

# Intensive Pest Animal Management

## Baiting and trapping timetables

June 2010

The time of year that pest animals are targeted will be determined by what type of programme is planned – either year round or to protect a particular species during its breeding season. For year round programmes, it is best to start targeting the pest animal when their numbers are naturally low. For rats and possums this will be at the end of winter. Other animals such as rabbits, need to be targeted when their preferred food sources are lowest to ensure good bait uptake i.e. during winter.

The recommendations below are general best practice and the amount of bait used or traps set will need to be judged depending on bait type (see [Choosing the right bait](#)), pest animal density and the presence of other pests. If using a pesticide that is palatable to other pest species you may need more bait to allow for their interference and bait take. [Result monitoring](#) is an important tool and will identify the impact your actions are having – we **strongly recommend** you do some result monitoring as rapid emptying of bait stations does not necessarily equate to kills of your targeted pest!

### Possums

Baiting should be pulsed seasonally and include a period of no baiting to avoid bait shyness. Initial baiting for biodiversity protection should commence at the end of winter until October. Pulse feed over this period replacing bait at 3 weeks, then at 4 weeks. Uneaten bait can then be removed until a second round of baiting from February to April. Bait stations that have had high bait take should be continually refilled every 4 weeks until bait is no longer taken. This second baiting round is prior to possum mating and when food is at its shortest supply. If using pelletised bait, place bait in clear plastic bags to prolong bait life and palatability. [Possum monitoring](#) only needs to be done once a year, usually in summer.

## Rats

Baiting should be pulsed seasonally and include a period of no baiting to avoid bait shyness. Initial baiting should commence at the end of winter when rat numbers are naturally low. Initially bait stations should be checked every 4 weeks until bait take reduces. After this, baiting can occur every 6 to 8 weeks. Baiting should cease in late autumn. Rat numbers should then be low going in to winter, and when the food source from seeds is highest. Rat numbers would naturally peak in autumn, so achieving low numbers in autumn will be a very good indication that your baiting regime has worked well. If using pelletised bait, place bait in clear plastic bags to prolong bait life and palatability.

Plan to [monitor for rats](#) in September, December and April. The December monitor is a mid season monitor that will tell you what progress you're making compared to the early season monitor in September. You may need to adjust your baiting regime at this stage. The April monitor will give an end of season result.

## Rabbits

Target initial baiting during winter as this is when there is less food available for rabbits, and uptake of pellets is likely to be higher. Aim to reduce numbers until late spring, then cease baiting over summer. Commence again the following winter. Rabbits are difficult to control and require an ongoing programme, ideally combined with use of other control methods like shooting or trapping.

## Mustelids and hedgehogs

The size and objectives of your project will dictate what time period you operate mustelid and hedgehog trapping. To protect birds over a breeding season, it may only be necessary to trap for the season. For protection of endangered species or to protect lizards and insects, traps need to be set all year round. Mustelid and hedgehog numbers peak over the summer months, so traps will need to be checked weekly or fortnightly from December through to March. The rest of the year, fortnightly or monthly checking should suffice. The frequency of trap checking will depend on pest levels, you'll get a feel for how often to check traps based on your catch rates.