



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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IMPORTATION OF SAVANNAH CATS UNDER REVIEW

Environment Minister Peter Garrett has initiated a review of the potential impacts of hybrid Savannah cats, which could see the cats banned in Australia.

Mr Garrett said a draft assessment report had been released to assist considerations about the potential impacts of the cats on the Australian environment and whether they should be prohibited from import, under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

"I'm really concerned about the potential threat to the environment from the importation of the Savannah cat and we will be looking very closely at this. That's why I have asked my department to undertake the proper assessment process as quickly as possible," Mr Garrett said.

"Savannah cats are a cross between a Serval, which is an African wildcat, and a domestic cat and they can grow much larger than normal domestic cats.

"This report looks at the risk of Savannah cats becoming feral if not properly contained, and notes that there is potential for these cats to easily adapt to the Australian environment. Estimates suggest there could already be up to 12 million feral cats across Australia and they are already one of single biggest killers of Australian native animals.

"This report suggests that the potential breeding-in of wildcat genes to existing feral cat populations could see them develop even better hunting skills.

"I will not hesitate to use the powers available to me under the EPBC Act to prohibit the import of Savannah cats if it is necessary to protect the environment."

The draft assessment report is available for public comment for 20 business days, closing on 17 July 2008. Details of the invitation to comment and how to respond are available on the DEWHA website at:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/trade-use/invitecomment/index.html>

"I encourage interested parties to provide comment on the report so I can ensure I take all relevant information into account," Mr Garrett said.

The department will review all comments received and any additional information provided in preparing the report. It will then be provided to the Minister for consideration.