

Easy Reference Sheet

February 2019

Use of Humane Possum Traps

Introduction

In rescue situations where a sick or injured possum cannot be captured manually, a humane possum trap may be suitable. Most urban possums are highly motivated by food, which makes trapping an effective capture method.

The humane possum traps outlined in these instructions are ones that Wildcare endorses for use. Whilst there may be slight variations in design between manufacturers, the basic elements of the traps should be the same.

Wildcare does not support the use of any other trap design or method of trapping including leg-hold or body-grip, traps or snares. All animals must be handled in accordance with the **Animal Care and Protection Act 2001**, which, if breached, could constitute an offence carrying significant monetary penalty.

Possum traps must only be used for the humane capture of **sick** and **injured** possums. The capture of possums for any other purposes is strictly prohibited.

Positioning the trap

The possum trap will be most effective if it can be set in an area where the possum frequently visits. It must be set on a flat, secure surface to prevent injury to the possum if the trap should fall when it is activated. A veranda/deck floor or a large, sturdy table are suitable options.

The trap must be positioned where it is protected from the elements.

Once trapped, it is likely the possum will remain in the trap until collected and transported to a wildlife hospital. Consider placing an old towel or sheet under the trap to prevent damage in case the possum urinates.

If the possum is not accustomed to coming for food where the trap needs to be positioned, it may be necessary to slowly coax the possum away from its usual feeding location to the trap location over a period of a few days.

How the trap works

Suitable food is secured to a hook at one end, which will entice the possum to enter the trap. Once the possum grasps the food, the hook or plate mechanism will be activated resulting in the trap door closing.

Checking the trap

It is essential that once set, the trap is checked at least every 3 hours throughout the night. There is a risk of accidentally trapping the wrong possum or a non-target species such as bandicoots, native rodents, domestic animals and birds. If non-target species are left in the trap, they can sustain considerable injury trying to escape. Further, marsupials can drop their joey(s) from their pouch and cause injury to them.

Non-target animals that have been accidentally trapped should be released immediately. However, if they show any signs of injury, please contact a wildlife rescuer promptly who will ensure that the animal receives appropriate veterinary care.

Traps should be de-activated through the day to prevent accidental trapping of non-target diurnal animals.

If a resident is unable, or unwilling, to check the trap through the night, then it should be de-activated before they go to sleep.

Hook Style Humane Possum Trap

Follow the steps below to activate the possum trap

Step 1

Secure a piece of food onto the hook. Using food that the possum is accustomed to, will help achieve a successful outcome. Otherwise, suitable options would include a piece of apple, banana or sweet potato.

It is illegal to use any food that is harmful or poisonous to an animal and doing so is an offence.

Place the trap on a flat, steady surface in the vicinity of which the possum visits.



Step 2

To activate the trap, pull the horizontal bar on the door to the top of the cage to enable the door to be opened. Balance the horizontal steel bar on top of the trap (that is attached to the hook) so that the very tip of the bar sits on the top part of the trap door (as seen in the image below). If too much of the horizontal bar is resting on the trap door section, the door will not close when the hook/food is pulled.

Explain to the resident how to reset the trap in the event the door accidentally closes so they can confidently reset it.



Step 3

Once the possum is trapped, place a cotton sheet or towel over the trap to reduce stress on the animal. Move the trap to a quiet place out of the weather until it can be transported to a wildlife hospital, vet or is collected by a wildlife rescuer.

If being held for more than an hour or so, please give the possum additional food. If captured and held overnight, remember that the possum will miss several hours of foraging and feeding time so it is likely to be hungry. Vegetables and apple can be cut up into pieces small enough to fit between the bars of the trap. Avoid opening the door to place food into the trap to reduce the likelihood of the possum escaping. Suitable foods are sweet potato, baby spinach, carrot, banana and apple.

Remember that the possum is likely to be distressed and may become aggressive. Do not attempt to handle the possum unless you are confident and trained to do so.

It is usually easiest to leave the possum in the trap for transportation. Place a waterproof mat or several old towels on the seat of your car, in case the possum has an accident.



Lever Style Humane Possum Trap

Follow the steps below to activate the possum trap

Step 1

Place the trap on a flat, steady surface in the vicinity of which the possum visits.

Then place a piece of food approximately 2-3cm from the trip plate. Do not place bait directly on the trip plate. The food needs to be placed in a position that will force the possum to step on the trip plate. Using food that the possum is accustomed to, will help achieve a successful outcome. Otherwise, suitable options would include a piece of apple, banana or sweet potato.

You can place the food in the correct position via the rear door. When you have set the bait, ensure that the rear door is closed securely using the wire lock.

It is illegal to use any food that is harmful or poisonous to an animal and doing so is an offence.





Step 2

Holding up the possum trap door with one hand, slide the trap door hook (J-hook mechanism) under the bar of the trap door to hold the trap door up in place. The possum trap is now ready for use.





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Loaning traps to members of the public

It will be necessary to leave the possum trap at the property of the member of the public. Unfortunately have been incidences in the past where traps have not been returned to Wildcare. It is the rescuer's responsibility to ensure that you have the person's name, address and contact number before leaving the trap and it is the rescuer's responsibility to ensure that the trap is collected in a timely manner so as to ensure that the trap is not misplaced or misused.