

## PCA and Education

Environment Southland biosecurity officers visit schools within the PCAs to talk to students about animal pests and the use of traps and toxins. The aim of these talks is to create awareness about animal pests, their environmental and economic impacts and the control methods used, particularly bait stations and toxins. Students are shown a variety of traps and bait stations and taught the risks, in case they come across them.

As part of their EnviroSchool programme, students from Dipton and Limehills Schools spent a few hours with Environment Southland biosecurity officers trapping for possums.

Limehills School adopted Swales Reserve, part of the Lady Barkly PCA, as an animal pest trapping project. Swales Reserve is administered by the Department of Conservation and is located within 300m of the school. We helped arrange access and the required trapping permit was issued to the school by DOC.

The first round of trapping for possums, using Timms traps, was done in June and July this year, with a total of five possums and four hedgehogs caught. There is a plan to trap the reserve for mustelids (stoats and ferrets) and cats in the future.



Limehills School students setting a possum Timms trap.



Environment Southland biosecurity officer, Alfredo Paz, with students from Limehills School.

Dipton School students learnt about pests and trapping possums at Castlerock, with the help of Environment Southland biosecurity officer, Craig Smith, over a four week period. The owners of the farm at the Castlerock Limeworks area kindly permitted access to the area across their land. They even gave up a paddock near the stream at the base of Castlerock, which the school has restored with native plantings. During the pest component of their activities, students caught eight possums using yellow Timms traps.

At the end of the project, the traps were removed, but the school will continue to monitor pest levels. The children were delighted to have time outside the classroom – learning about the benefits of controlling possums and other pests.

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# POSSUM PRESS

Possum Control Area Newsletter - November 2012 - Issue #3



Possum numbers are quietly increasing in many parts of Southland and are a concern as they can severely impact on the environment by damaging flora and fauna. They pose an economic impact by reducing agricultural production through competing with livestock for food. They are also a known carrier of Bovine Tb disease.

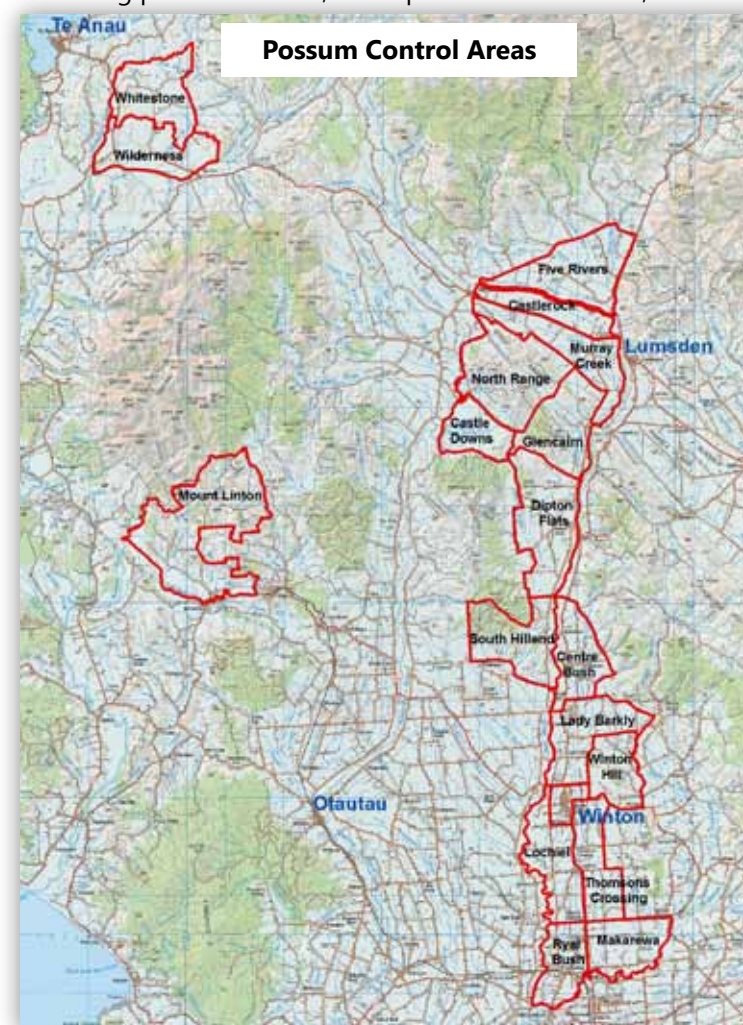
## What's New in the Possum Control Areas

Eighteen Possum Control Areas (PCAs) have now been successfully established. Another 50–60,000 hectares, largely in Northern Southland, is being planned for set up over the next 12 months. We continue to receive a high level of acceptance and support from landowners, who are keen to ensure that possum numbers are kept low.

One of the most recent PCAs to be set up is in Makarewa, just north of Invercargill. Traps were used initially and followed up with bait stations. A total of 570 possums were caught mainly in the tree lanes of this intensively farmed flat area. The on-going baiting of the stations will ensure possum numbers are kept low.

Ideally, as each PCA is set up, adjoining areas will be approached and set up. This means that possum population reinvasion or increases from other areas is less likely to occur.

Following possum control, other pests such as ferrets, stoats and rats may also be targeted.



If you are interested in controlling these pests too, our staff can demonstrate an effective range of traps and, in some cases, help source a supply of traps.

## In this issue

**Four more PCAs added.**

**The benefits of using experienced pest contractors.**

**Best practice for using bait stations.**

**Why monitor the results of possum control?**

**Schools lend a hand.**

## Current PCA Statistics

- 18 PCAs in Southland covering 99,500 hectares.
- The average PCA size is 5,500 hectares.
- Approximately 450 landowners are actively involved.
- One hundred bait stations on average for each PCA.





## PCA Contractors

Environment Southland engages approved contractors to carry out initial control and bait station set up on behalf of landowners in new PCAs. All possum habitat is covered in this first round of possum control, ensuring that a low, even population is achieved.

We fully encourage landowners to continue using these contractors to carry out the annual maintenance work. They know exactly how much bait to use and what signs to look for. They have spare parts and stations and can easily move or correct a bait station if required. This is also one less job for you to worry about.

Another benefit of using contractors is that control is carried out throughout the PCA and in a shorter timeframe, which maximises the benefits. It is important that as many bait stations as possible are controlled in a similar time frame. Contractors simply invoice the landowner for the work and Environment Southland supplies the agreed bait at no cost.



Environment Southland encourages landowners to use contractors to monitor and maintain possum bait stations.



It is important to place bait stations where stock cannot access the bait.

## Possum Baiting

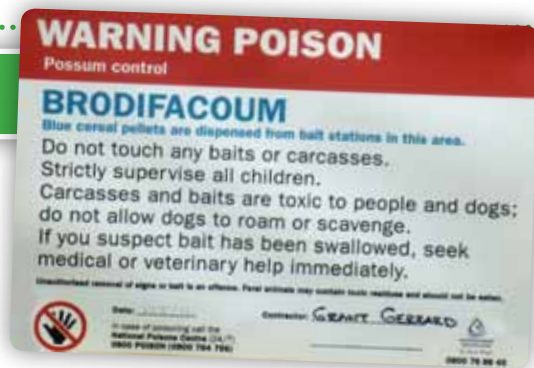
Bait stations are an effective way of controlling possums and when positioned and maintained correctly will provide years of possum control. It is a legal requirement and best practice to ensure livestock does not have any access to the bait. Therefore, bait stations are placed in a manner that reduces the risk of this occurring i.e. behind fences or up trees.

If you suspect stock have had access to bait they should not be sent for slaughter for up to 270 days. Contact one of our biosecurity staff for further advice and information.

Stock access to bait and bait stations should also be taken into account when the following activities are carried out on the farm:

- Shifting or renewing fences.
- Trees are felled or blown down.
- Previously unstocked areas are used for grazing.
- New farm staff are employed – ensure they are aware of the possum control project and the associated risks.

Sometimes you may notice that bait is not always completely taken from some bait stations. It can be good practice where possible to remove old bait after two or three months before it becomes mouldy and unpalatable. Old bait should be disposed of by burying it at least 60cm underground.



## Poison Warning Signs

When toxins are used, a poison warning sign must be erected at all normal points of public access to your property. In the case of Brodifacoum, possum bait signs must remain up and visible for up to 12 months. If you notice any warning signs have been damaged or are missing, please let us know so a replacement can be supplied.

## Possum Monitoring

With any programme it is important to understand and check that results are being achieved. Environment Southland periodically carries out possum population monitoring in various PCAs each year and gives the results to landowners.

Monitoring may be in various forms depending on what information is required. The main form of monitoring is Residual Trap Catch (RTC). This 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 20m apart for three nights. The number of possums caught is measured against the total trap nights and expressed as a percentage. If the target is five percent RTC then no more than five possums shall be caught from 100 trap nights.

RTC monitoring may be carried out before any control work is done in a new PCA to give an idea of the initial



Possum numbers are monitored using leg hold traps laid in areas of possum habitat.

possum density. This information can then be used to determine an effective control plan. Or, it may be used after a control exercise to ensure the possum level has been reduced to the required level or is holding at that level. It may also be used as a targeted or education monitor on properties where specific information is required on an area holding greater possum habitat, or where a landowner may be using alternative control methods.

Other forms of monitoring include visual inspections for possum signs and use of wax tags or chew cards, which are set up on trees and left for several nights. Possums will leave a bite mark, giving an indication of their presence or absence.

## To Join a PCA Programme

We thank all farmers already in a PCA for your support. We especially welcome feedback on the PCA concept and control work to date. This can help with the direction of the PCA programme.

If you are not currently in a PCA and would like to know more about the benefits, please visit our website or contact our biosecurity officers.

## Possum and Rock Stew

### Ingredients

1 possum (skin optional)

1 rock (several stones if no rocks available)

Several litres of water. (This is where the flavour comes from so choose your vintage carefully.)

### Directions

Boil the water, not so long as to reduce its natural flavour.

Add the possum, boil for several hours.

Add the rock, simmer for a couple more hours.

Discard the possum and eat the rock – it's probably more tender!

