



**KEY FACTS ABOUT TOXIN USE
FOR POSSUM CONTROL
ON OTAGO PENINSULA
BY OTAGO PENINSULA BIODIVERSITY GROUP
2018-19**

What's happening?

Possum control began in 2011 to protect and enhance Peninsula biodiversity, stock health, tourism and lifestyle. To date, almost 15,000 possums have been removed. A further knockdown of possum hotspots is scheduled for conservation areas and private land in all sectors in 2018-19, primarily in remote coastal areas in Sectors 4 and 2. It will comprise a combination of poisoning and trapping in these areas. OPBG will also be supporting community trapping at the gateway to the Otago Peninsula (Sector 5) to prevent possum re-invasion from Dunedin city.

Where is it happening?

Most work will occur in Sector 4 conservation areas (Department of Conservation, DOC), comprising Sandymount, Sandfly Bay and Boulder Beach reserves, and in gully habitat that leads from these areas onto private rural land (conditional on landowner consent). Toxins and traps will be used on private and DCC land in sectors 1-4, where and when landowners agree to or request possum control work to achieve the objective of creating a possum-free Peninsula.

When will this happen?

Possum control using toxins and traps is planned to start on conservation areas in June 2018. It will be undertaken until the end of May 2019. Trapping will take place on private properties at any time in response to landowner requests and/or in full agreement with affected landowners.

Who will carry out the possum control?

The Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group (OPBG) and experienced external contractors will undertake the work, with assistance from proficient community trappers and landowners.

Monitoring

Non-toxic chew cards (white corflute cards laced with a possum lure) may be laid out for 1 week in all sectors, at any time. This helps OPBG to locate and map possum presence and movement corridors, to evaluate possum distribution and



Chew card

relative densities, and to improve trapping efficiency. Cards will be positioned c.20-30 cm off the ground, typically on tree trunks and fence posts. Chew cards will be retrieved and any locations showing positive possum sign will be followed up. In addition, residents and landowners are encouraged to report possum sightings and activity to OPBG.

Control Methods

Due to the varied nature and land use of the Otago Peninsula and the history of possum control to date, a variety of ground methods and toxins will be used, including the following:



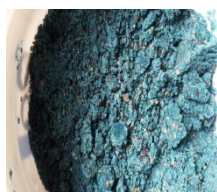
Feratox

Cyanide ('Feratox'): This may be used in DOC reserves (away from public walking tracks) and on some private land. Feratox is a small 'pellet' bait with enough cyanide to kill one possum and designed to crack under the pressure of a possum jaw. The small green pill will be encased in green dyed peanut paste placed in either a possum-specific 'BaitSafe' bait station, a small blue paper bait bag or similar, or as paste on the ground. There will be signs posted at all public access points showing where and how baits are laid, if present. **Feratox is not used around residential properties.** Any Feratox uneaten by possums will be retrieved at regular intervals and at the end of each stage of the operation.



Cholecalciferol pellets

Cholecalciferol (0.8% Vitamin D): 'Decal' will be used on conservation areas and adjoining gullies in pellet or gel form, deployed in possum specific 'Bait-Safe' bait stations to prevent nontarget bait take. Some may also be used in blue paper bait bags in these areas where there is dense vegetation. **'Decal'** may also be used on some larger private properties in pelleted form, and only in 'Bait-Safe' stations to minimise danger to stock or pets. While cholecalciferol poses a low risk of secondary poisoning (and can be purchased and used without a licence), OPBG will ensure landowners are aware of the risks associated with (a) bait spilled on the ground by possums and/or (b) pets or working dogs scavenging possum carcasses.



Cholecalciferol hard paste

Bait-Safe bait stations (blue, red or orange plastic) have been used by OPBG since 2015. They have worked exceptionally well at keeping bait fresh and keeping nontarget animals out, including protected fauna such as penguins, other bird species and reptiles, livestock and domestic pets.



Bait-Safe

Small Victor leghold traps are set in areas away from domestic animals, in rural and remote habitat. Leghold traps are checked daily and possums are killed humanely. These traps are more effective than kill traps.



Timms trap



cage trap



Possum Master



A12 kill trap



Indicator dog

Timms kill traps and live capture cage traps may be used and **are compatible with residential areas**. By controlling the times of day devices are set and the bait types used (fruit or vegetable), the (low) risk to children and pets is managed very effectively. Cage traps are checked every day.

Possum Master and Trapinator kill traps are a recent addition to our toolbox. It is a kill trap that can be set in trees above stock height or out of reach of ground birds eg. in Yellow-eyed penguin areas. Like the Timms trap, the Possum Master and Trapinators do not require checking every day, so both traps are well-suited for use in less accessible areas.

A12 kill traps are used by OPBG and a growing number of landowners. They are capable of removing up to ten possums on each small gas canister and useful at locations frequented by possums.

New trap types may be added to this list over time.

OPBG and its agents will notify people of trapping in public areas through signage at access points.

Signage for kill traps will have a picture of the trap(s) in use, a warning, and a request that people do not interfere with the traps.

Traps will be set away from formed public tracks.

Nightshooting is a useful method for control and monitoring of possums and will be used this year in remote rural areas.

Dogs are another useful tool, both for indicating the presence of possums (surveillance monitoring), and for 'search and remove' where possum numbers are high - particularly in dense scrub.

Other methods?

The above are ground methods that have been proven to work across the range of environments on Otago Peninsula. While OPBG is aware of other pest control tools that are available, none are currently being considered.

Quality control

Operational work undertaken by all operators will be monitored by OPBG to ensure that it complies with regulations, consents, performance standards, label instructions and Health & Safety standards. Control methods will be discussed with affected landowners/occupiers before and during the work.

What do you need to know about these pesticides?

When using pesticides like cyanide and cholecalciferol there is a poisoning risk to humans and domestic animals.

Poisoning can occur by eating poison baits. There is a relatively low risk of secondary poisoning (cats and dogs eating possum carcasses) with all three bait types shown.

All poison will be removed from each property following operations; this is a requirement by the Ministry of Health.

How will we know if the operation has achieved its goals?

Trap monitoring lines will be laid to measure how effectively possum control has been undertaken. This involves leg-hold trapping to a standard protocol on a number of selected “trap lines” within each area worked.

The control target for this operation is that no more than two possums should be caught for every 100 traps set for one night. This is referred to as a 2% or less “residual trap catch index” (RTCI). Chew card bite rates can also be converted to RTCI where domestic animals and protected species are at risk.

NOTE: WHERE BAITS ARE BEING APPLIED IN PUBLIC AREAS THERE WILL BE INFORMATION AND WARNING SIGNS POSTED AT ACCESS POINTS.

General warnings

- 1. Do not touch any of the poison baits or bait stations.**
- 2. Do not touch any of the traps.**
- 3. Do not touch any of the poisoned possum carcasses.**
- 4. Keep pets under control; do not let dogs eat poisoned carcasses.**
- 5. Do not let young children into the area unattended.**
- 6. Tell any visitors to the area of the danger.**
- 7. All areas will have poison signs in place at the time of poisoning.**

What do I do if I suspect poisoning?

In a case of suspected poisoning, contact your:

- local doctor;
- local medical centre; or
- National Poisons Centre (phone 0800 764 766)

Regulations

Possum control is governed by over 30 different Acts and regulations; in particular:

Map 2: Boulder Beach operational area

