



## **KEY FACTS ABOUT TOXIN USE FOR POSSUM CONTROL ON OTAGO PENINSULA BY OTAGO PENINSULA BIODIVERSITY GROUP 2019-20**

### **What's happening?**

Possum control began in 2011 to protect and enhance Peninsula biodiversity, stock health, tourism and lifestyle. To date, almost 18,000 possums have been removed. Further control of possum hotspots is scheduled for conservation areas and private land in all sectors in 2019-20. It will again involve a combination of poisoning and trapping in these areas. OPBG will also support community trapping at the gateway to the Otago Peninsula (Sector 5) to prevent the spread of possums to and from Dunedin city.

### **Where is it happening?**

Most work on public land will occur in 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 land and some DCC areas (such as Okia flats, Hereweka Harbour Cone block), where and when landowners or managers 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 2019. It will be undertaken in stages until the end of May 2020. 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 up to a week in all sectors, at any time. This helps OPBG to locate and map possum presence and movement corridors, to evaluate possum



*Chew card*

distribution and 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 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, private land and some DCC rural land, in pellet form. It will be deployed in possum specific 'Bait-Safe' bait stations to prevent nontarget bait take. Non-toxic bait will also be used in these stations to detect, aggregate and habituate possums.

'Decal' may also be used on some larger private properties in 'Bait-Safe' stations to minimise danger to stock or pets. While cholecalciferol poses a very low risk of secondary poisoning, 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.



*Bait-Safe*

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

**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** will be used; both are **compatible with residential areas**. By controlling the times of day devices are set and the bait types used (fruit or vegetable), the risk to children and pets is managed very effectively. Cage traps are checked every day.

**Possum Master** and **Trapinator kill traps** are recent additions to our toolbox. They are kill traps 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 as they become available.

**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 placed off formed public tracks.**

**Nightshooting** is another useful method for control and monitoring of possums and will be used in remote rural areas.

**Dogs** are effective in indicating the presence of possums (surveillance monitoring).

## Quality control



Operational work undertaken by all operators will be monitored by OPBG to ensure that it complies with regulations, consents, label instructions, Health & Safety standards and guidelines. Control work will be discussed with affected landowners/occupiers before commencement of work to ensure that boundary details, physical hazards, welfare and any other issues are clarified with the landowner.

**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.

Primary poisoning can occur by eating toxic baits. There is also a risk of secondary poisoning in wildlife and domestic animals through eating poisoned carcasses). Dogs and children should always be kept under supervision where warning signs are encountered.

All toxin will be removed from each property following operations, according to pesticide safety standards. This is a requirement by the Ministry of Health and the Department of Conservation.

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

Monitoring lines will be laid to measure how effectively possum control has been undertaken. This involves (a) leg-hold trapping in rural areas to a standard protocol on a number of selected trap lines within each area worked, or (b) by using chew cards or wax tag lines in other areas to provide a proxy figure.

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:

- Biosecurity Act 1993
- Conservation Act 1987
- Pesticides (Vertebrate Pest Control) Regulations 1983
- Animal Welfare Act 1991
- Resource Management Act 1991
- Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996

## **Who do I contact for more information?**

Bruce Kyle	03 489 0505
OPBG Operations Manager	027 4387 617

Hoani Langsbury	03 478 0906
OPBG Chairperson	027 2522 876

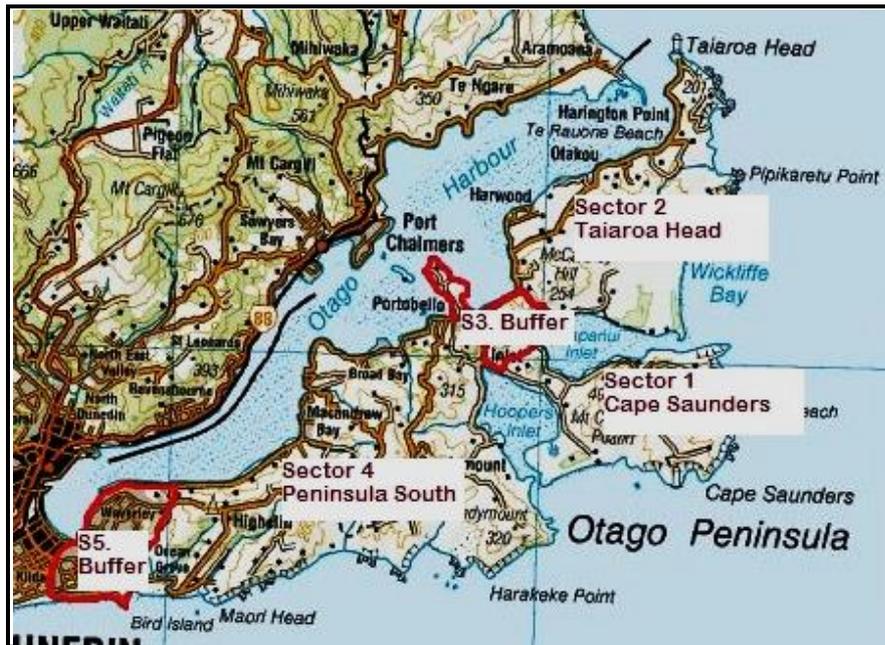
## **NOTE:**

**All care and responsibility is being taken to contact affected landholders in this operation. If you lease land in the area to or from someone who lives outside the operational area, or know of a neighbour who is likely to have an interest in the work, please advise Bruce Kyle, Operations Manager OPBG (0274 387 617).**

**Once again, OPBG welcomes the public to report possum sightings and activity, and/or to support the group in a volunteer capacity. We are extremely grateful for the efforts and support provided by a huge number of residents and landowners on the Otago Peninsula and wider community and we look forward to continue working together towards a pest free peninsula.**

**Please refer to maps below:**

Map 1: Otago Peninsula control sectors



Map 2: Boulder Beach operational area



