

Possum Trap Line for Schools

Part of the Tangihua Lions Lodge Resources for schools

As part of our conservation project and education program we have 13 possum traps set up close by that anyone staying at the Lodge is welcome to use. You can set as many or as few as you like. All efforts help to reduce pest numbers and protect our native forest.

What You Need

Bait and Lures

The possums need to be encouraged to put their heads in the trap and most possums can't resist something sweet. You will need bait for inside the trap and ideally a lure to spread on the tree below the trap.

Fruit makes great bait and you don't need a lot per trap. It needs to be something that you can thread onto a wire. Slices of apples are best.

The lure can be made by mixing together ½ kilo of flour, 1 cup of icing sugar and 4 teaspoons of cinnamon. Don't worry if your measurements aren't exact, possums aren't that fussy.

Equipment

You don't need any equipment to set or check the traps, however people may like to wear gloves when spreading the lure around or extracting possums from the traps the next day.

A backpack for carrying your bait and lure is useful and a sack or something similar if you want to bring your catch back with you.

If you want to record your catch, a camera and / or pen and print out of our tally sheet (see below) will be useful.

We also recommend you take a copy of this document, either printed or electronic, to guide you on your trapping journey.

Treat traps with extreme caution at all times

Keep fingers clear of the front opening

Never put your hand in the trap once it has been set

Before Heading Out

Before you get to the first trap, make sure everyone is aware of the RULES;

- No one is allowed to touch the traps without an adult present.
- Treat all traps with extreme caution.
- Keep fingers clear of the opening and don't put your hand inside unless you are absolutely sure it isn't set.

It is also good for everyone to know how to tell if a trap is set. The easiest way to tell is to check the string on the top of the trap. If the string is short and tight, the trap hasn't been set. If it is long and loose, the trap is set. **If the trap is set, or you are unsure, keep your hands clear.**



Short tight string = not set



*Long loose string = set **KEEP HANDS CLEAR***

Treat traps with extreme caution at all times
Keep fingers clear of the front opening
Never put your hand in the trap once it has been set

Finding the Traps

We have 13 traps split into two lines with seven traps on line 1 and six traps on line 2.

All the traps are at least 10m away from walking tracks or the road. This is to ensure that they are not easily accessible to young children.

To find the traps, look for the blue and pink markers like in Figure 1 below. These are clearly visible from the track or road and show you where to turn off. From there, follow the pink triangle markers until you spot a trap like the one in Figure 2.



Figure 1: School Trap Line (STL) marker showing you where to turn off the track



Figure 2: Following the pink triangles will take you to a possum trap

Treat traps with extreme caution at all times
Keep fingers clear of the front opening
Never put your hand in the trap once it has been set

Trap Line 1

Best done in order starting with #1 as it is the furthest away from the Lodge. After setting each trap, come back out to the track to get to the next one.

Trap #	Location
1	Walk through the confidence course and carry on along the track and through the grass clearing. The first marker is on the right just past the clearing. If you get to the bridge you have gone too far.
2	Coming back from #1, turn hard left as you enter the confidence course. The marker is beside the last jumping platform.
3	Follow the track back towards the Lodge. #3 is on your left just before the clearing.
4	Take the track from the clearing to the swimming hole. You should spot #4 easily.
5	Cross the creek between the clearing and Lodge. The track to #5 is on the left immediately after the creek.
6	Head up the track to the Lodge. #6 is on the right about half-way up the hill. The pink & blue markers are set back in the bush a little.
7	Walk past the clothes line to the top of the grass hill between the main Lodge and little Lodge. You will find the marker on the treeline.



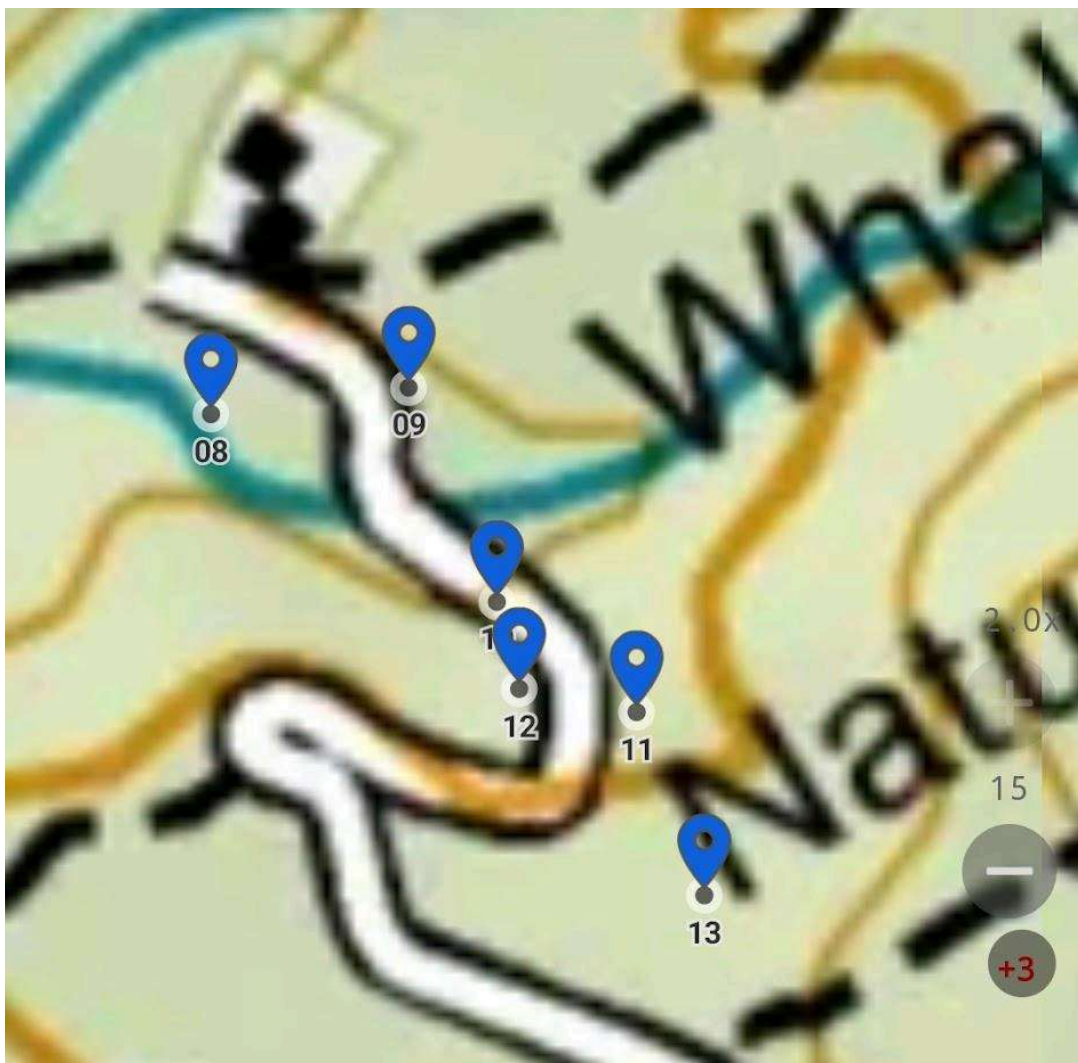
Treat traps with extreme caution at all times

Keep fingers clear of the front opening

Never put your hand in the trap once it has been set

Trap Line 2

Trap #	Location
8	Starting at the boot wash station, walk along the road like you are leaving the lodge. The marker to station 8 will be on your right, opposite the lodge.
9	Continue down the road. The marker for station 9 is on your left. If you get to the bottom of the drip, you have gone too far.
10	Continue up the hill looking to your right for the marker to station 10.
11	Continue up the hill and the marker for station 11 will be on your left.
12	Almost directly opposite the marker for station 11.
13	Continue on up and the marker for station 13 is on the left along with the start of the rope trail. Follow the pink markers and rope trail until you spot it.



Treat traps with extreme caution at all times
Keep fingers clear of the front opening
Never put your hand in the trap once it has been set

Setting the Traps

When setting or checking traps it is good practice to only have a few people approach the trap. Too much disturbance by people can put the possums off.

Check it isn't already set

The first thing is to check that the trap isn't already set. You can tell it is set if the string at the top is long and loose like the photo below.

If it is set, please do not 'dry fire' it by simply setting it off, as this can damage the trap.

Instead, carefully slide the trap along the rails until it is half off. Hold tight on to the string at the top. Reach in behind the trap with a stick and knock the trigger wire. This will set the trap off and the string can be lowered.

Once you are confident the trap isn't set

1. Slide the trap off the rails and turn it upside down.
2. Thread your bait on to the trigger wire up to the bend.
3. Turn the trap back over and slide it back on the railings. Make sure it is string up and trap entrance down.
4. Pull the string until you feel the trap mechanism click into place.
5. Sprinkle some of your lure around the trap



Long loose string means the trap is set
KEEP HANDS CLEAR



Trap with apple threaded on to trigger

Treat traps with extreme caution at all times
Keep fingers clear of the front opening
Never put your hand in the trap once it has been set

Checking a Trap and Extracting a Possum

Possums are most active at night, which is when you are most likely to catch them. Leave the traps set overnight and check them in the morning.

If you have caught a possum, the best way to get it out is to pull the possum with one hand while pulling the string with the other, being careful not to pull it enough to set it again.

The Lions Lodge board would love to know how many possums you caught so please record what you get and pass the information to our Lodge Manager. The sheet below can be a useful tool, especially if you are setting them more than once.

If you haven't caught a possum and you don't intend on checking them again the next day, please carefully un-set the trap by following the instructions above. If traps are left set, there is a risk of catching non-target species, such as other students. If the trap does catch a possum and isn't cleared within a few days, the disintegrating possum can damage the trap.

Monitoring the Possums Caught

Monitoring of pest numbers in an area is an important part of any conservation project. This knowledge is used to make decisions as to where and what species to target. Over time, it also provides useful information on how successful the pest control measures have been.

A standard way of measuring and reporting the number of possums in an area is by using the Residual Trap Catch Index (RTCI), which is the percentage of trap-nights in which a possum was captured.

The sheet below will help you calculate the RTCI in the area you trapped. We are aiming to get down to 5% or less.

Treat traps with extreme caution at all times

Keep fingers clear of the front opening

Never put your hand in the trap once it has been set



Monitoring Sheet

Group Name: _____
Date Started: _____ Date Finished: _____

Trap #	Day 1		Day 2		Day 3		Trap #	Day1		Day 2		Day 3	
	Set	Catch	Set	Catch	Set	Catch		Set	Catch	Set	Catch	Set	Catch
1							8						
2							9						
3							10						
4							11						
5							12						
6							13						
7													

	No. Traps Set (A)	No. Possums Caught (B)
Day One		
Day Two		
Day Three		
Total		

Calculate RTCI (%)

$RTCI = A / B \times 100$

RTCI =

Treat traps with extreme caution at all times
Keep fingers clear of the front opening
Never put your hand in the trap once it has been set