

SENSIBLE PETS FOR AUSTRALIANS SOME PEOPLE MAY NOT LIKE THIS STORY

BUT (as we say in the vernacular) “THEMS THE BREAKS”

Cats are very beautiful animals, but so are tigers. I believe it should be legal to keep tigers however, perhaps not have them roaming the streets.

Some cat keepers push the idea that it is only natural for cats and foxes to take fauna as they fill an ecological niche. Is it an ecological niche for cats to push our lyrebirds towards extinction? They are already doing this to our hopping mice, dunnarts, bandicoots other small marsupials and native creatures? How much fauna do cats kill? We don't know, however, there are some sound figures on what cats can and do kill. So for anybody to say, “we need more research into cats”, is just ignorance.

Sunday Mail Adelaide 13/08/2000 Kellie-Jo Lamb, an environmental scientist from Western Mining company, showed a cat, which contained: - 24 painted dragons, 3 bearded dragons, 2 earless dragons, 3 striped skinks, 1 zebra finch and 1 mouse. All but one was a native animal. That's over ten thousand native animals per year.

Even if cats take only one quarter of this estimate, it is still a national disaster.

Those who knew Melbourne in the 60s and 70s would remember the skinks that covered the paling fences in the summer. There were finches, grey fantails, restless flycatchers, pardalotes, silvereyes, willy wagtails and pee wees (magpie/mud larks). These last two types of birds always nested within view of each other; now you hardly ever see either.

In the winter, red robins would come and visit us. Garden poison sprays are taking toll on many of these creatures but cats are also an ongoing disaster. Locking up a cat at night does not help our fauna much at all. It is in the daytime that cats kill the few remaining lizards and native birds. Cats and foxes have already taken countless nocturnal creatures and, the only bell that will stop a cat from killing wildlife is a cowbell.

Keep a native animal without a licence and you can be fined. Export one out of the country and you can go to jail; even if it is not rare or has been bred in captivity. Cats are kept and bred without a licence and you don't even have to account for the kittens; but we must account for all native animals that we breed. Why? What is wrong with native animals? Instead of cats, should we not be breeding native animals by the millions. Also, instead of a licence for natives why not a licence for exotics. Don't you think we have it back the front?

We now know how to breed most native animals. You can feed your bilby on cat food and birdseed and we could have them as pets across Australia. We could breed the mini kangaroos like pademelons, potoroos and tammar wallabies. We could keep the marsupial quoll (native cat) plus many other beautiful native animals.

Cane toads are invading Kakadu to wipe out much of our wildlife, so why not breed up those that could be lost because of the cane toads; by the way the NT Department of Conversation says it is illegal to kill cane toads in Kakadu. Let's breed up the cassowaries before we lose them. We should have cassowaries in stock for the day when we rid the rainforest of the feral pigs. At no government cost, we could breed the numbers of many types of these animals back into their millions, which is how it should be. Government departments could then focus on all the ferals like: cats, foxes, pigs, rabbits, goats, starlings, and cane toads etc.

We Australians are far too out of touch with our wildlife. When a child wants a pet it will love any animal. What better pet, than a beautiful little potoroo or pademelon to mow your back lawn?

Not all Australian animals will make good pets, but there are many that would. We must just make sure that, by law, we don't get drongos out there breeding them into pink poodles. We must retain them as genetically close to the wild originals as possible. If we do that we'll always have a viable gene pool in case of some disaster in the wild. A minimum cage or pen size would be a 'legal must'.

There are some Australians who don't want us to breed these native animals back into their millions because, some of these animals are rare and they'd prefer us to keep cats. I guess it takes all types.

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