

Common Brushtail Possums in domestic roofs or gardens

The Common Brushtail Possum is the most abundant Australian possum.

Brushtail Possums are quite large, almost the size of a small cat. They have grey fur and a darker thick, bushy tail. Brushtail Possums are nocturnal, they are active at night, and rest during the day. They prefer to rest in secure, dark and dry places such as hollows, rock cavities and roofs. Their diet consists of leaves, flowers, fruit and at times bird eggs and insects. They play an important role in the seed dispersal of some native plants.

Brushtail Possums are found in a wide range of forest environments across Victoria. They have adapted to living in rural and urban environments where they are more abundant than in native habitats.

Brushtail Possums in urban areas create noise and mess in buildings using them as dens, often in the space between the ceiling and the roof. Brushtail Possums can also cause damage to gardens and may eat your pets' food.

Management methods

Managing Brushtail Possums in roofs

Brushtail Possums that have taken up residence in a roof should be removed humanely and prevented from returning.

It is important to check that it is in fact a Brushtail Possum as rats can also get into roofs. Rats make light scampering and gnawing sounds compared with a possum's throaty hiss and heavy thumping.

Prune all branches that lead to the roof, and leave a gap of at least 1.5 meters; possums can jump a long way down but can't jump far across.

Brushtail Possums can gain access to the roof space through loose tiles or roofing iron, broken eaves and holes in timber or brickwork. Watch where the possum emerges from the roof and then block off these access points. A one-way flap that allows the possums to leave, but not return is a simple and humane way of restricting access. The flap can be made from metal or Perspex with a hinge at the top. Hinge the flap to allow

possums out but not in. Cover the flap surrounds in metal to prevent possum claws from gripping.

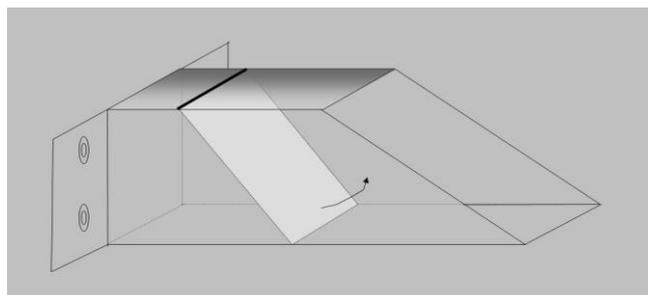


Figure 1. Diagram of a one way Brushtail Possum flap

Nest boxes

Nest boxes can be installed in your garden as alternative den sites. Brushtail Possums are territorial, so if one adopts the nest box it will keep others away from your property.

Trapping and releasing Brushtail Possums

Common Brushtail Possums living in buildings may be humanely trapped by residents and land managers under a Governor in Council (GIC) Order.

Under the Order, possums may only be trapped using traps that will not cause injury and must be released on the same property within 50 metres of the capture site.

Humane traps can be sourced from your local council or hired from licenced wildlife controllers.

Relocation of Brushtail Possums more than 50 metres from the capture site or off the property where they have been captured is prohibited. Research has shown Brushtail Possums released in new environments are often distressed, attacked by other possums and may die.

Managing possums in gardens

Where possums are causing serious damage to trees or gaining access to roofs from a tree, a 60 cm wide Perspex or metal tree collar can be fitted around the trunk of tree to prevent them from climbing it.

To deter possums from your property, a 30 cm floppy boundary fence can be constructed on top of your existing fence (Figure 2).

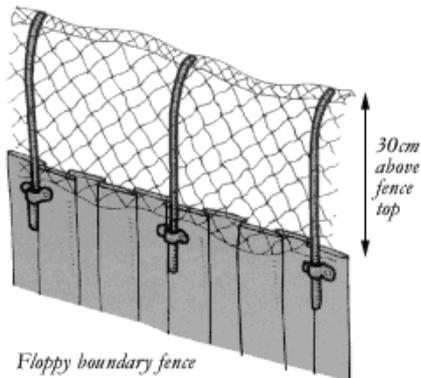


Figure 2. Diagram of a floppy boundary fence

Damage to your garden can also be reduced by floppy fencing (Figure 3). To construct the fence:

- Use 80 cm wide, heavily galvanised chicken wire.
- Bury the bottom 20 cm and support the remainder on vertical lengths of flexible, high-tensile fencing wire.
- Bend the wire to curve the upper section outwards.

When a possum attempts to climb the fence, it will bend over and then spring back.

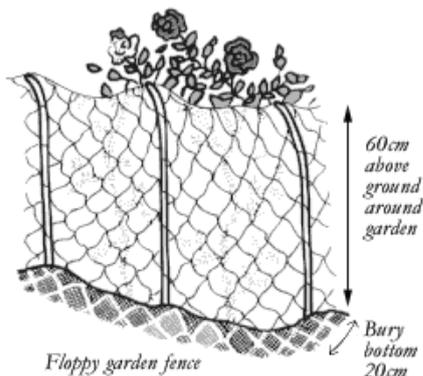


Figure 3. Diagram of a floppy garden fence.

Alternatively, install a low-powered electric fence that will deter possums but cause them no harm. These can be installed on boundary fences to keep Brushtail Possums out of your garden, or on roof edges to keep them off your roof.

Research has shown that repellents and ultrasonic devices do little to deter Brushtail Possums. The “Possum Repellents Fact Sheet”, available on the www.wildlife.vic.gov.au website provides further information on available options.

Lethal control

Lethal control requires an Authority to Control Wildlife from DELWP.

Authorities to Control Wildlife

If you require an Authority to Control Wildlife (ATCW) you should complete an ATCW application form and submit it to DELWP.

Your ATCW application will be assessed by a DELWP officer who may inspect your property to confirm the damage being caused by wildlife.

An ATCW for lethal control will only be issued if the DELWP officer is satisfied that it is necessary to manage the problem and that all practical non-lethal control options have been exhausted.

Further information

Please contact the DELWP Customer Contact Centre on 136 186, your local DELWP regional office or the DELWP website www.wildlife.vic.gov.au



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