



TOWARD A PREDATOR-FREE PENINSULA

Information about OPBG activities over 2020-2021

What is happening.

Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group (OPBG) began a possum eradication programme on Otago Peninsula in 2011, as the first stage in a long-term predator-free programme. To date, 19,000 possums have been removed. OPBG is one of three delivery partners for Predator Free Dunedin (PFD) alongside the Halo Project and City Sanctuary. OPBG's possum eradication and future multispecies pest work is funded through PFD as a PF2050 landscape project till mid-2023.

From May 2020 until May 2021, we will undertake possum control on the northern areas of the peninsula, where possum numbers are presently low. This area includes Portobello, Cape Saunders and Taiaroa Head (Sectors 1, 2 and 3). It will again involve a combination of poisoning, trapping and surveillance monitoring in these areas.

OPBG will also be engaging with communities to promote backyard trapping in residential areas such as Harington Point, Harwood and Portobello.

Widespread possum control elsewhere on the Peninsula (Sector 4) will resume fully in 2021. However, limited trapping, poisoning and backyard trapping may occur to maintain possum populations at lower densities.

We will continue to support The Guardians' volunteer trapping programme at the base of the Otago Peninsula (Sector 5) to fulfil its strategic function as a buffer zone.

Where it is happening.

Most work will occur on private rural land, occasionally close to neighbouring residential properties. OPBG will continue to consult with residential neighbours as well as landowners to ensure that domestic animals and children are not in any danger.

Work will only be undertaken at the consent and/or request of landowners or occupiers. This includes where and when work is undertaken and applies to both residential and rural properties. If landowners or occupiers have any concerns about the work, OPBG is happy to discuss them at any time.

Widespread trapping, poisoning and community trapping will be undertaken in Sectors 1, 2 and 3. Limited trapping, poisoning and community trapping may occur in Sector 4 and volunteers will be trapping in Sector 5.

Predator Free Dunedin and Otago Regional Councils new pest plan

PFD's work is supported by the Otago Regional Council through the Regional Pest Management Plan 2019-2029. This includes site-led programmes for the Otago Peninsula (OPBG), West Harbour and Quarantine and Goat Islands (Halo). OPBG's Predator Free Peninsula vision is directly supported through the new plan with the following Plan Objectives: "eradicate possums, contain mustelids and sustained control of feral cats, rats and hedgehogs" with an additional Rule relating to the keeping of these pests.



Otago Peninsula divided into sections employed for possum control

When this will happen.

This phase of possum eradication is planned to start on 1 May 2020 and will finish in April 2021. Most work is likely to occur between May and November.

Who will carry out the possum eradication and other animal pest control?

Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group (OPBG) staff, external contractors and volunteers will undertake the work.

Monitoring



Chew card

Surveillance monitoring allows us to gauge possum distribution and to estimate relative possum population densities. This allows us to target activities and improve the efficiency of possum control.

Residents and landowners are encouraged to report possum sightings and activities, as well as monitor possums on their land with chew cards.

Non-toxic chew cards (white corflute cards laced with a possum lure) and **Wax Tags** (a plastic, orange device with a ball of wax) are laid out close to habitat. A week later they are checked for possum specific bite marks.



Wax tag



Feratox pellets



Cholecalciferol 'Decal' pellets

Eradication & Control Methods

Due to the varied topography and mixed land use on Otago Peninsula, a variety of ground methods and toxins will be used. These include the following:

Cyanide ('Feratox'): Feratox is made up of small round pellet baits, each containing enough cyanide to kill one possum. Each pellet is encased in a green peanut paste and kills the possum as it is cracked open when eaten. Feratox bait is placed either in a **bait station** or in a '**starch striker**'.

Feratox may be used on both rural land and some reserves, away from public walking tracks. There will be signs posted at public access points to advise when and how baits are laid. Feratox is not used around residential properties.



Starch Striker

Cholecalciferol ('Decal'): Decal is a green, pelleted toxin (Vitamin D3) that may also be used on rural land and some reserves. It will be used in **Bait-Safe** and/or **Mini Philproof** bait stations. Non-toxic prefeed bait will be used in these stations prior to toxin being deployed. 'Decal' poses a low risk of secondary poisoning. Bait stations are used to maintain bait quality and to keep out nontarget animals (ie. protected fauna, livestock and domestic animals).

Brodifacoum ('Pestoff'): 'Pestoff' is a blue pelleted toxin that may be used as a final 'mop-up' tool when and where possum densities are very low. It will be used in Bait-Safe and/or Mini Philproof bait stations.



Mini Philproof bait station



Bait-Safe bait station



Trapinator kill trap



Possum Master kill trap



Victor leghold trap on a raised set.

Victor leghold traps are set in areas away from domestic animals, in rural and remote habitat. Raised sets further reduce these risks. Leghold traps like all live capture traps are checked daily and possums are dealt with humanely. These traps are more effective than kill traps.

Trapinator and **Possum Master kill traps** are recent additions to our toolbox. These are kill traps that can be set in trees or positioned above the reach of pets, children, stock or ground birds. Trapinator, Possum Master and **Timms traps** do not require checking every day, so they are well-suited for use in less accessible areas.



Detection dog

Cage traps are sometimes used and are checked daily.

A220 traps are a new self-resetting trap that kills possums and rats for up to six months without servicing. These traps may be used in areas where the topography and remoteness make regular maintenance and servicing difficult.

Nightshooting and **Detection Dogs** may be used for control and monitoring of possums in some areas.



Timms kill trap



AT220 self-resetting kill trap



Cage trap

Important information about pesticides.

When using pesticides like cyanide, brodifacoum and cholecalciferol there is a poisoning risk to humans and animals. **Primary poisoning** can occur by eating toxic baits directly. **Secondary poisoning** can affect wildlife and domestic animals through eating poisoned carcasses.

Dogs and children require close supervision if there are warning signs in place. By keeping to the main public walking tracks in an area people are unlikely to encounter baits or bait stations.

Toxic baits will normally be present for a limited period of time (less than a month) per treatment. However, some areas may require more than one treatment.

Warning signs will remain in place for as long as each area is being treated or is being considered for further treatment. In public reserves, signs will also remain in place through a standard 'Caution Period' to ensure that poisoned carcasses are decomposed and non-toxic prior to sign removal.

Working Safely

Control work will be discussed with affected landowners/occupiers before commencement of work to ensure that boundary details, health and safety, operational procedures and any other issues of concern are discussed and addressed with the landowner.

OPBG and contractors 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 are usually placed off formed public tracks, depending on habitat.

Operational work undertaken by all contractors will be monitored by OPBG to ensure that it complies with regulations, consents, label instructions, Health & Safety standards and guidelines.

General warnings

1. Do not touch any poison baits or bait stations.
2. Do not touch any traps.
3. Do not touch any possum carcasses.
4. Keep pets under control; do not let dogs eat possum carcasses.
5. Do not let young children into the area unattended.
6. Inform any visitors to the area of the dangers and warning signs.

What to do with a suspected poisoning.

In a case of suspected poisoning, immediately contact your:

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

Who to contact for more information.

Bruce Kyle
OPBG Operations Manager 021 2424 996

Nathan McNally
OPBG Project Manager 021 987 332

We are grateful for the efforts and support of the community, particularly the residents and landowners of the Otago Peninsula and we look forward to continuing our work together towards a predator-free peninsula. We encourage people to report possum sightings and activity, and to support the group in a volunteer capacity.



Photo: Rod Morris