

Common Brushtail and Common Ringtail Possum Management Standard

Description:

The Common Brushtail and Common Ringtail Possum Management Standard sets the parameters for the implementation of the procedure document.

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Table of Contents

1.	BACKGROUND	4
2.	SCOPE	4
3.	DETAILS OF STANDARD	4
4.	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	7
5.	LINKS TO AGENCY ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS	8
6.	REFERENCES	8
7.	REFERENCE TO NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARD	8
8.	DEFINITIONS	8

1. BACKGROUND

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* protects all native mammals, birds and reptiles (excluding unprotected species listed in Schedule 10 of that Act) throughout South Australia.

Permits issued to landholders pursuant to Section 53(1)(c) of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* authorise the removal or destruction of protected animals that are causing, or likely to cause, damage to the environment, crops, stock, or property/dwellings/buildings. Permits are also issued where protected animals are a risk to public safety.

Permits authorising the release of protected animals, sourced via the trapping and removal of the animal from a conflict situation, are issued pursuant to Section 55 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

The Department for Environment and Heritage has identified that the Common Brushtail Possum has suffered a significant reduction in its range across South Australia. Although Common Brushtail Possum populations appear to be secure within the Greater Adelaide Region, Mount Lofty Ranges and Kangaroo Island, in other areas of the state this species has become rare and in some cases locally extinct.

The Department for Environment and Heritage has reviewed the status of the Common Brushtail Possum through the Threatened Species Status Subcommittee of the Wildlife Advisory Committee and has, on the basis of current population trends, recommended that the Common Brushtail Possum be listed as rare on the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* Threatened Species Schedules in 2004.

2. SCOPE

This standard applies to:

- the management of Common Brushtail Possums and Common Ringtail Possums on mainland South Australia, and
- delegated staff within Science and Conservation, Regional Conservation and Natural and Cultural Heritage Directorates.

3. DETAILS OF STANDARD

3.1 Assessment parameters

3.1.1 Primary considerations

Trap and release

The Department for Environment and Heritage may grant a Permit to Trap and Release given the following circumstances:

- Where possums have accessed the roof space of a built structure, and
- There is an occupational health and safety or public safety issue.

Trap and destroy

The Department for Environment and Heritage may grant a Permit to Trap and Destroy given the following circumstances:

- There is an occupational health and safety or public safety issue,

- There is an impact to the natural (pre-European) environment,
- There is a significant impact on agricultural or ornamental gardens, and
- There is ongoing damage to roof and ongoing presence of possums in the roof and alternative solutions were unsuccessful or not possible.

3.1.2 Secondary considerations

Trap and destroy

The Department for Environment and Heritage may grant a Permit to Trap and Destroy given the following circumstances:

- A trap and release permit has already been issued and did not solve the problem (ie, possums lifting roof tiles and getting into roof spaces or other extenuating or unusual circumstance),
- There is an impact on agriculture or ornamental gardens that has not been resolved by use of multiple deterrents over an extended period.

3.1.3 Applications may be refused if:

Trap and release

- The applicant fails to provide sufficient information to accurately assess the application (All questions mandatory).
- The re-occurring possum problem relates to building/property maintenance not being undertaken to prevent possum re-entry into the building roof space.
- If the reported damage is to flower/vegetable gardens and no preventative measures have been implemented.

Trap and destroy

- The applicant fails to provide sufficient information to accurately assess the application (All questions mandatory).
- The re-occurring possum problem relates to building/property maintenance not being undertaken to prevent possum re-entry into the building roof space.
- If the reported damage is to flower/vegetable gardens and no preventative measures have been implemented.
- If the reported damage is to flower/vegetable gardens and recommended preventative measures have not been implemented.
- If the reported problem relates to dogs barking at possums at night and no alternative preventative measures have been taken.
- If the reported problem relates to Common Ringtail Possums.

3.2 Fate of animals

3.2.1 Trap and release

Possums must be released within 24 hours of capture (released at sunset on the day of capture) and released on the same property within 50 metres of the capture site.

3.2.2 Trap and destroy

Possums must be humanely destroyed within 24 hours of capture.

Destruction must be facilitated by either:

- a registered veterinarian,
- the Animal Welfare League, or
- Animal Research Facilities that hold a current scientific permit and animal ethics approval (contact the Department for Environment and Heritage, Research Permits Section on Telephone 8124 4725 for details).

3.2.3 Injured/orphaned/sick animals

Possums trapped, in accordance with a trap and release permit, must not be released if they are

- showing signs of disease,
- unlikely to survive in the wild, and/or
- a biosecurity risk.

If there is an unacceptable degree of disability or suffering, where the possum is diseased or dying, then the possum must be taken to a registered veterinarian, the Animal Welfare League or RSPCA to be euthanased. The RSPCA provides an emergency service to assist distressed animals and is able to receive for euthanasia any possums that may be suffering from significant injury or disease at either their Lonsdale Animal Shelter or City Headquarters. The RSPCA does not destroy healthy possums, even if caught under a valid destruction permit. A permit to destroy the possum is not required in this circumstance.

Refer to the Native Species Rescue and Release Standard Operating Procedure to determine health and rationale for not releasing sick animals

http://hub2.deh.sa.gov.au/npwsa/pdfs/sop_rescue_fauna.pdf

3.3 Approved methods of destruction

The only acceptable means of killing possums is by the use of carbon dioxide or by barbiturate overdose.

3.4 Pest controllers

3.4.1 Permits to Trap and Release Common Brushtail Possums

Pest controllers providing a possum removal service must hold a current Permit to Trap and Release Common Brushtail Possums.

Pest controllers are permitted only to trap and release possums on behalf of the landholder onto the landholder's property, within 50 metres of the capture site.

3.4.2 Permits to Trap and Destroy Common Brushtail Possums

Pest controllers will not be issued a Permit to Trap and Destroy Common Brushtail Possums.

Pest controllers can arrange for the destruction of possums on behalf of the landholder only in situations where the landholder has obtained a Permit to Trap and Destroy (destruction permit). The pest controller must not carry out the destruction of possums unless they are accredited for humane destruction using one of the techniques outlined above.

3.4.3 Permits to Trap and Release Common Ringtail Possums

Pest controllers, likely to encounter Common Ringtail Possums when servicing clients for possum disturbances, require additional permit authorisation to trap and release this species.

3.4.4 Permits to Trap and Destroy Common Ringtail Possums

Pest controllers should not be issued with a Permit to Trap and Destroy Common Ringtail Possums.

3.4.5 Other licence requirements

Pest controllers, who provide a possum proofing service that involves altering, repairing or improving a building or house, must hold a Specified (Restricted) Builders License pursuant to the *Building Work Contractors Act 1995*. The Office of Business and Consumer Affairs administers this Act.

3.5 Animal welfare

The permit holder and/or pest controller must comply with animals welfare standards outlined in the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1985*, the regulations subordinate to that Act and any other relevant Codes of Practice.

3.6 Permit duration and extensions

Pursuant to Section 53(2) of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972, a permit to trap and release or trap and destroy cannot be granted for a period exceeding 12 months. Permit extensions will not be granted. Applicants may re-apply for a permit if required.

3.7 Trap specifications

The recommended possum trap, in keeping with animal welfare standards is:

- a wire mesh box trap (540mm (minimum) x 260mm x 260mm)
- mesh size less than 19mm x 19mm square
- a spiral bait holder with a spring-activated door or a foot treadle with a spring-activated door

Traps with bait hooks and/or mesh greater than 19mm square can cause injury and suffering to possums and should not be used.

3.8 Possum box features

Possum boxes should be made from rough sawn hardwood timber, with the timber at least 19mm thick to provide adequate waterproofing and insulation.

Treated timber, chipboard, toxic paints or strong smelling glues must not be used.

The possum box entry point should have a minimum diameter of 80-100mm.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Science and Conservation Directorate

- The development, maintenance and contributing to implementation of the Possum Management Standard.

- The maintenance of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* and Regulations delegations and sub delegation documents for the granting of section 53(1)(c) permits.

Regional Conservation Directorate

- Provide advice on the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* and Regulations.
- The maintenance and implementation of the Possum Management Standard.
- Ensure that the purpose for which the possum is taken is lawful and valid.

Natural and Cultural Heritage Directorate

- Provide advice on the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1985*, regulations and Code.
- Advice on approved methods of destruction.
- Contributing to the maintenance of the Possum Management Standard.

5. LINKS TO AGENCY ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Native Species – Rescue and Release Standard Operating Procedure dated 28 January 2004.

6. REFERENCES

7. REFERENCE TO NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

8. DEFINITIONS