

Living with Possums in your Roof



We are extremely lucky to have such a diverse group of native birds, mammals and reptiles living in our backyards and surrounding areas. One native animal you may find in your backyard is the Northern brushtail possum, protected under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2000*.

Possum Visits

Due to land clearing and removal of natural hollow trees and logs, these nocturnal marsupials are being forced into urban areas. Possums often consider the dark sheltered areas of roofs a suitable nesting site and can be heard moving as they leave the roof after dark and return before dawn. Some people find possum inhabitation a nuisance.

Preventing Possums

Wildcare recommends the following measures to help if you have possum problems.

- Provide a nesting box in your backyard as an alternative sleeping place for your possums. (see instructions overleaf)
- Locate and block access and exit points with suitable building materials when you are sure all possums are out of the roof. This must be done at night when the possums have left. You can also make a one way flap to allow the possums to leave the roof, but prevents them returning.
- Remove the possum's access to the roof by lopping any overhanging branches.
- Do not feed any possums as this will attract more to your area.
- Remember that any removal of a possum will only be a temporary solution as another one will move in soon after. The only permanent solution is to block up the entry/exit points to your roof as detailed above.

If you are unable to block the entry to your roof;

- Scatter camphor blocks or naphthalene flakes inside the roof (do not mix these as this may cause a chemical reaction). Possums do not like the smell.
- Place a light in the roof cavity for at least three consecutive nights to discourage the possum - being nocturnal, possums prefer dark areas to sleep in.
- Do not use Ratsak or other baits as they are cruel. If consumed, the animal experiences a painful, lingering death. Please use other deterrents as mentioned above.

Removal of Possums

You should be aware that due to the protection of these animals, you are not permitted to kill, maim or trap and relocate these animals without a permit to do so. A special permit is required in the Northern Territory to remove them from your property.

It is illegal and cruel to 'dump' them in another area where they will have little chance of survival. These animals are highly territorial. If a possum is removed, another one will move in soon after.

For further information contact:
Parks & Wildlife Service - 8999 4536
Wildcare - 8988 6121

Wildcare Inc is a voluntary, non-profit organisation, which provides a support network for carers of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife in the Northern Territory.

The primary objective is to rehabilitate and release these animals back into their natural habitat and to raise community awareness concerning the care and conservation of native animals.

Donations are warmly appreciated.

Further information is available: www.wildcarent.org.au - PO Box 464, Palmerston, NT, 0831 - P: 08 8988 6121



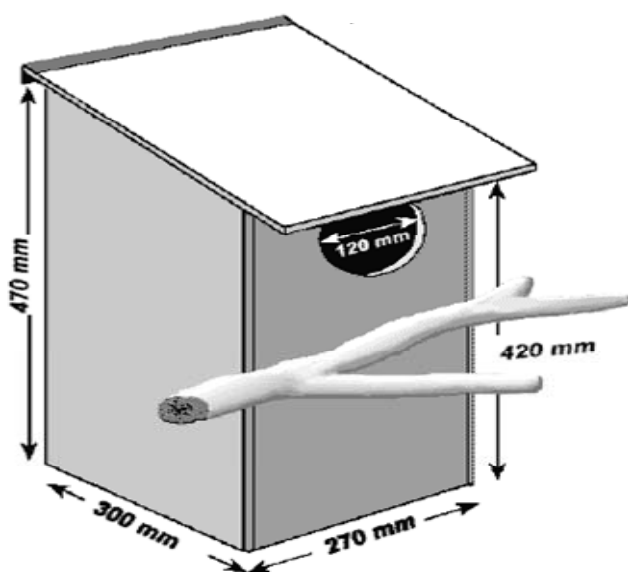
Artificial Nesting Boxes

Where nesting sites are not available, mammals and birds can use artificial nesting boxes. Brushtail possums prefer a deep box that has been cleared out after previous habitation.

An entrance hole of 9-12cm diameter is preferred and natural logs are better to use when building a box. A lip over the entrance hole is beneficial as it will not allow excess rain or light in. Boxes should be approximately four metres above the ground and small holes drilled in the base to allow for drainage.

Nesting boxes can be made out of most materials, but be careful of treated timbers and timbers painted with lead based paints (many animals chew on the edges of the boxes when marking their territory and lead base paints can poison them).

With the Territory's high humidity and rainfall it is recommended that marine ply be used to make boxes.



Installing the Nestbox

Boxes should be placed between four to eight metres above the ground.

It is best to hang the box with wire, covered in a piece of old garden hose where it contacts the tree. Choose a spot where there is a branch on the opposite side of the tree to where you wish to position the box.

Cut the wire 50% longer than the tree circumference and put a loop in one end.

Thread the wire through the garden hose and the holes in the box.

In the tree, pass the wire around the branch and tie it off on the loop. Leave it a bit loose to allow for tree growth. If there is no suitable branches to hang the box from install a spring in line with the wire. (An old bed spring is great). This means the wire can be tight around the tree and allow for tree growth

* Wildcare Inc cannot be held liable for any information provided in this fact sheet.

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