



Possums in houses

The common Brush tail Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecular*) is a nocturnal marsupial that mainly inhabits areas of woodlands and open forests, but easily adapts to the urban environment. In the wild, they usually make a home in tree hollows. However, if none is available possums may set up home in roof cavities or chimneys. They may also eat vegetables or plants from gardens.

What to do:

- Provide an alternative home by securing a possum box to a nearby tree at least 4 metres from the ground. Boxes may be purchased from ACT Wildlife or online.
- Block all entries to the roof or chimney (e.g. with timber or wire mesh) when the possum has left at night. A licensed pest control company can assist with this.
- Sprinkle camphor or naphthalene around the roof area, or put a light in your roof, to deter the possum from returning.
- Where possible, locate the nest inside your roof or chimney and place it in the possum box. The nest has the scent of the possum and will encourage it into its new home. Half an apple or banana can also be placed in or near the box.
- Trim any branches that overhang the roof to remove easy access to your roof.
- To prevent possums climbing trees near the house, a smooth tree guard at least 60cm wide can be placed around the tree trunk. Where possible place the guard above the first fork of the tree so the possum has refuge if pursued by predators.
- A large cage made of taut chicken wire can be erected around vegetable gardens, and shade cloth placed around smaller trees.

Do not:

- Put rat bait in the roof. Possums like the taste and this can cause severe internal bleeding and a slow, painful death.
- Attempt to catch the possum. They have sharp claws that can inflict serious, painful injuries and very sharp teeth.
- Harm the possum, as native animals are protected by law. Trapping, removing or killing a possum without a licence is illegal in the ACT.
- Relocate the possum without first seeking advice. Possums are territorials and relocation often results in their death due to stress, loss of safe nesting places and predators.

Did you know?

Possums have a complex set of calls, with around 18 different sounds identified.

The numbers are declining in many areas of Australia due to land clearing and feral predators.

Brush-tail possums are generally solitary but come together for breeding, which occurs during Autumn and Spring in the ACT.

For information on possums and how to live with them, follow the links:

Territory and Municipal Services www.tams.act.gov.au

The Marsupial Society of Australia www.marsupialsociety.org

Sustainable Gardening Australia <http://www.sgaonline.org.au/living-with-possums/>

Treelogic www.treelogic.com.au/facts/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/Possums_Trees.pdf

For more information or advice contact ACT Wildlife Inc. on 0432 300 033

or visit our website www.actwildlife.net

