

## ANIMAL PEST CONTROL

### ***POSSUM CONTROL***

### **A Guide to Self-Help Possum Control Areas**

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#### ***Introduction***

The Regional Pest Management Strategy seeks the support and assistance of landowners to minimise the damaging effects of possums in the region. The key method to achieve this goal is the establishment of self-help possum control areas.

#### ***What is a self-help possum control area?***

Possum control areas are areas of land where a majority of landowners (75% based on area) have agreed to maintain low possum densities on their land.

The Regional Council arranges and pays for initial possum control work, which leaves the land with a very low possum density. Land occupiers are then required to maintain low possum numbers over their land.

The Regional Council determines the boundaries of a possum control area. Where possible, the boundaries will be physical features such as rivers or streams to help reduce the level of possum re-invasion. Existing possum control areas, Department of Conservation control programmes and Animal Health Board vector control operations may also determine the boundaries of the possum control area.

#### ***How is a self-help possum control area established?***

The Regional Council may recommend a possum control area be established to those in problem possum areas or to those who contact the Regional Council for possum control advice and assistance.

The person who initiates the possum control area is required to gain support for the scheme in their area.

Once an initial level of support is achieved, all landowners in the proposed possum control area are visited and the proposal discussed with them.

To establish a possum control area Council requires the occupiers of at least 75% of the land area within the proposed possum control area to sign the agreement form. Once this has happened, Regional Council staff notify all occupiers the possum control area has been established.

Where a proposed possum control area contains areas of production forestry or land administered by the Department of Conservation it may take longer to establish. This is because these parties need time to plan for the initial possum control. They must carry this out at their cost as part of the possum control area.

#### ***Initial possum control***

Once a possum control area is set up, Council arranges for initial possum control work to be carried out over all the properties within the control area. Contractors reduce possum numbers to below 3% residual trap catch. All land owners within the possum control area are then required to maintain possum numbers over their land at or below 5% residual trap catch.

Land occupiers may employ contractors to undertake the work on their behalf or undertake their own ongoing control work.

Trap catch refers to an index of possum density as determined by trap-catch

monitoring. A 5% trap catch means that for every 100 traps set for one night, 5 possums are caught.

### **Pest Control Advisory Service**

The Regional Council Biosecurity team provides advice and information on baits and traps, possum control techniques, where and when to control possums, and cyanide licence training. This can be done either individually or as part of a wider group in the possum control area. Where necessary Biosecurity staff will arrange practical field days and on-farm demonstrations, involving Regional Council staff and experienced animal pest control contractors. Staff can recommend animal pest control contractors who can provide professional and cost effective maintenance services for landowners.

### **Subsidy Scheme**

Hawke's Bay Regional Council operates a subsidy scheme for animal pest control products such as cyanide and bait stations. These products are available from Farm Gear HB (Puketapu) and Farmlands Trading Ltd branches throughout Hawke's Bay and can either be bought by landowners or picked up on behalf of landowners by approved contractors to use in maintenance programmes. For the list of products see the Environment Topic "*Subsidised Pest Control Products*".

### **Monitoring and enforcement**

The Regional Council will monitor possum control areas to ensure control work is maintained. This will be done on a random basis and also carried out if the Council receives complaints about large numbers of possums coming from neighbouring properties.

If a monitor shows the landowner is above the required 5% residual trap catch, Biosecurity staff work with the landowner to develop a specific farm programme to better control possums on the property. Biosecurity staff may recommend a contractor be engaged to maintain low possum numbers.

If, after a reasonable period of time, the landowner has not managed to reduce possum densities, Council will take action to reduce possum numbers. The landowner will be billed for this work. This must be done to protect any neighbouring properties carrying out work and to ensure the long-term success of the self-help possum control programme.

### **Possum Control Area Establishment Process**

Landowner has a possum control problem



Landowner contacts Hawke's Bay Regional Council and discusses control options



Regional Council staff approaches individual landowners to sign them into the programme



If 75% of the community support the programme the area is designated a Possum Control Area



Regional Council contractors undertake initial knockdown of possum numbers. This is paid for by Regional Council.



Regional Council Biosecurity staff contact landowners 3-6 months after initial control to discuss maintenance control options.

### **Contact information**

For advice on establishing possum control areas and animal pest control contracts contact:

Campbell Leckie  
Biosecurity Contracts Co-ordinator  
(06) 835 9200 ext. 9354 or (025) 214 7436.

For advice on maintenance control of possums and other animal pests contact:  
Allan Beer  
Biosecurity Advisory Team Leader  
(06) 835 9200 ext. 9353 or (025) 915 087.

### **For further information**

For further information on animal pests or the Regional Pest Management Strategy, contact the Biosecurity Animal Pest Officers at Hawke's Bay Regional Council

Wairoa 06 838 8527

Napier 06 835 9200

Waipukurau 06 858 8636

TOLL FREE 0800 108 838

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