

Desex your cat

by Michela Brown,
Animal Rights & Rescue
Group



BARNEY, a timid 2 year old male Domestic short hair, is up for adoption from ARRГ, desexed (and kitty-litter trained) of course.

Warmer weather heralds kitten season, and local animal welfare groups have already started the rescue and rehoming of hundreds of unwanted babies. In one morning alone, Animal Rights & Rescue Group took into care a four week old abandoned kitten and three beautiful nine week olds dumped inside a box. While 'accidents happen', now is the time to spay/neuter your cat to prevent those unwanted litters (and to also prevent tom cats wandering, fighting and spraying!)

Unfortunately there just aren't enough good homes for all the kittens (and puppies) born each year, with shelters and pounds around the country swamped with discarded animals. It is an old wives tale that having a litter makes an animal more settled, or that they are in some way 'missing out' by not breeding. For anyone who says 'I'd like for my children to see kittens being born' I say take your children to a pound to see the ones euthanased because there aren't enough homes for them.

To anyone who says 'I don't have a problem finding homes for them', I say spend a week with ARRГ (or any other animal welfare group) and see the puppies, kittens and adult animals that are brought to us, found in cardboard boxes, taken to Council pounds or vets, or dumped to turn feral.

Talk to a Vet - the advantages of desexing far outweigh doing nothing, and the cost is minimal for a loved family member who will live with you for around fifteen plus years. For pet owners in genuine financial need, assistance with desexing can be provided.

Please check out ARRГ's website <www.animalrights.org.au> or contact us on 6622-1881 for more information. We are a non-funded organisation of volunteers who rescue and rehouse unwanted, lost and neglected companion animals - and we welcome you to call us for more information on safely rehoming your pet. Many of our animals awaiting adoption can be viewed on the website.



Funding for local private landholders for creek restoration

Funding opportunities are available for private landholders on Goolmangar, Jiggi, Websters, Calico, Bishops, Mulgum and Gungas creeks to support the preparation of a creek management plan.

This plan will cover work to be undertaken such as weed eradication, fencing, native tree planting, water testing and other rehabilitation.

If you own land on these creeks and are interested in supporting this planned project please call Chris Herden on 0427-326-031

Chris, who is a local conservation biologist and has a background in natural resource project management, is co-ordinating a submission for funding for this important work.

"Now banned, the 'bufiest' of Mexican waves!"

Cane toad and native Australian predatory fauna-related adaptations and behavior.

by Ian Browne Shamrock
News, Darwin December
2006

They don't have teeth and have a different pectoral girdle structure compared to frogs. No, I am not talking about Jabba the Hut; I am in fact talking about Australia's only toad species, the feral *Bufo marinus*. I can happily say that after a few years away from Litchfield Park near Darwin, I returned recently to see the resident Buely Rock Holes and Wangi Falls Merton's water monitors still alive and well there and no sign of cane toads 'as yet'. The Top End is actually the world's hot spot for the Veranideae family; the monitor lizards, so this toad march has got many lizard loving scientists nervous. I was out at Fogg Dam, also near Darwin, in December, not only a location with the highest cloud to ground lightning strike zone on the planet but the region also has the largest predatory vertebrate biomass on earth. I only saw one dead cane toad and thankfully no live ones; come dark I'm sure this would change. I did see a very large goanna which made me happy as I had seen one there also in the abutting rainforest ten years previous when I first visited this, then 'cane toad free' wetland ecosystem.

I spoke with biologist Anthony Griffiths at Charles Darwin University in 2002 about the ecological impacts the toads would pose for the Top End environment. He believed that many species of lizards would in fact adapt to the toads after falling in population initially. Tony believed that not all lizards such as goannas species would actually die out, some would either disagree with the 'sickening' taste and live to see another day, or not even bother with this toad at all. Tony also has new information he will share with me in coming months, so stay posted.

Ben Philips, a biologist researching cane toad ecological relationships with Sydney University, suggested that 'brown snakes' with

smaller heads had actually been naturally selected for due to the environmental pressures associated with cane toad predation, an evolutionary phase happening right now in our bush. Ben Philips also states that cane toads have become a larger animal, increasing their leg span and pace as they move further south into the temperate zones. Ben has also been studying the impacts of cane toads in places in the Top End including Fogg Dam and suggests that in some places there has been a reduction in as much as 95% of goanna numbers (ABC



Stateline, 2006). He explained how only resistant and non cane toad predating individuals are surviving in these regions (ABC Stateline, 2006). "Once bitten twice shy perhaps or at least left with a vile taste in the mouth and a roaring headache." He believes that as many as 75% of the planigale population, a carnivorous marsupial, will survive as they have proven to be quick learners (ABC Stateline, 2006). As for snakes such as the death adder only 30% will survive, however in the long term Ben believes that the cane toads will not be as much of a threat as there will be enough genetic diversity available in the wild for populations of the adapted predatory species to survive and hopefully flourish in the long term (ABC Stateline, 2006).

But when is this 'long term' forecast you might be asking? Well Ben Philips believes that in around 100 year's time

numbers of species such as goannas and death adders will be relatively stable (ABC Stateline, 2006). However, this also means that a couple of generations of kiddies will possibly go without the charms of commonly seeing a large, cheeky goanna cruising around the picnic ground I feel, and as for the death adder, well it too has a right to survive in its own land surely.

Now there are two theories at play here in relation to black snake and cane toad inter-relationship in the wetter environments along the East Coast of Australia.

Ben Philips explained how black

snakes have had toads on offer in some places for a few decades and don't eat them any more. The other theory is that in areas where newly arrived toads have been recorded only half the black snakes ate the toads, the other half seemingly resisted. Further analysis of such worthy hypothesis described and researched by Ben Philips is that some goannas and snakes just don't eat cane toads; they are genetically predisposed to this action.

The brown snakes obviously weren't in their study area I feel! The second is that many taste and spit out the putrid toad; 'conditioned behavior' from experience, and never attempt to eat them again, thus living a better, healthier existence. "A bit like a health conscious person trying fast food and deciding to bin the greasy substances rather than finishing the feast".

In conclusion to such important research carried out by the likes of Ben Philips and Anthony Griffiths is that there is some hope at the end of the croaking invasive rainbow, but more research, and perhaps a helping hand in population management is needed I feel. I look forward to sharing with you Tony Griffith's information next year and we can then also entertain the facts and follies of predator to prey relationships occurring in Australia in relation to invasive species such as cane toads. I am just waiting for someone to further explain to me the factual certainties relating to ravens, crows and kookaburras in the predation and feeding behaviors when it comes to dining with the "Toad of Toad Hall?" Do these intelligent birds in fact flip the toads onto their backs and by-pass the poison glands in the process? I am sure many more facts and follies will be created as this 'banned, bufiest of Mexican waves' continues to sweep across our moist, warm landscapes. (For a copy of the full essay, email Ian at >etshamrock2@hotmail.com<).



MASSAGE PRACTICE DANIEL KESZTLER

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