



RESPONSIBLE CAT OWNERSHIP AND HUMANE CAT MANAGEMENT

THE NATIONAL CAT Management Strategy Group (NCMSG), of which the NZVA is a member, launched its proposed

strategy at the New Zealand Companion Animal Council (NZCAC) Conference on 21 September.

The NCMSG has been working together for two years, and earlier this year sought feedback on draft strategic goals and outcomes. This was taken into consideration in the drafting of key recommendations and strategy.

A consultation period for the draft strategy ran for a month from 21 September. Comments were sought from key stakeholders on the strategy implementation (due to the NCMSG's limited resources, feedback was sought from organisations rather than individuals, with one submission requested per organisation). Following consultation, NCMSG will present the final strategy to the Government before the end of the year.

The NCMSG recognises that there are significant benefits to cat ownership and that cats have intrinsic value to people, the community and New Zealand society, but also acknowledges there are concerns regarding the impact of cats, particularly on native wildlife and pastoral industries.

"The recognition of sentience in our animal welfare legislation raises the bar for New Zealand in the way we manage complex issues like cat management," says the NZVA Head of Veterinary Services Callum Irvine. "This requires us to ensure that any framework developed not only addresses the needs of the community in a consultative and collaborative manner, but also ensures the wellbeing of cats is acknowledged and that methods employed are humane."

The issue is complex, and the proposed changes seek to enable, rather than mandate, the development of solutions at a community level. Given the importance and sensitivity of this issue, the NCMSG has proceeded cautiously. It is in ongoing consultation with identified interested parties on all aspects of the proposed draft national cat management strategy, and will pursue a range of actions to implement the required change.

NCMSG's vision is that cats in New Zealand are responsibly owned and valued, and should be humanely managed in a way that protects their welfare and our unique native species by 2025.

The New Zealand veterinary profession will play a critical educative role to ensure the change in community attitudes, beliefs and behaviours needed to realise this vision.

The NCMSG implementation summary document and full document can be accessed at the following links:

→ <http://bit.ly/NCMSGbackground>

→ <http://bit.ly/NCMSGsummary> ■