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| **Animal** **Welfare** | Names: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

As a member-driven organization, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) relies on quality input from its members to shape its policies and actions. As a team of veterinarians, you have the opportunity to provide comments on an animal welfare-related policy that is under review.

**POLICY:** *The AVMA strongly encourages owners of domestic cats in urban and suburban areas to keep them indoors.*

**ACTION:** The AVMA has requested that your team comment on the inclusion or exclusion of rural ("farm") cats from AVMA policy on keeping owned cats indoors.

**ISSUE BACKGROUND:** As part of its discussions, the Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) is considering whether there is a good reason for excluding rural cats from this policy. Cat longevity is related to how they are kept, with indoor cats living longer.1 A study of free-roaming farm-associated cats in Illinois found that 75% of these cats died before reaching one year of age, and only 6% reached 3 years of age. The main causes of death were vehicles, disease, humans and dogs.2

However, outdoor cats may be untamed and some are only loosely owned by people who may consider them too wild for adoption as pets.3 They also may be kept for rodent control. Some researchers question the effectiveness of cats in pest control4 and suggest that farm cats present risks for transmitting diseases to livestock.5 Cats kept for pest control purposes also tend to receive less veterinary care.6

Cats housed indoors are also less likely to prey on wildlife. Free-roaming cats will kill species such as small mammals, frogs and lizards.2,8 Predation by cats is considered an important factor in bird population size, including species of conservation concern.

From<http://www.avma.org/issues/policy/comments/ofc_free_roaming.asp>

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3. Centonze LA, Levy JK. Characteristics of free-roaming cats and their caretakers. J Am Vet Med Ass 2002; 220: 1627-205.

4. Vantassel SV, Hygnstrom S, Ferraro D. Controlling House Mice. NebGuide: University of Nebraska—Lincoln extension, Institude of Agricultural and Natural resources. 2005.

5. Van Sambeek F, McMurray BL, Page RK. Incidence of Pasteurella in poultry house cats used for rodent control programs. Avian Diseases 1995;39:145-146.

6. Coleman JS, Temple SA. Rural residents' free-ranging domestic cats: a survey. Wildl Soc Bull 1993; 21: 381-390.

7. Lepczyk CA, Mertig AG, Liu J. Landowners and cat predation across rural-to-urban landscapes. Bio Conserv 2004;115:191-201.

8. Mitchell JC, Beck RA. Free-ranging domestic cat predation on native vertebrates in rural and urban Virginia. Virginia J Sci 1992; 43: 197207.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Do you agree that urban and suburban cats should be housed indoors (for their safety and to protect wildlife)?

2. Is there a reason for suggesting that concerns about cats' safety and wildlife considerations in rural areas differ from those in urban and suburban areas?

3. Are there other good reasons for keeping rural cats outdoors? For keeping urban and suburban cats indoors?