



## MARLBOROUGH FOUR PAWS

### MARLBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL 2023-24 ANNUAL PLAN SUBMISSION

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## **ABOUT MARLBOROUGH FOUR PAWS**

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Marlborough Four Paws was established in 2017 with the goal of providing welfare to animals in need and to reduce the stray animal population in our region.

We aim to protect local bird life, mitigate the spread of animal disease, and reduce animal suffering by preventing the birth of unwanted litters of kittens and puppies.

We remove animals from the stray population and prevent population growth through:

- Trapping, desexing and homing dumped and stray felines.
- Desexing of cats that businesses and individuals have found and kept as barn cats.
- Assisting financially struggling pet-owners with the desexing of their pets.
- Educating and promoting the importance of desexing to the community around us.
- Homing only desexed animals.

Marlborough Four Paws is run entirely by volunteers and relies on donations and grants to continue its rescue efforts.

## **OUR PROPOSED INITIATIVE FOR 2023-24**

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We propose that a management plan for the stray feline population be included in the Marlborough District Council 2023-24 annual plan.

Without immediate Marlborough District Council intervention, we predict a major population explosion in the next 12 to 18 months. This will cause rate payer outrage, voter outrage, swamp vet clinics and decimate our bird and lizard populations.

THE STRAY CAT POPULATION IS BEING FUELLED THROUGH:

- Dumped litters and pets.
- Roaming pets that are not desexed.
- A lack of a regional plan for the management of the stray feline population

Marlborough has a serious stray cat problem. Cats are crepuscular. The only way to see the real depth of this problem is to be out at dawn and dusk. We invite anyone within the Marlborough District Council who has doubts about this issue or opposes the need to create a management plan for this issue, to join our volunteer trapping team for a night.

## WHAT IS CAUSING THE STRAY CAT POPULATION TO EXPLODE?

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Many population models suggest that left unmanaged, two felines can breed to over two million animals in just eight years. Milder winters means that breeding cycles are continuing through months we would usually expect to see a reprieve. One female cat can have two to three litters a year, with the average litter being four. If half of those kittens are female and start breeding two to three times a year from just six months old, you can see why we are predicting an imminent population explosion.

In the 2020 Companion Animals in New Zealand publication a potential 13% of pet cats were not desexed. The top three barriers to de-sexing cats were 'cost', 'hadn't gotten around to it' and 'feel it is unnecessary' (gulp!). 88% of pet cats were indoor/outdoor cats or completely outdoor cats. If up to 13% of these pet cats are not desexed then they are able to breed with each other and existing dumped and stray animals.

A lot of our efforts are focused on rescuing dumped litters and dumped pets. We also have a huge workload removing litters from households that do not desex their pets. These are the litters we know about. If a household that doesn't care about desexing has a male cat, then it will be creating litters throughout the region.

## WHY DO WE NEED A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE STRAY FELINE POPULATION?

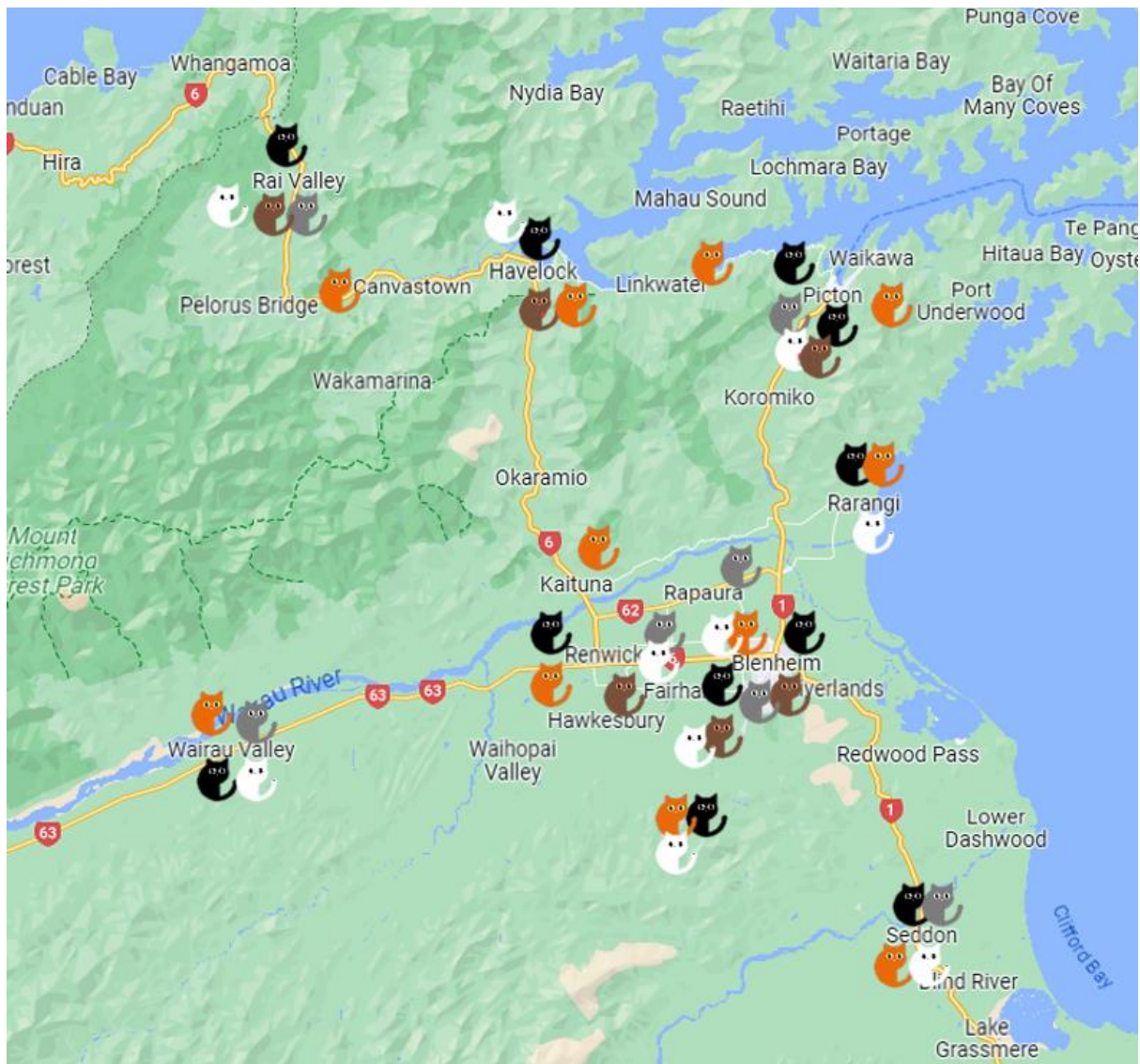
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The volunteers of Marlborough Four Paws remove stray and dumped felines from the population in a humane and ethical way, providing crucial support for the community projects focused on endemic population regeneration. Many of our volunteers put in full time hours whilst managing families and their own careers.

Our rescue team is seeing a worrying level of breeding and no winter reprieve. We are reacting as fast as our donations will allow, but the population is getting away on the region. We desexed 332 felines in 2022. We forecast we will desex 400 in 2023. It is a huge effort, but still not enough. We need more than the steam of our own volunteers and public donations. There is a daunting level of work needed in our region to bring the stray feline population under control. Marlborough Four Paws doesn't just trap, desex and rehabilitate stray animals, our volunteers also react to hundreds of calls from people who have found stray cats and litters dumped on both private and public property. The population density in some areas is bringing a level of disease we have never seen before.

There is a stray cat problem in Marlborough. We all need to own it and act upon it now. We can't wait another season.

## CURRENT OVER-POPULATED AREAS



Waterlea Racecourse  
 Blenheim Transfer Station  
 Budge Street  
 Clubs of Marlborough  
 Picton Main Street  
 Havelock Wharf  
 Countdown Blenheim  
 Springlands Mall  
 Rai Valley Transfer Station  
 Queen Charlotte Drive  
 Pollard Park  
 NMIT  
 Herbert Street

Elzy Street (hoarder)  
 Dunbeath Street (hoarder)  
 Horton Park  
 Seddon Transfer Station  
 Wither Hills Walking Tracks and Farm Park  
 Taylor Pass Dam  
 Redwood Pass  
 Wairau Transfer Station  
 Wairau Township  
 Cracker Point  
 The length of the Taylor River Reserve in particular Monro street, Raupo café, Clubs of Marlborough, and the Recycling Plant

## **INCLUSIONS NEEDED FOR THE 2023-24 ANNUAL PLAN**

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- Stray feline desexing clinics
- After hours workforce
- Subsidised desexing and micro-chipping for struggling households
- Amendments needed to the Animals Bylaw 2017

### **STRAY FELINE DESEXING CLINICS**

We are requesting that the Marlborough District Council includes stray desexing clinics in the 2023-24 annual plan. This would require contracting and financing 16 days of desexing (20 felines per day) either across the four main vet clinics in Marlborough or through a contract vet, to start to curb the stray population growth. We predict this level of effort will need to be maintained for at least five years and at that stage we would hope that we would be able to move to just four desexing clinics in a year.

For context of the level of urgent need; we focus constant attention on Blenheim Transfer Station yet right now there are 25 to 30 animals known to us that need urgent desexing before the next heat cycle. With more coming of age right behind those. That is just one of the over-populated areas needing urgent population management.

### **AFTER HOURS WORK FORCE**

The coordination of trapping and care of trapped animals before and after any desexing clinic is huge. The desexing clinics must be utilised in full and it takes real dedication, skill and understanding not to waste the vets' efforts. If the council were to employ people to perform this role it would require several employees working nights and weekends to achieve this.

Our suggestion is that they support Marlborough Four Paws in scaling up its operation by employing one of our team as a contractor for this work. Five years with a five-year renewal based on achieving targets. That person would then be supported by our volunteer team.

### **SUBSIDISED DESEXING AND MICRO-CHIPPING FOR STRUGGLING HOUSEHOLDS**

We recommend that struggling households within the region are incentivised in some way to micro-chip and desex their animals.

## AMENDMENTS NEEDED TO THE ANIMALS BYLAW 2017

We feel our recommendation to include a management plan for the stray feline population in the Marlborough District Council 2023-24 annual plan is supported within the wording of the Animals Bylaw 2017.

At the same time, we feel the bylaw needs additional strengthening and enforcement to prevent our region's pets from continuing to boost the stray population. There are animal hoarders in the region known to Marlborough District Council. They need to be managed and the cycle of abuse needs to be stopped.

### EXCERPT FROM ANIMALS BYLAW 2017

#### 4. Purpose

The purpose of this bylaw is to provide for the keeping of animals in a way that

- (a) protects the public from nuisance;
- (b) protects native fauna;
- (c) maintains and promotes public health and safety; and
- (d) manages animals in public places.

#### 6. Obligations of animal owners, generally

(1) The owner or person in charge of any animal must at all times

- (a) ensure that animal does not cause a nuisance to any other person; and
- (b) ensure that animal does not cause a risk to public health and safety; and
- (c) ensure that animal does not damage any property belonging to any other person; and
- (d) ensure that animal may not roam off the property on which it is kept; and
- (e) hold and comply with a permit to keep cats or birds in excess of the limits in these bylaws; and
- (f) otherwise comply with these bylaws in all respects.

(2) Any person who, in the opinion of an enforcement officer, fails to comply with these obligations, that person, on being required to do so by the officer, must take such measures to come into compliance including, if directed, remove the animals from the property, within a time specified by the officer.

#### 8. Restrictions on keeping cats

(1) No person may keep on any land more than four cats over the age of 3 months without the prior written permission of Council. [We suggest adding: All cats must be micro-chipped and desexed unless the owner has written permission from the Council stating otherwise.]

## MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

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The outcomes Marlborough Four Paws expects to see after a few years of intense management of the stray feline population are:

- An increase in local bird, lizard, and other endemic animal populations in the parks, reserves, and less built-up areas.
- Reduction of disease amongst the stray cats being brought in.
- Reduced calls and emails to Marlborough Four Paws and Marlborough District Council.
- Reduced dumping of stray animals at our local vet clinics.
- Reduced rescue of litters born or dumped.
- A shorter period where the shelter and foster homes are operating at maximum capacity with a waitlist.
- An obvious reduction in numbers in the previously high-density stray population areas in the region.

Our volunteers keep track of animals they trap in each area and monitor the area for signs of new animals that need trapping and desexing.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DO NOTHING?

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- We watch the decimation of our endemic bird and lizard populations.
- We see an increase of zoonotic diseases like toxoplasmosis jumping across to humans.
- We collapse rescue groups and overload local resources such as veterinary clinics.
- We see a visible level of animal suffering most of us never imagined would happen in an advanced country like ours. Whether viewed from a humane point of view or community aesthetic, emaciated, injured and diseased animals is a terrible thing.
- We put our own pets at risk. Stray felines can spread diseases to domestic pets, increase unplanned litters where domestic pets are not desexed and bring an increased risk of injury and associated vet costs through fighting.



## THERE IS A STRAY CAT PROBLEM IN MARLBOROUGH

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We invite you to join us at dusk or dawn to meet the animals let down by humans.

