

Management of Possums Operating Procedure

1. Scope

Management of Possums will be carried out throughout the University of Queensland's St Lucia campus.

On campus there are both Brushtail and Ringtail possums. The Brushtail (*Trichosurus vulpecular*) possum is a cat-size animal with a grey coat, large erect ears and a black bushy tail. The Ringtail (*Pseudocheirus peregrinus*) possum is smaller with a gingerish coat, small rounded ears, and a narrow tail with a white tip. The Brushtail possum usually presents the majority of problems due to its tendency to enter and sleep in buildings.

Brushtail possums are prominent on campus, especially around the Cumbrae-Stewart buildings and the Veterinary School. Although we hold no exact records of where possums are entering buildings, the list of buildings includes Prentice, Journalism Studies, Hawken, Zelman Cowen, Chemical Engineering, Connell, Cumbrae Stewart buildings and the Property and Facilities workshop.

2. Objectives

- To implement wildlife control practices that are ecologically sustainable, financially rewarding and technically feasible in accordance with The University of Queensland's Environmental Policy;
- To ensure compliance with environmental legislation through monitoring of The University of Queensland's wildlife as appropriate; and
- To implement wildlife management procedures, subject to available resources.

3. Management

3.1 **Preventing possums from entering buildings**

Preventing possums from entering a building is the most humane and practical solution to the problem, (rather than the removal of the possum from the area). It has been shown that catching and removing Brushtail possums is not an effective method of stopping them entering buildings. Although the removed possum may not find its way back into the building, the vacant territory is filled by another possum which is likely to roost in the same place. In addition, the removed possum when released into a foreign area usually faces a slow death by starvation and stress induced disease. It is vital to leave the possum in its own territory.

Possums usually enter buildings either through unsealed areas of a building, or through an open window.

3.1.1 Eaves or unsealed areas of a building

Unless the building is sealed between dusk and midnight, it is highly likely that the possum will still be in the building.

Property and Facilities make nesting boxes for the possums which are positioned in problem areas. Existing locations of possum boxes include outside Credit Union, in front of the Student Union, and Cumbrae Stewart building.

3.1.2 Possums in roofs

Preventing possums' access to a roof will not necessarily prevent them getting into a building. Pruning of tree branches 1.5 to 2 metres from the building, where possible, will prevent possums jumping onto the roofs of buildings. All pruning must be undertaken by Property & Facilities (P&F) Grounds Staff, requests should be made by contacting P&F Assist.

3.1.3 Possums entering buildings through open windows

Each school/centre should be made aware that leaving windows open invites possums into the building and is a security risk. First time offenders are asked to keep the window closed at night. The possum should be released outside the building that evening. If windows continue to be left open, P&F will not take responsibility for removal.

3.1.4 Construction sites

All construction sites should be checked to see if a possum resides in the area, prior to trees being removed. If a possum needs to be relocated, contact the P&F Pest Control Coordinator to assist.

3.1.5 Other

In areas where possums are known to reside, wheelie bins must always have lids closed as possums are often found in bins scavenging for food and are unable to escape.

3.2 Capturing and releasing possums

A permit issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DERM) is required to capture and release possums and the P&F Pest Control Coordinator maintains such a permit. If a possum needs to be captured staff should contact P&F Assist and the P&F Pest Control Coordinator will assist. Under no circumstances should staff attempt to capture and release possums.

3.3 Ringtail Possums

Ringtails appear to create fewer problems in roofs than Brushtails. However, they are more susceptible to injury and death from cats than Brushtails. A combination of their small size, timid nature, and nesting habits make them prone to attack from birds such as crows. The type of vegetation on campus also does not allow for good leaf coverage during winter, a period when attacks are more evident. Placing possum nesting boxes in trees around campus will help to alleviate this problem.

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If anyone from the University community becomes aware of a trapped and harassed animal, they should contact P&F Assist who will in turn contact the RSPCA Queensland.

4. Training, and Health and Safety Requirements

Handling possums should only be undertaken by a qualified person. If you do come across an injured or distressed possum, first, make sure that you are safe. Don't try to handle an injured animal or put yourself in a situation where there is a risk that you could also be injured. Handling may also cause further injury and stress to the animal. For advice or to have the animal rescued contact the [RSPCA](#) Queensland on 1300 264 625.

If scratches or bites occur, the person should go directly to the Health Clinic for treatment.

4.1.1 Environment changes, leading to animal stress

Possible situations include:

- Removal of trees from construction sites
- Caught in drains
- Attack by other wildlife (such as crows)
- Young abandoned possums.

5. Responsibilities

The Property and Facilities Division is responsible for the management of possums as discussed above.

To report wildlife concerns please contact:

| Contact | Telephone |
|--|------------------------------|
| Property and Facilities Division P&F Assist | (07) 336 <u>52222</u> |

Any enquires with respect to the management of possums should be addressed to personnel as listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Responsibilities

| Campus | Department | Contact | Telephone |
|---------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| • St Lucia | Property and Facilities Division | Pest Control Coordinator | (07) 334 <u>68886</u> |