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Public Perceptions of Domestic Cats and Preferences for Feral Cat Management in the Southeastern United States

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Abstract:

Populations of feral domestic cats and free-roaming, owned cats have increased throughout the United States, affecting wildlife and public health and warranting attention from a variety of management agencies. The contentious issue of feral cat management requires a greater understanding of public attitudes towards cats and preferences. We used an anonymous internet survey of randomly selected Athens-Clarke County, Georgia households to identify general public perceptions of domestic cats and preferences for cat management. We examined factors that may influence attitudes towards cats, and management including: knowledge about cats, experiences with cats and demographic variables. Results indicate that more residents have positive experiences with feral cats than negative, cat owners have greater knowledge of cats than non-cat owners, and animal welfare or conservation organization membership has a significant effect on attitudes towards cats. A majority of survey respondents agreed that more effective feral cat management is needed yet did not approve of trap-neuter-release (TNR) legislation recently passed in Athens-Clarke County. Logistic regression revealed that residents' attitudes were found to be more important than experiences or knowledge in supporting cat management legislation. Cat sanctuaries were found to be the most acceptable option to reduce feral cat populations (56%), followed by TNR (49%) and capturing and euthanizing cats (44%).

Keywords: [DOMESTIC CATS](#); [FERAL CAT MANAGEMENT](#); [PUBLIC ATTITUDES](#); [PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE](#)

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