



Possum in five finger tree at night

Control Options

There are several methods of controlling possums with some being suited to particular applications. A number of methods require the user to be trained and licensed.

The ARC has produced the following Pestfacts on possum control to help land occupiers control possums:

Pestfacts on possum control methods:

115. Campaign

Pellets for use in bait stations. *possum bait*

116. Talon and PestOff

Pellets for use in bait stations. *possum bait*

117. Feratox bait

Cyanide pellets for use in bait stations. Licence required.

120. Timms traps

The Timms trap is a kill trap, useful in urban areas.

121. Cage traps

Cage traps are useful in urban areas. Possum is kept alive.

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09 366 2000 www.arc.govt.nz/biosecurity

For more information on plant & animal pests phone ARC on:

(09) 366 2000 (Auckland free calling area)

0800 80 60 40 (outside the free calling area)



Possums

Trichosurus vulpecula



Introduction

Throughout most of New Zealand, the brushtail possum is a serious pest to native bush, exotic forests, pastoral farms, orchards, nurseries, parks and home gardens. It is one of the most costly nuisances ever introduced to New Zealand. There is now no prospect of completely eradicating this pest, but we can take steps to control them.

In native bush, possums devour developing flowers, fruit and fresh young foliage. They have seriously damaged or destroyed pohutukawa trees in our coastal forests and seriously reduced numbers of other plants throughout areas of the Auckland region. Possum also eat or destroy both eggs and

chicks of native birds and compete with native species for a wide range of native food sources.

In residential areas, possums steal or spoil produce and damage ornamental plants. Occasionally they enter homes, often by chimneys, fouling and damaging furniture or fittings when they are unable to escape.

Possums can act as vectors (carriers) for bovine tuberculosis which they can pass to cattle and other farm stock.



Rata tree killed by possum browse

Status

Possums are declared animal pests in the Auckland Regional Animal Pest Management Strategy. The ARC aims to protect Auckland's areas of high conservation value from the impact of possums and to make people aware of the damage that possums can do. The ARC uses animal pest control contractors to carry out possum control in areas of high conservation value in the Auckland region.

The National Bovine Tuberculosis Pest Management Strategy aims to reduce or eliminate vectors, including possums, where they are suspected of carrying *Mycobacterium bovis*, the cause of bovine tuberculosis. The Animal Health Board is responsible for the National Bovine Tuberculosis Pest Management Strategy and contracts the ARC to carry out vector control operations in the Auckland region.

Possums are declared wild animals under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977. This gives the Department of Conservation (DoC) powers to control possums on the conservation estate. It is an offence to release possums into the wild or carry out any act which will encourage or cause an increase in the population of possums. It is also an offence to keep possums as pets or sell possums without a licence from DoC.

Origin

The brushtail possum is a native of mainland Australia and Tasmania. Specimens from both areas have been introduced to New Zealand since the first successful introduction in 1858 to establish a fur trade.

Description

The brushtail possum is a nocturnal marsupial mammal a little under half a metre long from its snout to the base of its thick bushy tail. Though often seen on the ground, it is equipped for living in trees with powerful hind legs for leaping between branches and hand-like paws well suited for climbing and holding food. Possums have very long, sharp claws that cannot be retracted, enabling the possum to easily run up tree trunks. In the canopy the possums' long tail can wrap tightly around a branch supporting its whole weight as it reaches out for food with its front legs.

Possums have very good night vision and long sensitive whiskers enabling them to move easily and safely amongst tree branches in the dark. They have large ears and acute hearing for locating the "laughing cough" communication calls of other possums. They also have an extremely keen sense of smell in order to find ripening fruits and other tempting foods from great distances, and to follow smeared scent markings left by other possums.

Possums become sexually mature at between one and two years old and breed throughout the year. Young are born about three weeks after mating and crawl up to the marsupial pouch where they remain for at least 4 months before emerging to cling to the mothers back.