 2023; and

12 (2) The invasive species council to develop and implement
13 a program to effectively reduce the feral cat
14 population in Hawaii by December 31, 2025.

15 SECTION 2. (a) The department of land and natural
16 resources shall conduct a point-in-time count of feral cats per
17 island by June 30, 2023.

18 (b) The invasive species council, in consultation with
19 appropriate county, state, federal, and international agencies
20 and private organizations, shall develop a program to
21 effectively reduce the feral cat population in the State as



1 provided in subsection (c). In developing the program, the
2 invasive species council shall consider methods successfully
3 used in Australia to cull the feral cat population, including
4 the use of the Curiosity and Eradicator feral cat baits.

5 (c) Based on the point-in-time count of feral cats
6 conducted by the department of land and natural resources
7 pursuant to subsection (a), the invasive species council and
8 appropriate state agencies shall immediately implement any
9 findings and recommendations and start the program developed
10 under subsection (b) to cull the feral cat population as
11 follows:

- 12 (1) Eliminate the feral cat population on the islands of
13 Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii by December 31, 2025; and
14 (2) Reduce the feral cat population on the island of Oahu
15 by fifty per cent by December 31, 2025.

16 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
18 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for a
19 point-in-time count of feral cats per island and development and
20 implementation of a program to effectively reduce the feral cat
21 population in the State, pursuant to this Act.



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1 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
2 land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

3 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval;
4 provided that section 3 of this Act shall take effect on July 1,
5 2022.

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INTRODUCED BY: _____

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Blount", is written over a horizontal line.

JAN 24 2022



H.B. NO. 1987

Report Title:

Feral Cats; DLNR; Reduction Program; Invasive Species Council;
Appropriation

Description:

Requires DLNR to conduct a point-in-time count of feral cats per island by 6/30/23. Requires the invasive species council to develop and implement a program to effectively reduce the feral cat population in the State by 12/31/25. Appropriates funds.

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