

INSIDE ONE CAT

Lizards,
centipedes,
insects – a
feral feast



CLARE PEDDIE

THE remains of more than 30 native lizards removed from the stomach of just one feral cat starkly reveals the damage the felines do to the nation's wildlife.

The partly digested arms, legs, tails, heads and bodies represent about two days of meals for the 4.7kg cat – which was killed in the Far North as part of a five-year study into the impact of ferals.

Among the native animals identified were 30 *Ctenopus* skinks, a *Morethia* skink, and geckos, as well as centipedes, crickets and grasshoppers taking the body count to 43.

Nature Foundation SA employs a professional shooter on Witchelina Na-

ture Reserve – a 4219sq km expanse between Lake Torrens and Marree – to humanely cull cats and find out what they've been eating.

Another feral cat shot as part of the study contained two bearded dragons and a sand goanna, which reaches an average length of 1.4m.

Nature Foundation SA President Bob Lott said the culled cats were wild beasts of up to 150 generations, "not the moggy that got away, or that's wandering out from the homestead".

"They are wild, shrewd, adaptable creatures that pose the greatest threat to native wildlife," he said.

"All our hard-fought gains with conservation projects are to no avail if these predators are left to continue



PREDATOR: A feral cat trapped in the Far North.

to reproduce and destroy the landscape," he said.

Since 2012, Nature Foundation SA has killed almost 500 feral cats, each containing an average 11 prey.

Mr Lott said it was important to manage the problem rather than letting feral cats run wild, eating everything in their path.

"What we have to do is ensure we control them, because the cat's out of the bag really," he said.

Nature Foundation SA conservation programs manager Alex Nankivell said the study found feral cats don't discriminate among prey, eating birds, mammals such as dunnarts and planigales, bats, frogs, venomous mulga and brown snakes, pythons, spiders and scorpions.

"Feral cats have been implicated in at least 27 mammal extinctions across Australia and currently threaten more than 100 native species, including mammals, lizards and nesting birds," Mr Nankivell said.

"Feral cats are notoriously difficult to control as they are reluctant to take baits or enter traps, particularly when prey, such as small native mammals, are abundant. We need to develop new methods and tools to tackle the problem."

He said recent rain in the state's north will trigger breeding of feral animals and provide a "veritable smorgasbord" of wildlife.

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Young, autistic and dead Another brick in the wall Key to curbing appetite

A \$19 MILLION research program will investigate why autistic adults are dying decades before their time.

The five-year project planned by charity Autistica follows a bombshell study from Sweden that uncovered evidence of "shameful" premature death among those with the disorder.

Researchers from the Karolinska Institute analysed data on 27,000 people with autism.

On average, autistic adults died 16 years younger than those in the general population. Those who also had a learning disability died more than 30 years prematurely, at an average age of just 39.

PINK Floyd guitarist David Gilmour is set to become the first modern artist to perform before an audience at Pompeii's Roman amphitheatre.

The 70-year-old musician will return to the famous venue in July, 45 years after concert film *Pink Floyd: Live At Pompeii*, which was filmed in

an empty arena, made the band the first act to play there. Until now, no other rock concert has been staged there.

"Performing there in 1971 was very special and I'm looking forward to returning and hopefully creating some more memorable moments," Gilmour said.

A BRAIN cell that stops over-eating has been identified by scientists, paving the way to potential new anti-obesity treatments.

Tests showed that switching off the satiety neurons caused mice to eat more, and double their weight in three weeks.

When the cells' function

was restored, the mice reduced the amount they ate each day by about 25 per cent.

Dr Richard Hagan, of Johns Hopkins University in the US, said the signals seemed to tell the mice "they've had enough".

The findings are published in the journal *Science*.