Who wants feral cats in the Hawaiian Islands and why?

Álisa Davis

On behalf of Cheryl Lohr and Christopher Lepczyk

Dept. Natural Resources and Environmental Management, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa
I saw cats… individual cats, groups of cats, platoons of cats, companies of cats, regiments of cats, armies of cats, multitudes of cats, millions of cats, and all of them sleek, fat, lazy, and sound asleep.

Mark Twain, Roughing It, 1866
Why are feral cats a problem?
If we know that feral cats are a problem why can’t we just get rid of them?
Methods

Tailored design method
3 mailings – 2 survey, 1 postcard
Total 5,407 recipients

Non-response telephone survey
Targeted 5% non-respondents

No difference interest in wildlife, education, or average age
Methods

Stakeholder Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agriculture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting license</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wild Animals in Hawai‘i

A survey of your values and preferences in regards to the management of wild animals in Hawai‘i

To be completed by the adult (age 18 and over) in your household who has had the most recent birthday.

Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management
University of Hawai‘i at Manoa
1910 East-West Rd, Sherman Laboratory
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Methods

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Pre-identified

Stakeholder Group

Agriculture
Animal Welfare
Conservation
Hunting license
Public
Native Hawaiian
Frequent hunter
Feeder (birds & cats)
College education
Low interest in wildlife
High interest in wildlife
Rural home
Methods

**Wild Animals in Hawai‘i**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>162 (48.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Welfare</td>
<td>137 (54.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
<td>307 (47.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting license</td>
<td>483 (34.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>399 (20.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent hunter</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeder (birds &amp; cats)</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College education</td>
<td>726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low interest in wildlife</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High interest in wildlife</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural home</td>
<td>964</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the future, I would like the number of cats to: increase or decrease?

PCI ≤ 0.1

68% ↓

67% ↓
Do you want feral cats to persist in the Hawaiian Islands?
Why do some people want feral cats in the Hawaiian Islands?

Culturally important?  
Economically valuable?  
Enjoyable to see or hear?  
Do you benefit from knowing that feral cats persist?  
Damage people’s property or source of income?  
Pose a health or safety risk for people?  
Pose a risk for native animals?  
Source of contamination or degradation for soil or water?  
Has the number of feral cats increased recently?  
How often do you see feral cats?
Interaction more important than environmental impact?

![Bar graph showing percentage of respondents for various statements.]

- **Enjoy seeing cats**
  - Yes: 80%
  - Unsure: 20%
  - No: 0%

- **Feral cats have intrinsic value**
  - Yes: 10%
  - Unsure: 20%
  - No: 70%

- **Threat to native fauna**
  - Yes: 20%
  - Unsure: 40%
  - No: 40%

- **See feral cats frequently**
  - Yes: 30%
  - Unsure: 30%
  - No: 40%

- **Increase in feral cat abundance recently**
  - Yes: 40%
  - Unsure: 30%
  - No: 30%
In Summary...

87% people would like cat abundance to decrease
68% of people in animal welfare want a decrease

Goal: Reduce the abundance of feral cats

But how?

Most of the conflict surrounding feral cats is about the tools used to alter the abundance of cats
Thank you

Funds provided by

Please contact Cheryl Lohr at cheryl.lohr@gmail.com with any questions.