

# Easy Reference Sheet

## Caring for Possums

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There are 26 species of possums in Australia. Nine species, five of which are gliding possums, are found in South-east Queensland. All Australian possums are nocturnal and have a specialised diet which, depending on the species, include native vegetation, leaves, buds, flowers, seeds and native fruit, exudates and insects.

### ***Do I need a Permit to care for possums?***

**Yes.** You will need a REHABILITATION PERMIT to care for possums.

A Rehabilitation Permit can be obtained from a licensed wildlife care group such as Wildcare.

*Remember all Australian native wildlife is protected in Queensland. You cannot keep them without an appropriate Permit.*

### ***Do I have to do any training to care for possums?***

**Yes.** Possums have specialised dietary and housing requirements. They often come into care due to loss of habitat, illness, injury or as a result of being orphaned. You must have a good understanding of their biology, be able to recognise signs of illness and injury and be able to provide emergency care to them.

In Wildcare, you will need to complete the following training workshops in order to care for possums:

- Orientation – compulsory for all members
- Rescue and First Aid for Wildlife (Basic) – compulsory for all members
- Caring for Orphaned Mammals
- Possums (Basic)

### ***Is caring for possums difficult?***

Caring for common species of possums is a good place to start as a wildlife rehabilitator if you wish to care for mammals. Most common species of possums are fairly hardy and suitable for new carers provided that you implement good management skills. However, like all of our native wildlife, they do have specialised requirements.

Remember:

- Possums are **nocturnal** – they require feeding, cleaning and monitoring at night.
- Possums are **herbivores** – you must be able to provide a large variety of fresh vegetation for them EVERY DAY.
- Their greatest **predators** are domestic pets, such as dogs and cats – they cannot be housed near domestic animals.
- Young joeys need to be fed **every 4 to 5 hours** (including through the night).
- Older joeys and adults must be housed in a **large outdoor aviary** so that they can gain the strength required to climb large trees.

Once you have cared for common species of possums, then you may be ready to move onto caring for other possum species that have more specialised requirements.

**Remember, we raise to RELEASE!**

**We must care for wildlife in a way that ensures their survival once returned to the wild.**

## What equipment do I need to care for possums?

Possums need to be housed and cared for during rehabilitation to prevent further injury, prevent escape, minimise stress and to allow them to display their natural behaviour.

A few things we must consider when housing possums include:

- All species are arboreal and therefore require enclosures that are wide and tall enough to accommodate branches of a variety of sizes.
- Enclosures must be made snake and rodent proof.
- Injured and sick animals must be housed indoors.
- Enclosures will require large water containers for holding fresh vegetation.
- A variety of feeding bowls will be required including stainless steel coop cups for holding food and water.

Below is a brief overview of some of the equipment that possums require. The Wildcare possum training workshop and manual covers their requirements in more detail.

<b>Rescue Equipment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong, wire transport cage for rescuing adults</li> <li>• Clean, second-hand towels to line container</li> <li>• Medium sized plastic pet carriers for rescuing infants and juveniles</li> <li>• Pouches for orphaned possums</li> </ul>
<b>Orphaned Possums</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeding equipment (syringes, specially made latex teats, cannulas, sterilising equipment, small feeding bowls)</li> <li>• Lots of cotton pouches (30+ each animal)</li> <li>• Small baby blankets and towels.</li> <li>• Small pet carry cage</li> <li>• Verandah-style small aviary/cage</li> <li>• Branches for climbing and water containers for holding fresh vegetation</li> <li>• Specialised heating equipment (if caring for unfurred joeys)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adult Possums</b> <i>Critical Care Stage</i></p> <p><i>Intermediate Care Stage</i></p> <p><i>Pre-Release and Final Rehabilitation Stage</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solid wire mesh enclosure with sturdy branches (0.8m L x 0.8m W x 1.0m H)</li> <li>• Coop cups for water and food</li> <li>• Large quantity of clean towels or blankets for lining enclosure</li> <li>• Small water containers for holding fresh vegetation</li> <li>• Solid wire mesh enclosure with sturdy branches (1.0m L x 1.0m W x 1.5m H)</li> <li>• Coop cups for water and food</li> <li>• Large quantity of clean towels or blankets for lining enclosure</li> <li>• Large water containers for holding fresh vegetation</li> <li>• Large outdoor enclosure (minimum size 3.0m L x 2.0m W x 2.0m H)</li> <li>• Enclosure must have adequate amount of shade with some areas where access to sun is possible</li> <li>• Large branches and ropes to allow for climbing experience</li> <li>• All species will require an artificial nest box suitable to the species</li> <li>• Coop cups for water and food</li> <li>• Large water containers for holding fresh vegetation</li> </ul>

**Critical Care Stage** – designed to reduce an animal’s level of physical activity for a short period of time and to provide easy access for monitoring, treatment and feeding.

**Intermediate Care Stage** – allows sufficient space for some physical activity while enabling the animal to be readily caught for monitoring and treatment.

**Pre-Release/Final Rehabilitation Stage** – allows an animal to regain better physical condition, display natural behaviour, acclimatise to normal weather conditions and reduce human contact.

The measurements for enclosures listed above are sourced from the *Code of Practice – Care of Sick, Injured and Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland* (EHP). In some circumstances, Wildcare’s housing requirements exceed the CoP suggestions.