

POSSUM PRESS

Possum Control Area Newsletter - December 2013 - Issue 4

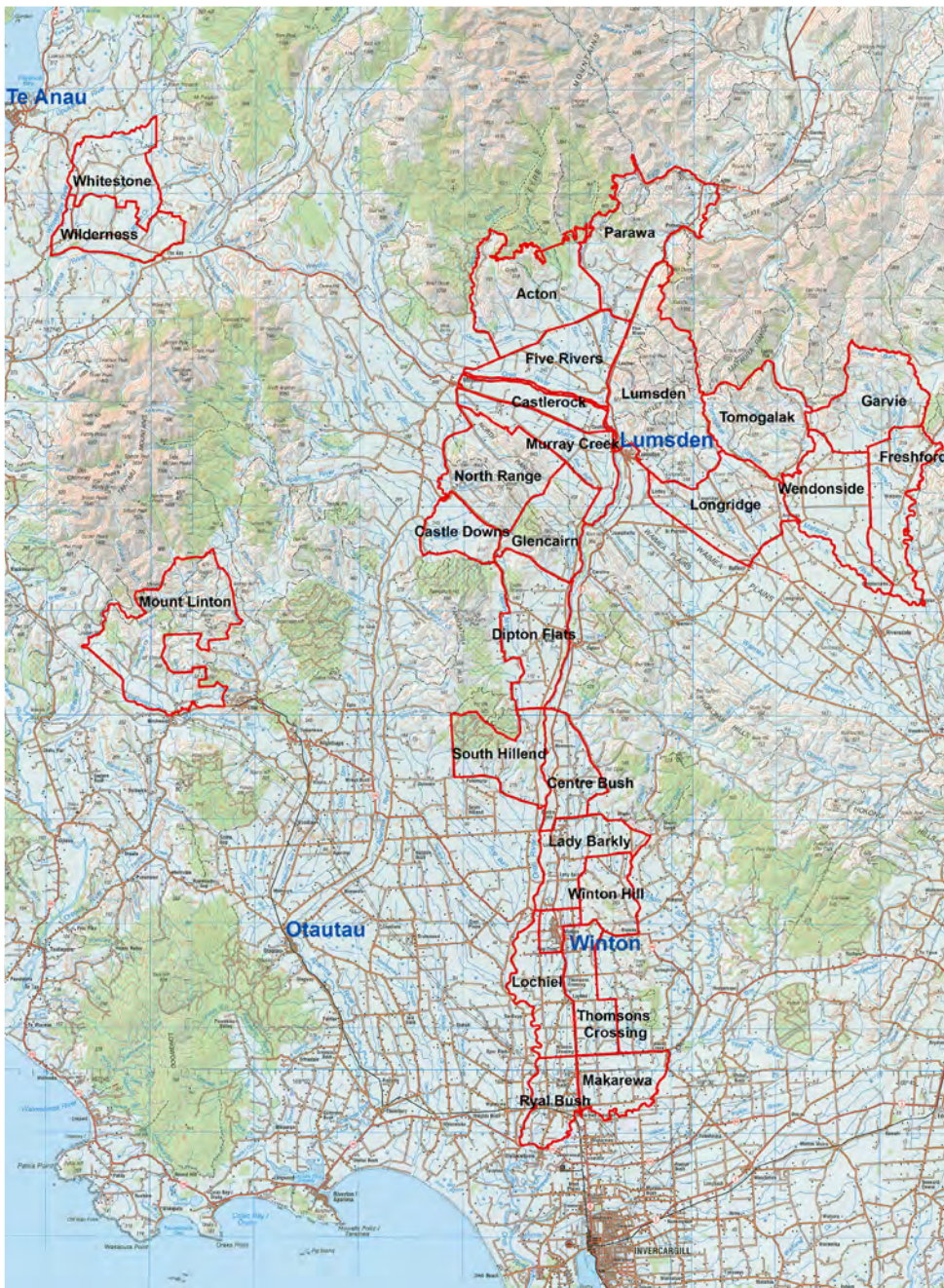


PossumControlAreas

What's New...

The Possum Control Areas (PCA) programme is moving into its fourth year. So far 26 PCAs totalling approximately 170,000 hectares have been successfully established, with more than 600 farms actively involved in long term, effective possum control. A further three PCAs totalling about 20,000 hectares are planned for the 2013/14.

Landowners have readily accepted and included possum control into their annual farm management activities. Monitoring results are excellent, reinforcing the view that once possum numbers are reduced they can be maintained annually with minimal effort and resource.



Quick stats...

The PCA programme is growing and showing excellent results!

26 PCAs covering 170,000 ha – a **70% increase** in the past year

Average PCA size – 6,300 ha

Approximately 600 farms

In this issue...

- More PCAs added
- Possum monitoring
- Control device options
- The benefits of using possum contractors
- Important points to remember



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Possum Monitoring

Monitoring provides both landowners and Environment Southland with information about how well the PCA programme is meeting its objective to maintain possum numbers below the five percent Residual Trap Catch (RTC) level (i.e. less than five possums caught on 100 trap nights).

Residual Trap Catch (RTC) is a nationally recognised method of monitoring using leg hold traps. Randomly selected trap lines consisting of 10 traps each are laid in areas of possum habitat. Each trap is set 20 metres apart for three nights. The number of possums caught against the total trap nights is expressed as a percentage. If the target is five percent RTC then no more than five possums shall be caught from 100 trap nights.



Leg hold traps are used to monitor possum numbers.

Over the past 12 months RTC monitoring was carried out in the following PCA areas with very pleasing results:

- **Glencairn** – monitoring following initial possum control by Environment Southland; contractor Chris Freer. Results recorded a 1.1% RTC.
- **Five Rivers** – monitoring following initial possum control by Environment Southland; contractor Henare Baker. Results recorded a 2.01% RTC.
- **Makarewa** – this PCA was established over two years ago, results show that landowners have held this area down to 3.38% RTC.
- **Ryal Bush** – this PCA was established over two years ago, results show that landowners have held this area down to 1.38% RTC.

During the 2013/14 year the following areas will be set up in the PCA programme:

- **Wendonside/Freshford** – new PCA areas currently being set up -pre control result of 5.6% RTC
- **Pine Bush (14.74%) and Mataura Island (17.45%)** – one monitor line recorded an almost record high for our Southland database of 50% RTC.

Pre-control monitoring has been carried out to assess the possum level prior to formal control being started.

Possum Control Devices

Bait stations are the most effective possum control method because once they are baited they work all night, every night. However, there are some trap options that may suit smaller landholders or sensitive areas. *Our Biosecurity staff can arrange to demonstrate these traps and provide information on their suitability or alternative options for your property.*

Timms trap & Possum Master

These traps are known as 'kill traps'. They are commonly baited with apple for possums (cats generally do not eat apple). When baited with meat they are ideal for feral cats and mustelids.



Timms trap.



Possum Master trap.

Cage trap

This is a live capture trap baited with apple that needs to be checked daily, with any possums caught, humanely dispatched and disposed of.

Using a Contractor for Annual Maintenance

Farmers using contractors to complete their annual possum control maintenance are finding this a more efficient use of resource.

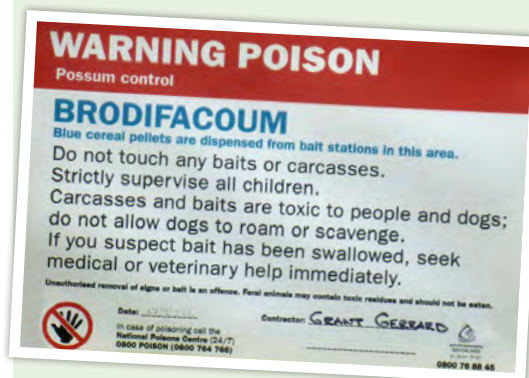
Contractors can effectively cover several properties at once ensuring a greater benefit by having less reinvasion of possums moving between properties. Contractors ensure that bait stations are still in the most effective place for possum activity and they carry spare parts to use as required. They can also freshen up a bait station site with a blaze of lured flour to entice possums back more quickly.

Using a contractor frees you up to carry on with other farm management activities. (We have had instances where bait supplied to landowners has been left to sit in the shed unused due to other routine farm work taking priority).



Using a contractor is an efficient option for annual bait station maintenance.

If you haven't already engaged a contractor and want to know more about this option or contractors' details, please give our Biosecurity staff a call.



Important points to remember

- *Where poisons are used in bait stations a poison warning sign must be visible at points of public entry to the property.*
- *Stock should not have access to any bait; check location of bait stations and fences.*
- *If felling trees, first check to see if any bait stations are present; they may need to be moved.*
- *Using a contractor is the most efficient option for completing annual possum maintenance.*
- *Everyone in a PCA needs to play their part so possums don't move around and re-invade areas already controlled.*



It is important to place the bait station where stock can't access the bait.

Missing Bait Stations

Recently we have had several incidents of bait stations becoming lost during the harvesting of trees.

If you are planning on felling or harvesting trees and have bait stations on your property, please let us or the pest control contractor know in advance so they can be checked and moved if necessary. This is important, firstly, to ensure that bait is not accidentally spilt on the ground for stock to access and secondly, so that bait does not become a hazard for forestry contractors.

By keeping records up to date, future control can take into account any change in bait station locations and possum habitat.



Bait stations becoming lost while harvesting trees have the potential to be a hazard for forestry contractors.

Southern Field Days

Environment Southland Biosecurity staff will again be on site at the Environment Southland marquee during the Southern Field Days held at Waimumu from 12–14 February 2014.

We're happy to discuss any aspect of the PCA programme or any issues related to the control of pest animals – look forward to seeing you there!



Visit Environment Southland's biosecurity stand at the Southern Field Days next February.

Why did the chicken cross the road?

To show the possum it's possible!

Environment Southland Contacts



Dave Burgess
Senior Biosecurity Officer
dave.burgess@es.govt.nz
Ph 021 784 946



Alfredo Paz
Biosecurity Officer
alfredo.paz@es.govt.nz
Ph 021 784 933



Craig Smith
Biosecurity Officer
craig.smith@es.govt.nz
Ph 021 784 945

Environment Southland Biosecurity – Pest Animals

Cnr North Road & Price St, Private Bag 90116, Invercargill 9840

Ph: 03 211 5115 or 0800 76 88 45 (toll free – Southland only) Email: service@es.govt.nz Web: www.es.govt.nz