

POSSUM PRESS

Possum Control Area Newsletter – December 2014

Welcome to the latest edition of Possum Press, a newsletter keeping you in touch with what is happening in Possum Control Areas (PCAs) throughout the Southland region.

What's New?

The Possum Control Areas (PCA) programme continues to grow and gain support from landowners who are keen to ensure possums are kept to a low level on farmland. Sustained and ongoing possum control will ensure greater pasture and crop production and help maintain the gains made through past possum control operations, which were carried out for TB purposes.

Approximately 196,000 hectares, within 30 PCA areas throughout Southland, are now established. PCAs are now beginning to establish in Eastern Southland, which includes areas previously worked under the Bovine TB programme.

As annual possum control becomes part of routine farm management, Environment Southland will carry out additional possum monitoring to provide farmers and the regional council with the information to ensure that the programme is working or where additional efforts may be required. The key to future success is maintaining the efforts already put in and ensuring farmers continue to apply the pressure and see that possums are kept to a low level.



See page 3 for more details

Senior biosecurity officer Dave Burgess talks with Winton farmer Bruce Hamilton about ongoing pest control on his property, which has been part of a PCA for more than five years. Bruce is seeing and hearing the benefits of the programme, with native birdlife returning to the bush areas in increasing numbers.



PossumControlAreas

196,000 ha
in **30 PCAs**
throughout
Southland

Visit our website and
click on



to see the latest
PCA map

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**environment
SOUTHLAND**

Te Taiao Tonga



Jeff Keen – Tomogalak PCA

Jeff and Linzi Keen have taken over the long established family farm in Northern Southland in the headwaters of the Tomogalak Stream. Protecting the land and the environment is strong on their list of goals for the largely hill country property and this includes effective sustainable possum control. Jeff saw possum numbers starting to increase slowly following the ceasing of formal possum control under the Bovine TB programme several years ago.

“Being part of a PCA means that we now have a good system in place to ensure that possums are controlled to a low level annually with little effort. Letting possum numbers get away again isn’t an option. We still have an uncontrolled area on part of our property boundary where possums move through from but the bait stations should pick these up.

The contractor is used once a year to service all the possum bait stations, while we also bait some of the stations in hot spots ourselves in between this. I think PCA’s are a good idea. We still need a collaborative landowner approach to keep possum numbers down long term.”

Andrew Currie – Castlerock PCA

Andrew runs a family farm in Castlerock between the Mossburn–Lumsden Road and Oreti River. Although the amount of possum habitat is not extensive, the established old man pine tree lanes and the adjacent river corridor of willow, scrub and long grass still provide plenty of good habitat for possums. Field trial cameras used the year prior to control showed extensive, costly damage to a kale crop, largely unnoticed until too late.

This PCA started around three years ago, with Environment Southland setting up an extensive network of bait stations throughout the PCA. Andrew’s father currently baits and maintains those on their property. Some of the stations are now slowly being removed from the PCA and used elsewhere, as possum numbers have dramatically been reduced and held that way.

“I think the PCA project is a good programme, resulting in less possums. We used to have them around the sheds for example, but not anymore. However Environment Southland need to allocate more resources to this work to allow the programme to expand as well as properly maintain the existing areas such as ours. The ongoing support and advice we receive is important and appreciated, this will keep farmers on side and see ongoing success. I’m pleased to see there’s good buy-in from farmers for the PCA programme in Southland.”



Bruce Hamilton – Winton Hill PCA

Bruce has been actively carrying out possum control on his Central Southland property for over 10 years. The desire to protect his deer farm from the risk of Bovine TB and to enhance the native bush blocks on his property were, and still are, the driving force for doing this.

“Although I was already doing some possum control, joining and supporting the PCA programme five years ago meant I have proper bait stations set up and a regular baiting programme is easy to do. Without possums I can see the native bush here is flourishing, as are the roses around the house. We used to see plenty of possums dead on the road here but not now. Having all my neighbours also doing something means less possums moving around so everyone benefits.

“The bird life is also more prolific compared with 10 years ago, with large numbers of wood pigeons living here. With a low possum population, my son John and I can also target other pest animals on the farm as well now.”



A highly effective bait station in the Pine Bush PCA.

PCA Profiles

Pine Bush PCA

The Pine Bush PCA in Southern Southland is approximately 5,800 hectares in size and involves around 40 landowners. The area has a wide variety of excellent habitats for possums including tree lanes, scrub, willows and small patches of native and exotic bush.

Landowners were keen to be part of the PCA programme earlier this year, so Environment Southland engaged its contractor to carry out initial possum control and bait station set up on behalf of the farmers.

Almost 2000 possums were removed from the area using traps and cyanide poison, including 31 killed from just one bait station in 10 days. This will provide huge benefits to the area.

Landowners will start being responsible for annual possum maintenance from next winter in order to see that the possums are now kept down to a low level.

Riversdale PCA

This intensively farmed flat area around Riversdale in Northern Southland was set up as a PCA (5,771 ha) this winter and although it contains a lot less possum habitat compared with other areas, the initial control still removed 437 possums.

This low possum population will now be very easy for the landowners to control annually, particularly using the possum bait stations that Environment Southland set up for this purpose. Like other PCAs, Environment Southland plans to expand neighbouring areas adjoining this one, to increase the overall benefits to the area.



Pest Control Options

While possums have been the focus of the PCAs, many landowners are interested in controlling other pests on their property to gain even greater biodiversity benefits.

Our biosecurity staff have the expertise to advise and show you the different effective control techniques and options that would be suited to your property and range of pest animals, including rats, stoats, ferrets, cats and magpies. Environment Southland can loan or help you source various traps for short or long term control of pests.

Further information on these pests and control options can be found on our website, www.es.govt.nz/environment/pests/animals.

*Why did the possum
cross the road?*

TO SEE HIS FLATMATES!



DOC 200 trap

For stoats, ferrets and rats – ideal to help protect birdlife. Target areas on the farm are duck ponds, sheds, tracks, offal holes, bush edges and gateways by tree lanes.

Site traps in areas that you pass regularly and can quickly check and re-bait when required. The stainless steel trap sits in a strong wooden box that will last many years.



Timms trap

Multi-purpose kill trap for feral cats and ferrets when baited with meat or fish, or possums when baited with apple. Easy to bait and set.

We can advise you on the best areas to site the trap, depending on the pest species you are targeting.



Magpie trap

There are a variety of magpie trap sizes available depending on your situation. The hardest part is catching the first call bird, which then entices other birds into the trap.

Working with other neighbours who are trapping will help and give greater effectiveness. Environment Southland can loan you a magpie trap for a short period.

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