

The report was blunt on the rabies vaccination issue, saying On the issue of vaccination, the report said "...maintaining adequate rabies vaccination coverage in feral cat populations is impractical, if not impossible. Therefore, these populations [of feral cats] must be reduced and eliminated to manage the public health risk of rabies transmission."

Most cats in managed feral cat colonies ~~typically~~ are only trapped and vaccinated once in their lifetimes, ~~and, one vaccine dose which~~ may not offer lifetime coverage, the report says. As a result, trapping and vaccination rates do not reach a sufficient proportion of the population to establish and maintain herd or colony immunity over time. The study also ~~found fault with the cited a~~ lack of consistent, verifiable documentation of vaccination for colony cats.

Group-feeding of cats by colony caretakers was cited as a problem on several levels. Those actions put cats at greater risk for contracting diseases since transmission is augmented by increased animal density and contact rates among cats. Group feeding also ~~The practice puts~~ wildlife ~~which are attracted by the food~~ at increased risk of contracting diseases, such as toxoplasmosis, since wild animals might be attracted by the food. A 2011 study found one-third of raccoons and opossums ~~associating that associate~~ with feral cat populations were infected with the disease.

The report called into question claims that feral cat colony management reduces the number of stray cats, ~~calling such assertions and the practice "dubious," "unlikely," "ineffective," "contradicted by research" and even went so far as to say~~ based on evidence that colony populations ~~may actually might actually~~ "... increase in response to supplemental feeding."

Feral cat effects on native wildlife species were described as "profound." The report cited numerous examples of studies that illustrated diminished wildlife populations in cat colony areas yet no decreased populations of pest animals such as house mice—~~blunting claims by feral cat advocates that feral cats keep pest populations down.~~

Scientists said that "feeding of feral cat colonies sustains their populations, and it likely subjects them to increased disease transmission (it) does not adequately meet feral cat population control needs that public health and animal welfare necessitate" and recommends that feral cat population control methods be determined with input from all stakeholders with ~~by a wide~~ range of interests.

The closing point of the report was succinct, saying that: "...requirements for rabies vaccination and prohibitions against free-roaming should be applied to cats as they are generally applied to dogs."

Toxoplasmosis is another serious health threat related to feral cats. A very recent study by 11 British scientists who examined 271 Eurasian otter cadavers across England and Wales found that 108 (almost 40 percent) of those animals tested positive for this parasitic disease, which is described in the study as a "globally important [disease] with potentially devastating health impacts both for humans and a range of domestic and wild species." Studies show that 60 to 80 percent of feral cats in the U.S. carry the toxoplasmosis parasite, which they shed via their feces, releasing hundreds of millions of infectious oocysts that remain viable for many months.

Another peer-reviewed study published in January 2013 and authored by scientists from two of the world's leading science and wildlife organizations – the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) – found that bird and mammal mortality

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has ~~addressed blasted virtually every public health claims supporting the operation of managed and continuation of~~ feral cat colonies that have been springing up across the country ~~supporting in support of and which provide sustenance and protection for~~ an exploding national feral cat population estimated to number between 60 – 100 million animals. The cat colonies are managed under a system called Trap, Neuter and Release (TNR) in which some percentage of the colony cats are trapped, neutered, occasionally given some level of vaccination and then returned to the area in which they were captured.

The peer-reviewed study, "Rabies Prevention and Management of Cats in the Context of Trap – Neuter – Vaccinate - Release Programmes," was published online in the ~~Scientific scientific~~ ~~Journal journal~~ *Zoonoses and Public Health*. It will be published in print in the coming months. In addition to the CDC, ~~additional study authors represented the U.S. Department of Agriculture and American Bird Conservancy.~~

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Specifically, the report said that " ~~...TNRV programs are not effective methods for reducing public health concerns or for controlling feral cat populations. Instead, responsible pet ownership, universal rabies vaccination of pets, and removal of strays remain integral components to control rabies and other diseases.~~ " ~~feral cat colonies are not innocuous...cause considerable mortality to local wildlife, act as reservoirs for feline-specific diseases, and transmit ...diseases to humans. Additionally, claims by cat colony advocates that managed colonies can reduce feral cat populations and control rodents are contradicted by research."~~

"~~I think there is absolutely no question that Solutions are needed to address the growing exploding feral cat population in the U.S. Allowing populations of feral cats to persist in communities, does not reduce public health problems related to cats. Any effective control program will need to be multifaceted, but will likely include removal of free-roaming cats, just as free-roaming dogs are not acceptable in most communities. Most importantly, upstream education of cat owners is needed to reinforce responsible ownership, including vaccination, spaying or neutering, and preventing their cat from roaming freely is posing an escalating and potentially serious health threat to the communities that continue to avoid dealing with them in a responsible manner. Sometimes making the right decisions is difficult but continuing to wear blinders so as not to see this threat is totally irresponsible on the part of community decisionmakers,~~" said Dr. Jesse Blanton, the ~~corresponding lead author of the study and, an epidemiologist from CDC epidemiologist.~~

As a rabies vector, cats pose a ~~disproportionate~~ risk for potential human exposures, ~~particularly among~~ with children, ~~especially vulnerable since children as they~~ are more likely to approach cats. The report cites a dramatic reversal in the incidence of rabies exposure between cats and dogs. In 1946, 8,384 dogs were found to be rabid compared to only 455 cats. In 2010~~11~~, only 697~~0~~ dogs were documented rabid compared to 303 cats. The study attributes the complete reversal in rabies incidence to relatively stringent control measures enforced on dog populations compared to a ~~less emphasized and more limited control program for~~ cats.

A propensity to underestimate rabies risk from cats has led to multiple large-scale rabies exposures, including 665 persons in New Hampshire receiving rabies treatments following exposure to a rabid kitten; ~~and~~ 27 individuals in South Carolina for a similar incident; ~~and in~~ 2011, an 8-year-old girl contracted rabies because no one was originally aware of her encounter with a stray cat.