

ANIMAL PEST CONTROL

POSSUM CONTROL

Bait Stations

Introduction

Possum bait stations are a safe, effective way of dispensing poison baits to feeding possums.

Bait stations come in a variety of shapes, sizes and prices. Key features to look for are the ability for the bait station to withstand weathering, be easily filled and be easy feeding for the possum. A bait station protects the bait from the weather substantially increasing the effective life of that poison.

Using bait stations

Fix bait stations above the ground out of reach of children and pets. In a farm situation, bait stations should not be sited where livestock can get access to them. Toxin residues in some baits even at sub-lethal doses can remain in the animal for some months.

Remove domestic stock from the treatment area before you begin poisoning and do not return stock to the area until all the baits have been removed.



'Pellet Feeder' bait station. Note warning sign.

Each bait station will effectively cover a range of 100 metres. The bait station should be located about 30 centimetres above a tree branch from which possums can easily feed on the bait.

Managing bait stations

The time lapse between ingesting a lethal dose and death gives a possum plenty of time to eat more poison than it needs, so to avoid wasting the bait, a "pulse baiting" strategy is advised:



'Philproof' bait station.

1. Keep the bait station filled for 7-10 days.
2. Leave the station empty for 21 days.
3. Repeat the cycle as necessary.

Campaign is a single feed toxin, so there is no need for pulse baiting.

At the conclusion of a bait programme, the unused bait should be collected and any material dropped around the bait stations should be buried.

Where to set bait stations

Possums favour different foods on a seasonal basis, such as the flush of spring growth on willows or poplars, or exotic fruits and crops in autumn. Knowing the

eating habits of possums allows you to place bait stations in the most effective areas for possum control. It is also sensible to place bait stations along the perimeter of bush blocks, along shelter belts or isolated trees.

See also the Environment Topic “*The Possum*” for the possum browse calendar.

Poison baits

There are four types of pelletised baits on the market for possums that are easy to use and can be applied by any person without the need for a poison license. These baits are: Talon, Pindone, Pestoff and Campaign. All four can be purchased through any stock and station agent.

See the Environment Topic “*Subsidised Pest Control Products*” for available subsidies on baits, bait stations and warning signs and where subsidised products can be purchased.

Anticoagulant poisons (Talon, Pestoff and Pindone) work by reducing the clotting ability of the blood and causing internal hemorrhaging. Pestoff and Talon bait, under law, can only be used in bait stations. The active ingredient in Campaign (Cholecalciferol), acts by elevating plasma calcium levels, causing heart failure.

Note: Using anticoagulants (Talon, Pestoff and Pindone) may prove expensive in areas with a high possum population. In such cases, an alternative control method should be used prior to anticoagulant pellets.

Contact Hawke’s Bay Regional Council Biosecurity Animal Pest Officers for advice. Also see the Environment Topic “*Talon and Pestoff Possum Bait*”.

Safety precautions

Like any poison, Talon, Pindone, Pestoff and Campaign are dangerous if eaten or the dust inhaled. Closely follow the instructions on the label.

Anticoagulant poisons can poison any animal. However an antidote (Vitamin K1) is available to counter their effects. The antidote must be administered by a veterinary surgeon. If you suspect an animal has eaten a bait then take it to a vet immediately.

Secondary poisoning (ie dogs eating carcasses) is an issue with all poisons, although it is a lesser problem in Campaign poisoned animals.

Acknowledgements

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For further information

For further information on animal pests or the Regional Pest Management Strategy, please contact the Biosecurity Animal Pest Officers at the Hawke’s Bay Regional Council for advice.

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