

Pest Animals in Riparian Zones

Good pest management is key to the success of your riparian planting project. Riparian zones can be great for attracting wildlife, however, they can also be a smorgasbord of tasty treats and an inviting environment for hares, rabbits and possums.

It's important to have a plan to tackle ongoing pest control before you get started with riparian plantings. A multi-pest control plan can be established to target several pests at once.

Triple trouble – hares, rabbits and possums

Hares, rabbits and possums are the main pests for riparian planting in Southland.

Hares are particularly destructive as they bite off new plants to mark their territory (rather than to feed). They can kill large numbers of plants in a few nights.

Rabbits will eat tree seedlings, as well as neighbouring pasture.

Possums will not only eat palatable species, but also cause breakages and damage to plants they don't like to eat.

Tip #1:

Use plant protectors. An effective way to protect your plants from animal pests is to use protective sleeves. They fit tightly over planting stakes and should fit snugly with the ground. Protective sleeves form an effective barrier, especially while plants are establishing.

Tip #2:

Let the grass grow. This helps to stop hares and rabbits damaging your new plantings. They don't like pushing through long, wet grass.

Tip #3

Ensure pest control is carried out before you start planting. This will minimise early damage to plants.



▶ Hare.



▶ Rabbit.



▶ Possum.

Controlling hares and rabbits

Rabbit control should be carried out during Autumn and Winter before their breeding season (Spring/Summer). Control rabbits until the growing tips of plants are above a height where rabbits can reach.

Shooting – night shooting with the aid of a spotlight using a .22 rifle or 12 gauge shotgun. Hares' eyes shine red in the spotlight. Choose overcast, breezy nights for better success and avoid chasing them or shooting at long range as this makes them 'shy'.

All safety precautions must be adhered to when using a firearm.

Poisoning – is an option for larger rabbit populations but is best undertaken by a professional contractor.



Typical hare damage to a plant (broadleaf).

Repellents – repellent preparations are designed to make plants unpalatable and unattractive to browsing hares and rabbits.

Repellents are generally applied as foliar sprays, which have to be re-applied periodically to treat new growth in the browsing range (0-50cm above ground). Commercial preparations are available from garden and nursery suppliers.

Fencing – exclusion fencing can be cost-effective where hare and/or rabbit numbers are high. Ensure there are no gaps under the fence and that all drains and depressions are netted as well. Gates into the block must be rabbit proof and be kept closed at all times.

Fencing for hares – mesh netting (8-10cm in diameter) are effective.

Fences need to be at least 1m high and must be tightly stretched and pegged to the ground to ensure there are no gaps.

Fencing for rabbits - mesh netting (less than 3cm in diameter); paling fence (gaps less than 5cm; or corrugated iron).

Possoms

Controlling possums

In most areas, ongoing possum control will be necessary to protect your plantings.

Trapping – traps for controlling possums are available from farm supply stores. Traps fall into three categories - kill traps, leg-hold traps and live capture traps. Traps need to be checked regularly, which can be a time-consuming option.

Poison – the poisons available for general public use are:

- Pestoff (Brodifacoum) – second generation anticoagulant poison that is a slow acting poison.
- Feracol (Cholecalciferol) – a calcium elevating poison that causes heart failure.

Note: These possum baits must all be used in bait stations, in areas where stock cannot



Bait stations are available on loan from Environment Southland.

access. Bait stations help to confine the bait to the target species and should be placed at 100-150m intervals through areas of possum habitat.

Night-shooting – night-shooting is an option when controlling small possum populations. If shooting is used, a .22 rifle and shotgun are the preferred firearms. All necessary precautions must be taken when using firearms.

Repellents – repellents may deter possums from damaging young trees however, they don't provide total protection.

Commercial Pest Controllers – professional pest control operators can be used to carry out possum control work. Contact Environment Southland for information and contractor details, or see the Yellow Pages under Pest Control.

Possum Control Areas (PCAs) – In order to support and assist landowners to control possums on their properties, Environment Southland Biosecurity staff help coordinate and establish Possum Control Areas (PCAs). They ensure coordinated possum control is carried out over a larger area or community by groups of landowners using effective control methods. Landowners who are keen to be part of a PCA or want to find out more can contact our Biosecurity team on 0800 76 88 45 or check out Environment Southland's website: www.es.govt.nz

Further Assistance

Contact one of Environment Southland's Biosecurity Officers for more advice about good practice methods for pest control. Phone 0800 76 88 45.