

ANIMAL PEST CONTROL

POSSUM CONTROL

Talon and Pestoff (*Brodifacoum*) Possum Bait

Introduction

Talon and Pestoff possum baits are cereal-based using cinnamon as a lure. They are relatively safe to handle because of the low concentration of the active ingredient brodifacoum, a second-generation anticoagulant. Brodifacoum works by preventing the blood clotting and animals die usually through haemorrhaging in the gut.

Baiting strategy

Using Talon and Pestoff possum bait requires quite a different baiting strategy than when using conventional acute poisons such as 1080 or cyanide. Sub-lethal doses of those acute poisons can cause bait shyness, as the possum associates feeling unwell with eating the bait. However Talon and Pestoff possum bait contains a slow acting anticoagulant, so pre-feeding is not required and the possum will not associate feeling unwell with these baits because of the length of time between ingestion and onset of symptoms.

Talon and Pestoff possum baits must be used in bait stations. This is a legal requirement. The bait is designed for bait stations and is unsuitable for ground spread. Ensure warning signs are attached beside each bait station. Bait stations help confine the bait to the target species - possum - preventing access from children, domestic animals or grazing animals. Site bait stations in areas that are accessible by possums but inaccessible to stock. Stations attached to trees in fenced off bush areas are ideal.

See the Environment Topic “*Bait Stations*” for further information. See also “*Subsidised Pest Control Products*” for available subsidies on baits, bait stations and warning signs.



Bait station filled with Talon.

How to use

Talon and Pestoff possum bait – Apply sufficient bait to the bait station for the first three to four days to ensure all possums feeding at the bait station are able to ingest a lethal amount (about 60 grams each which is a small cupful). Install as many bait stations as you can in any one area to ensure the resident possum population will get an opportunity to consume sufficient bait.

On days 14 - 17 reload all bait stations to allow surviving possums to consume the bait. Again ensure sufficient bait and bait stations are available to allow the remaining population to ingest a lethal dose. A possum may take 10 to 20 days to die once a lethal dose has been ingested.

Possums are territorial by nature, so the population within an area is unlikely to change markedly during the initial period of poisoning. Assessing the population size to determine the amount of bait and number of bait stations is difficult. However, by having sufficient bait and bait stations available in the first few days of poisoning, sufficient bait will generally be consumed by the resident population.

What to do after initial control

Once an area is cleared of possums it will often be recolonised by possums from nearby areas. Talon and Pestoff possum baits should be used from time to time in bait stations to monitor bait take and therefore possum presence. The control cycle can be repeated once possums have been detected.

Safety and environmental issues

Talon and Pestoff possum baits must be used in accordance to the label instructions, so that these baits do not pose a significant risk to other non-target species or the environment. The bait breaks down with moisture very quickly. Any residual brodifacoum will bind strongly to the soil where it is slowly broken down by micro-organisms. Brodifacoum is not taken up by plants. Also because brodifacoum is insoluble in water and binds strongly to the soil, it does not leach out into groundwater. However, appropriate protection measures should be taken (see below).

Stock and domestic animal precautions

Livestock that have been exposed to Talon or Pestoff **MUST** be withheld from slaughter for 270 days. Grazing stock must not have access to the bait. Brodifacoum may be detected in the liver of grazing animals (sheep/cattle) for several months. The use of bait stations in areas that are not accessible to stock will prevent the likelihood of contamination occurring.

Dogs are susceptible to brodifacoum, and should be tied up or muzzled to ensure they do not eat poisoned carcasses or have access to bait.

Vitamin K is an effective antidote to brodifacoum. If bait is consumed by domestic animals, consult your veterinarian for appropriate treatment.

Health safety precautions

The safety precautions are listed on the bait labels. Read them carefully before you start. They include:

- Do not eat, drink or smoke while applying bait. Wear rubber or PVC gloves and wash hands and exposed

skin before meals and after work. Avoid inhalation of the bait dust or wear an appropriate dust mask.

- Any dead possums found should be buried.
- Avoid contamination of any water supply with baits or empty containers. At the conclusion of the bait programme or pulse baiting, collect the unused bait and any material dropped around the bait stations. Dispose of empty containers, any unwanted bait or residual dust by taking to a municipal landfill or burying small amounts away from waterways in a hole 1 metre deep.

First Aid (Children and Adults)

Refer to the first aid instructions on the label of the bait container. Poisoning is treated by the repeated administration of vitamin K for a period of several weeks.

Symptoms of Poisoning

- Presence of blood in urine, stools and sputum (spit).
- Bleeding from nose, ears or anus.
- Pale gums.
- Widespread bruising and difficulty in moving.

Reference

"Possum Control Information System - fact sheet package", May 1995. Produced by the National Possum Control Agencies.

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.

Wairoa	06 838 8527
Napier	06 835 9200
Waipukurau	06 858 8636
TOLL FREE	0800 108 838
www.hbrc.govt.nz	

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