

Chapter 1: Definitions of cats

The common domestic cat (*Felis catus*) are New Zealand's most **popular companion animal** with 44% of NZ households listing themselves as owning one or more pet cats in the 2016 NZCAC study.

New Zealand has the highest cat ownership rate in the world (McKay 2016) the total companion cat population in this country was 1,134 million, compared to 683,000 dogs. The biggest role of the companion cat in New Zealand is as a member of the family (83%) or trusted companion (12%).

Cats are defined legally under the **Code of Welfare for Cats (2007)**, as gazetted by the Minister of MPI (the Ministry for Primary Industries) in New Zealand.

Cats are defined as:

- **Companion:** Common domestic cat (including a kitten) that lives with humans as a companion and is dependent on humans for its welfare.
- **Stray:** A companion cat which is lost or abandoned and which is living as an individual or in a group (colony). Stray cats have many of their needs indirectly supplied by humans, and live around centres of human habitation. Stray cats are likely to interbreed with the unneutered companion cat population.
- **Feral** – A cat which is not a stray cat and which has none of its needs provided by humans. Feral cats generally do not live around centres of human habitation. Feral cat population size fluctuates largely independently of humans, is self-sustaining and is not dependent on input from the companion cat population.

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/animal-welfare/codes-of-welfare/>

“**Community cats**” is an increasingly popular description of stray, semi-owned or un-owned cats, whose reliance on the community they live in for their care is essential. These cats are naturally free-roaming, “un-owned” or “semi-owned” cats, who may live either on their own or in colonies. The community often takes an interest in them and many in that community would like to look after them and to make sure their welfare and other needs are met.

Therefore, one of the key objectives of the **Community Cat Coalition** is to attend to the management needs of stray/community cats in the Auckland region whether they be residing as groups in established colonies, or individually/collectively within the general community.

