

The environmental impact of cats on native wildlife

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A team of researchers, led by Dr Wayne Linklater from the Centre for Biodiversity and Restoration Ecology at Victoria University of Wellington, recently surveyed veterinarians and cat owners to understand their attitudes and beliefs about cat welfare and behaviour.

The survey found that most veterinarians believe keeping [cats](#) inside at night would positively impact cat [welfare](#) and also benefit wildlife—because cats that are inside from before dusk to after dawn

have reduced opportunities to hunt for native insects, reptiles and birds.

"We know cats kept indoors, particularly at night, will reduce the high rates of cat injury from cat fights, disease transmission and vehicle collisions. Importantly, 99 percent of owners surveyed said they would be willing to bring their cats in at night," says Dr Linklater.

Drawing on expertise from Massey University, the University of Otago and University of Plymouth, England, the second phase of the study will use survey findings to motivate owners to make changes in how they care for their cats that might also address environmental problems.

PhD research by Victoria University graduate, Dr Edith MacDonald, shows [cat owners](#) are concerned most for their cats' welfare. "The question for a wildlife biologist trying to solve a cat-related problem is how we can tap into that concern and motivation," says Dr Linklater.

Keeping cats in at [night](#) might not be the strategy that reduces their impact on native species most, but Dr Linklater says it is a compromise between what needs to be done and what can be done.

Provided by Victoria University of Wellington

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