

The Timms Trap – Possum Trapping Made Easy



Noeleen Clements and the user-friendly Timms Trap. Photos: Fiona Edwards

KILLING POSSUMS can be an unpleasant business, no matter how much one dislikes the damage they inflict on forests.

However a trap which has come on the market in recent years makes possum trapping relatively simple for the ordinary person.

Noeleen Clements is one such. A committed Forest and Bird member from Ruatangata, west of Whangarei, she is also committed to the eradication of what she describes as "furry, brown-eyed overstayers."

Last year Noeleen and husband Tony moved onto a 9-hectare property, covered with a mixture of mature bush, regenerating scrub and blackberry. They bought the block to enjoy the bush and the birds. Instead they saw the bush start to die and the birds disappear.

After witnessing totara trees debarked and their fresh shoots eaten bare, the taraire berries consumed by possums instead of pigeons, and brown kiwi evicted from their nests by squatting possums, Noeleen took action.

Armed with three Timms Traps, she

has killed 300 possums in the last 12 months. Each possum is attracted to the trap by the bait placed inside the innocuous looking plastic box. Inside the trap is a simple device which quickly and effectively breaks the animal's neck once it takes the bait. The possum is killed instantly.

Noeleen then scoops the possum out and buries it. On the top she plants a native tree. "The possums had a go at my bush; now the bush can have a go at them!" she laughs.

Fiona Edwards

The result: the possum is killed instantly



Notes on Timms Traps

- Timms Traps are especially designed for trapping possums in easily accessible areas.
- Use apples as bait as possums like the smell.
- Move traps around the property and place in nesting sites such as logs, holes, dense scrub.
- If you have household pets, place pepper around the trap.
- Keep children away from the traps.
- The traps retail for around \$30-\$40 and can be purchased from the Department of Conservation or stock agents.

very nature of the job attracts independent and self-sufficient characters who work far better on their own, taking responsibility for themselves. Such people respond better to contracts with good rewards for performance.

DoC is trialing several alternative contract systems for employing ground hunters. These vary from a simple incentive payment to a retainer plus incentive or bonus. Already it has been found that no single contract system is best overall. Factors such as the degree of control required, and the initial density of possums, influence the cost-effectiveness of each system.

It is important to determine accurately the costs of control in simple terms, for example costs per possum and per hectare, so that the control methods can be compared and optimised. These analyses must be kept open and accountable to the public.

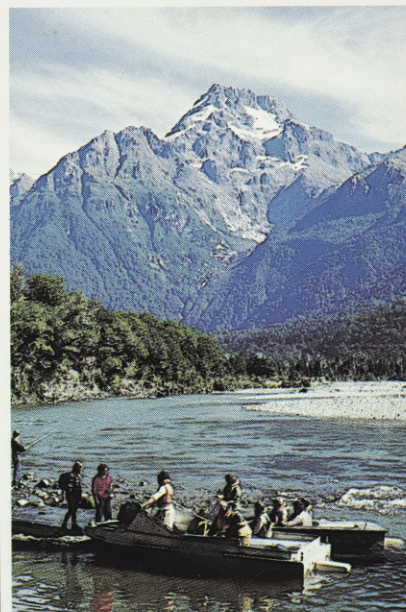
Possum control cannot be viewed simply in terms of conservation values. There is the economic threat they pose to our primary industries through the spread of bovine TB. On the West Coast, where MAF, Regional Council, NZ Employment, and farmers are all involved, a regional strategy must be devised to co-ordinate these different interest groups.

Conservationists have much to contribute and gain from a unified approach rather than suffer from divisive rivalry. In the longterm it could be that the need to protect our agricultural industry, and provide worthwhile employment, will supply the impetus to make real gains in protecting our environment.

Ian James is a consultant to the Department of Conservation. He lives in Harihari, South Westland.

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