

rights on Crown lands, perhaps from a royalty paid by owners of opossum-bearing bushes; only registered dealers to buy skins; the revenue derived by the Crown to be devoted for some time to the development of the opossum trade and to the conservation of forests by increased ranging.

Finally, the Great Alpine Range should be stocked as soon as possible, preferably with a new stock of best Tasmanian brown or "black mountain" opossums imported for the purpose.

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H. B. KIRK.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

TRAPPING OPOSSUMS, AND METHOD OF PREPARING SKINS: NOTES BY MR. E. C. EVANS, OF ORARI GORGE.

THE opossum is a very easy animal to trap. The best trap for sale at present for catching the opossum is the American jump trap. These traps are not as severe as the ordinary rabbit-trap. In setting the trap, drive a nail in a tree about 2 ft. from the ground, and bait it with a piece of apple or carrot. Set the trap immediately below the bait and about 6 in. from the base of the tree. The trap need not be covered. Be careful that the ground round about the trap is clear of all sticks. If this is not done the opossum, when in the trap, will gather them in in his struggles, and the result will be that those sticks will strip the fur from him. A large number of skins are spoiled through this.

The best and easiest way to kill an opossum in a trap is to stand behind him with a pea-rifle, entering the bullet behind the head and to come out between the eyes. If this is done properly the opossum will die immediately. When dead, take him from the trap and hang him up by one of his back legs, and leave him until quite cold. Do not touch his fur while he is warm, as it will come out very easily. The method of skinning an opossum is to lay him on his back, legs up; run knife from tip of tail up middle of belly to mouth; cut from one back foot to the other, and the same on fore legs; clear skin from legs and belly; clear skin from head and pull back, finishing off at tip of tail; be sure to fold fur in and grip fleshy part of skin when pulling.

To stretch skins, tack them out on a board, fur down. Do not stretch much—the more they are stretched the more open it makes the fur. After they are dry, take a scraper and clean all grease and particles of flesh off skin. The better the skin is cleaned the better it will keep and the more it is worth.

APPENDIX B.

NOTES ON KILLING OPOSSUMS, BY H. H. OSTLER, LL.B., AUCKLAND.

The two following methods of taking opossums have been proved by me to be very successful.

1. Opossums come out at night and feed on the grass along the edge of the bush. If one looks carefully he will observe their droppings on the grass and the logs along the edge. I have known them travel as far out as a quarter of a mile, but never farther. When disturbed while thus feeding they will run for the nearest cover, and if too far from the green bush they will run up the nearest high stump or dead tree. There they will cling with their claws, looking down at the disturber. If a .22 rifle is used it will be found impossible to see the sights, and therefore impossible to kill the opossum cleanly. If, however, an electric torch is taken and held in the left hand alongside the barrel of the rifle, it will not only light up the sights, but the light will reflect in the eyes of the animal, which show like two rubies. It thus makes a perfect mark, and it is easy for any fair shot at such short range to hit it in the head and kill it cleanly. A quiet dog will greatly assist, for he takes the opossum by surprise, and it makes for the nearest stump or dead tree and does not try to run for the bush. On one occasion the writer, with a setter dog, a .22 rifle, and an electric torch, got seventeen opossums in one evening. The dog set them and drew quietly on to them as though they were pheasants, and they never seemed to become aware of him until he was so close that they scrambled up the first available high stump or dead tree. Lyman sights are no good for this method of shooting, as the back sight is too far behind the light of the torch to be lit up by it. The ordinary V back