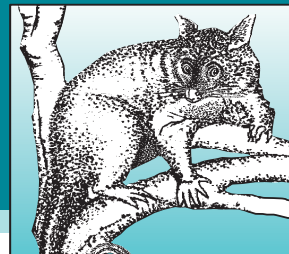


# Why not do a possum study?

In addition to hosting an animal pest officer at your school possum control lends itself well to a more comprehensive study and has cross-curriculum links especially with Maths, Science and Technology.



## Activity 1

*History/Science*

### Background

- What do we know about possums?
- What do we want to know?
- When were they introduced to New Zealand?
- Why were they introduced?
- What country did they come from?
- What group of animals do possums belong to?
- What are their habits? eg, herbivorous, nocturnal etc
- About how many possums are in New Zealand now?
- What damage do possums do to the New Zealand environment?
- On a large piece of paper, write what we know about possums and the damage they do.

NB Much of this information can be found in the possum control information pack available free from the Taranaki Regional Council.

## Activity 2 - Controlling Possums

*Language/Debate/Speech*

- Write a speech on one of the following topics.
  - Why we need to control possums?
  - What is 1080 and what are the advantages/disadvantages of using it?
  - What methods of control are there, poisoning/hunting/trapping?
- Debate Topic
  - That trapping is a more effective way of controlling possums in New Zealand than poisoning.
- Divide your class into groups to debate this topic or ask children to present a speech on possum related topics.

## Activity 3 - Possum Survey

*Maths*

- Set up some feed stations around the school using apples, carrots etc and different lures to ascertain numbers of possums around the school environment. Put stations out in the afternoon and collect in the morning.
- Think of ways to target only the possum population ie, not birds, cats etc.
- Record information over the period of a week/fortnight.
- Graph the information on a daily bar/line graph.
- Graph on a stem-and-leaf graph.

## Activity 4 - Trapping

*Technology*

- Design an effective possum trap.
- Decide on what features it should have eg, cage the possum. Consider health and safety ie, not dangerous to operators, children; and ethical humane issues, ie doesn't cause unnecessary pain.
- Evaluate the most effective trap, based on some of the above criteria. Vote on which traps are the best.
- Design an advertisement to promote the use of your trap, give your trap an original, suitable name.
- Trial to see if your trap is suitable.

## Activity 5 - Poster

*Art/Language*

- Design a poster to support the work of eliminating possums, point out the value of not having possums eg, TB, eradication, protecting native birds and trees.

## Activity 6

*Written Language*

- Write a newspaper article about the damage possums do.
- Write instructions on the operation of your possum trap. Include safety considerations.
- Send a formal letter with the results of your survey programme to the Taranaki Regional Council animal pest officers.

## Further Study

*Homework*

- Research more about possums sourcing The School Library Service, the Internet, Encyclopedias.
- Present a study on one aspect of possums eg, History, Biology, Control.

*Activities*

- Conduct similar experiments and surveys at home to ascertain possum numbers.

# Curriculum links

## with a possum study

### Science

*Making sense of the living world (MSLW)*

#### MSLW L.4

- Conducting a field survey in the school grounds, bush, scrub, roadside, or zoo to observe the main features of a variety of animals and their feeding habits.
- Collecting newspaper articles to find out about an environmental issue.

#### MSLW L.3

- Observing the recording and feeding habits of familiar animals.
- Developing a large wall chart about the habitats of some common New Zealand animals and plants.

#### MSLW L.2

- Finding out what happens to the animals in a forest when the trees are cut down (or destroyed).

#### MSLW L.1

- Walking through the bush to observe the variety of plants and animals.

*Making sense of Planet Earth and Beyond (MSPE&B)*

#### MSPE&B L.3

- Justify their personal involvement in a school or class initiated local environmental project eg (a possum control programme) a school tree planting project.

### Technology

*Possum Traps (Unit L.2-3)*

#### Technological knowledge and understanding

- Explore and discuss the use and operation of possum traps by Taranaki Regional Council.
- Identify and depict ideas about key components in a trap such as a trigger, lure.
- Compare significant features of traps such as safety features, user friendliness.
- Compare how different groups of people carry out trapping such as a regional council operation compared with commercial or home trapping.

#### Technological capability

- Gather information, and identify and discuss needs, opportunities and preferences in their local environment eg, comparing possum control in the city to the country.
- Make traps, planning, designing and reviewing ideas.

### Technology and Society

- Explore and compare the role of traps and possums in another time eg, trapping for bounty, the fur trade environmental care.
- Describe and identify the positive and negative effects of possum control on peoples' lives and environments.

### Maths

*Statistics Level 3*

#### Statistical investigations

- Plan a statistical investigation of an assertion about a situation.
- Collect and display discrete numeric data in stem-and-leaf graphs, dot plots and strip graphs, as appropriate.

#### Interpreting statistical reports

- Use their own language to talk about the distinctive features, such as outliers and clusters, in their own and others data displays.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact:

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