Food for thought – why do people feed stray cats?

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What cats are we talking about?
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- Semi-owned cats are stray cats that are fed by people who do not consider themselves to own the cat.
What did we research?

- Australia wide online survey
  - Demographics
  - Feeding stray cats (where, how many, how long etc.)
  - Attitudes:
    - about feeding stray cats
    - about important others’ view of their feeding stray cats
    - about perceived control over feeding stray cats
What did we research?

Theory of Planned Behaviour: Ajzen & Fishbein
Why do people feed stray cats?

- What we found:
  - Semi-owners
    - Most are women
    - Most are middle aged or older
    - Most feed one cat daily or every few days, in their home or within their property and have done so for several months or more
    - Most cats that semi-owners feed are able to be picked up or at least patted
    - Can also be pet owners
Why do people feed stray cats?

- **What we found:**
  - Attitudes correlated with semi-ownership:
    - Benevolent attitudes about the outcomes of feeding for the cat
    - Positive attitudes about outcomes for the person doing the feeding
    - Belief of support from important others to semi-own
  
  - We can predict semi-ownership based primarily on beliefs about positive outcomes of feeding (behavioural beliefs)
    - These beliefs outweigh any influence other factors
Why is this knowledge important?

- Semi-ownership:
  - It’s a result of benevolent beliefs
  - Semi-owned cats are in good body condition
  - Many semi-owned cats are tolerant of human interaction
  - But….
Why is this knowledge important?

- Semi-owned cats are in the main un-desexed
- There are estimated to be 500,000 stray cats in Victoria alone
  - semi-owned cats aid in maintaining this
- Semi-owned cats have *much* shorter lives than responsibly owned cats
- Semi-owned cats suffer with disease and injury
Why is this knowledge important?

- Semi-owned cats make up a significant proportion of shelter admissions

- 64,000++ unwanted cats are admitted to shelters annually in Australia
  - 60-74% of admitted cats are euthanased
Why is this knowledge important?

- Food for thought….
- Nearly ¼ of Victorians semi-own cats
- We know benevolent beliefs drive this behaviour
- We know many semi-owned cats have poor welfare

- Challenging/changing beliefs an important part of effecting change
  - Could people’s benevolent attitudes be better directed to benefit semi-owned cat welfare?
    - What are the barriers to taking the next steps (responsible ownership)?
  - Continuing education on semi-owned cat welfare
Thanks, any questions?
References


