



## tasmanian conservation trust inc

Letters to the editor  
The Mercury

5 February 2012

### **'Fox hunt turns to new pest'**

I am disappointed that Environment Tasmania ('Fox hunt turns to new pest', Mercury 3 February 2012) thinks that, after foxes, cats are the top, and perhaps only, priority feral pest in Tasmania.

Before allocating large amounts of money to a government program to trap and poison cats, it is important to look at the science which shows that there are numerous other serious feral animals which can be eradicated, rather than just controlled, and at far less cost.

When preparing the publication 'Feral Animals of Tasmania' for WWF in 2008, I asked more than twenty scientists which feral animals they thought were priorities for management in Tasmania. In addition to the fox, they named the rainbow lorikeet, Indian myna, long-necked turtle, ferret or polecat, pig (feral on Flinders Island), goat and numerous fish species including gambusia, carp and weatherloach.

Each of these species has the potential to be another cat but is currently not wide spread and can be eradicated – most relatively cheaply. With current technology and legislation, feral cats can not feasibly be eradicated from the Tasmanian mainland, no matter how much money was available. They may be eradicated from some islands such as Maria Island.

So lets get our priorities right. First, prevent serious new feral pests coming here or being released. Second, locate and eradicate feral species which pose a serious threat and are not well established. Then look to controlling cats and other wide spread feral animals but only where sustained effort is possible and it will have a positive benefit for native species or stock animals.

The best thing that the government can do to control cats is to enact the long stalled Cat Management Act. This will cost very little but will empower many hundreds of farmers, community groups and councils to control cats where they want to. It will also phase in compulsory de-sexing of pet cats which will slow down the supply of new feral cats.

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