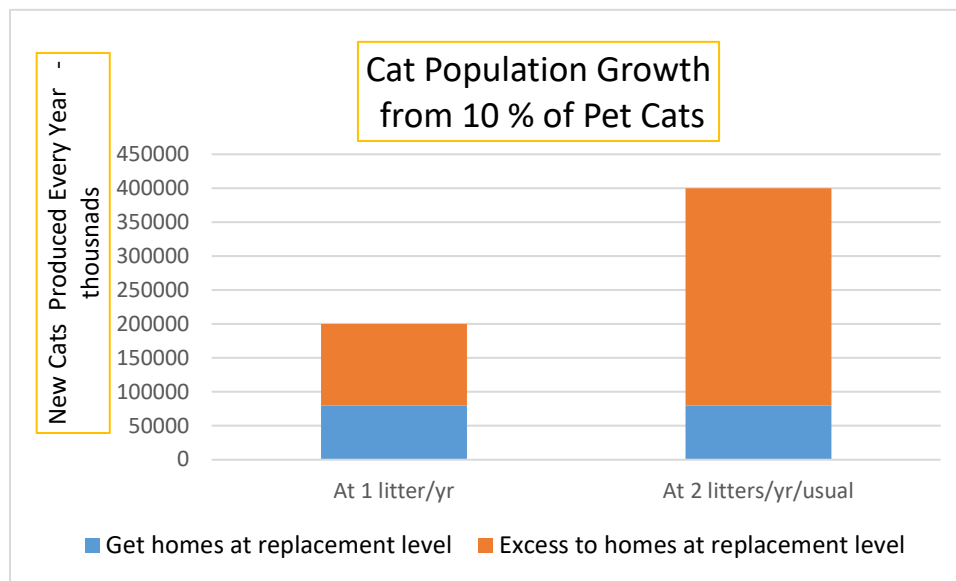


I am writing with new information relating to my petition for the attention of the Committee.

1. THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON BREEDING ACTIVITIES WITH DOMESTIC CATS.

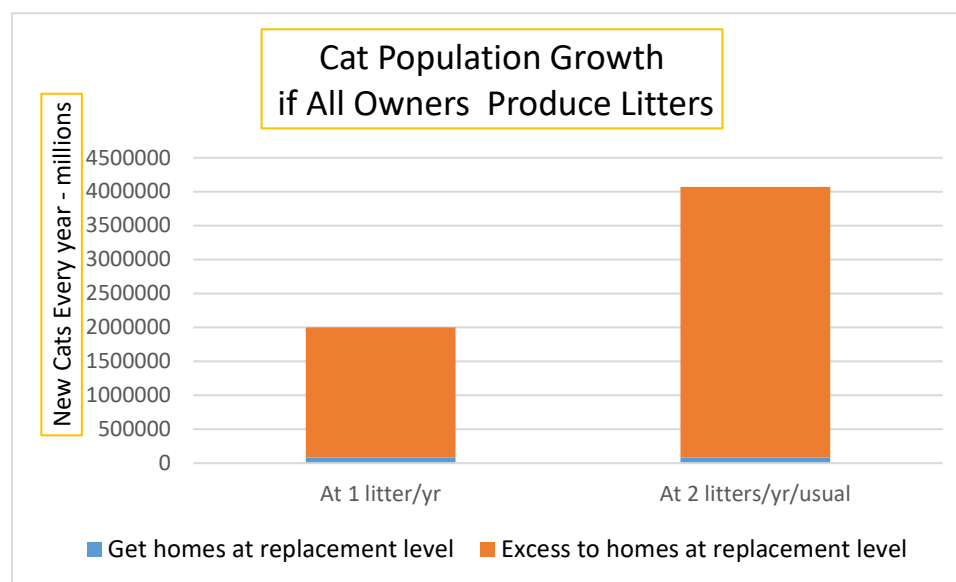
The Scottish Government's proposals to licence cat breeding could bring an effective solution but only if we get it right. The problem with the proposed thresholds is that they are NO improvement on the present high level of pet cat over-production. And they could make things dangerously worse, as explained below.

- (i) **AS THINGS ARE.** Assuming 10% of pet cats are kept un-neutered (a conservative estimate based on widely used polls <https://www.pdsa.org.uk/media/4371/paw-2018-full-web-ready.pdf> and <https://www.pfma.org.uk/historical-pet-population>) then 40,000 female pet cats are currently each producing 2 litters a year.



This represents 400,000 new pet cats a year which is 320,000 in excess of the homes available at replacement level. The gold column represents the over-production.

- (ii) **IF 2 LITTERS/ YEAR WITHOUT A LICENCE ALLOWED.** This represents NO improvement on the above. And it could make things dangerously worse by sending out the completely wrong message 'It's alright to produce 2 litters a year'. It introduces confusion and is likely to encourage more people to let their cat have litters than currently do. This would represent a massive backwards step.



If all the owners of female pet cats produce 2 litters that represents FOUR MILLION new pet cats a year. This would be a major public health issue and a grave animal welfare matter.

If all the owners of female pet cats produce 1 litter that represents TWO MILLION new pet cats a year. This would equally be a major public health issue and a grave animal welfare matter. The gold column represents the over-production

IF 1 LITTER / YEAR WITHOUT LICENCE ALLOWED How could a cat owner prevent further pregnancies without locking their cat up for 9 months in every twelve? This would be a serious breach of animal welfare legislation. In addition it would be un-enforceable since every litter would be declared to be “the first litter”.

2. THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S POSITION ON THE CAT POPULATION IS IN NEED OF UPDATING.

- (i) **INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) CAT SPECIALIST GROUP REPORT (FEBRUARY 2019).** “The report reviews all evidence and concludes that, while there are wildcats remaining in Scotland,

there are no longer enough to ensure their continued survival as viable populations. With domestic/ hybrid cat numbers high, hybridisation is considered the major threat to the survival of the wildcat in Scotland and recent data suggest that this threat is accelerating. The remaining number is too small, the hybridisation too advanced and the population too fragmented for the wildcat to survive on its own. The IUCN CSG recommend the reinforcement of the remaining wildcats by breeding genetically tested wildcats for release.” This will require that the threats be removed that led to the near extinction.
<http://www.scottishwildcataction.org/latest-news/2019/february/new-international-report-sets-out-how-scottish-wildcats-can-be-saved-from-extinction/>

The Scottish Wildcat Action project findings 2018-19:

- there are high and accelerating numbers of un-neutered domestic and feral living cats
- none of the remnant wildcat individuals or the future wildcat ranges are far from human settlements –where the un-neutered domestic cats come from
- the wildcat prefers woodland/ pasture margins in which to source food and shelter and is a lowland species, rather than a high altitude species as has previously been thought.

The project seeks:

“Para 26 (iii) Compulsory legal measures that would prevent ownership of pet domestic cats unless they were neutered/vaccinated/chipped (with some exceptions*). These could include a Ministerial Order/(prohibition of) Keeping Order as set out in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – these can be used to prohibit the keeping of certain types of non-native species and can be applied over different geographic areas.* (*Exceptions may include provisions that apply to registered cat breeders, professional veterinarian discretion in employing vaccinations etc.).

Para 30 As a minimum this should start with the application of option (iii) as soon as possible within the Priority Areas and surrounding buffer zones up to 2025 and beyond, extending to the whole of Scotland after 2025.”

<http://www.scottishwildcataction.org/media/42572/cat-management-paper-by-scottish-wildcat-conservation-action-plan-steering-group.pdf>

- (ii) The considered thought of many individuals - vets, scientists, frontline cat rescue workers, animal experts and individual members of the public who posted support on my petition page, and the two and a half thousand individuals who have signed my two petitions – has brought this issue to a place where it can no longer be ignored. Some cautions and fears were raised but essentially all the Submissions to PE1674 support my figures and agree with the benefits of pre-pubertal neutering for cats:

The official policy of the Cat Neutering Group, a coalition of vet and welfare bodies, is to advocate pre-pubertal neutering of cats as routine for welfare reasons. <http://www.kind.cats.org.uk/docs/CatGroupStatement.pdf>

“The BSAVA advises that cats can be neutered from 16 weeks and in the case of feral and rescue kittens, neutering at eight to 12 weeks is considered safe and appropriate.” “The welfare implications of neutering are outweighed by the social, health and population benefits.” They also advocate planned breeding involving pre-selection of suitable mates, health screening and booking of kittens to suitable homes. (PE1674/E)

- (iii) There is a persisting myth that ‘feral cats’ are a different population which needs to be corrected - pet and feral cats are one and the same species. ‘Feral’ refers to the absence of socialization experiences in the first 6 weeks of life. Cats living ‘ferally’ only exist because someone once didn’t neuter their pet cat. Their numbers can be reduced by humane Trap Neuter Vaccinate Return work but will keep being replenished until pets are all neutered (or kept under licence conditions).

Natoli E et al. (2006) Management of feral domestic cats in the urban environment of Rome (Italy). Preventive Veterinary Medicine.
doi:10.1016/j.prevetmed.2006.06.005

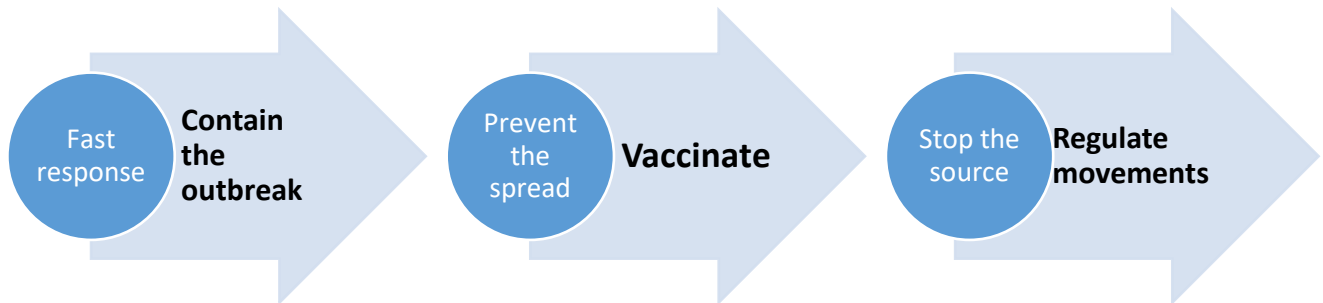
3. We CAN change our habits in how we acquire cats.

It is already commonplace for us to order in advance and wait when we want a new sofa or a new car. It would need a nudge to move towards this new habit in getting a new cat/ kitten. It is already like this for responsible dog and horse acquisition, and cat rescue adoption.

- In-breeding is a common occurrence with un-controlled breeding (brothers with sisters, mothers with sons). Planned breeding would enable a healthier diverse gene-pool to be included. It makes perfect sense to reserve a majority of licences for non-pedigree breeding in order to safeguard against the undesirable breeding for traits and features that result in health damage.
- More opportunities for responsible breeders would develop as the public adapt to new ways of pre-booking and preparing/ waiting for kittens.
- Vets would have the same powers to make exemptions on clinical grounds as they do now.
- Enforcement relies on the law putting out a clear un-ambiguous message. We don’t throw out the law against murder just because murders happen. We don’t confuse the public about knife crime – one stab is enough to break the law. Other bans are introduced (such as on smoking in public places) and behaviour change happens– people just get on with it, they ramp down the importance to themselves of the previous behavior.
- The effect of new measures on numbers of dumped cats. As things are, thousands of unwanted cats are cast out by a variety of careless and deliberate acts. If they are neutered that means we have thousands to ‘rescue’. If they are un-neutered the numbers rise to the tens of thousands and escalate beyond

control. It is not beyond the wit of us all to prepare mitigation to phase in new law. Better to grasp the nettle now than stick our heads in the sand.

4. **A public health approach implements three elements – fast response, prevent the spread and stop the source.** It has had success in preventing escalating knife crime in Scotland.



It is particularly applicable to preventing escalating cat numbers and diseases.

