

Possums in the Roof

The Shire of Capel is within one of the most biologically diverse regions in the world. Habitat that supports rare and endangered animals is scattered throughout the Shire.

Many residential areas border onto areas of natural bushland and sometimes this can cause interaction with native animals that can be seen as a nuisance that needs to be managed.

Brush-tail and Ring-tail possums in the roof can cause all sorts of problems with noise at night and bad smells. Many older homes have a roof that is not sealed around the eaves. Any gaps into the roof space will allow access to both Ringtail and Brushtail possums who find living in roof-spaces very comfortable.



If you have a possum or possums in your roof you will need to take the following actions.

1. **Locate** where the possum is getting in.
2. **Seal off** all entry points except one. This can be done using small (20mm) chicken wire mesh, sheet metal or wood. Ensure it is secured well as possums, especially brushtails, will have a go at pulling it apart to gain entry. If you have a tiled roof it should be checked for loose tiles because possums can lift loose tiles and squeeze through into the roof cavity.
3. **Entice** the possum out of the roof in the evening by providing some fruit near the remaining exit hole. Placing a light or a radio in the roof will also annoy the possum and make it want to leave.
4. **Seal up** the hole, when you see the possum exit out of the roof space. Over the following few days it will become clear if a possum is trapped in the roof by its noisy attempts to escape.

Consider providing a possum box in your garden for possums to live in.

Catching possums is illegal as trapping can only be undertaken legally by a licenced trapper. Shifting them away from your house will only allow another possum to take up residence in your roof space. You must seal off your roof space. This is the only way to keep the possums out.

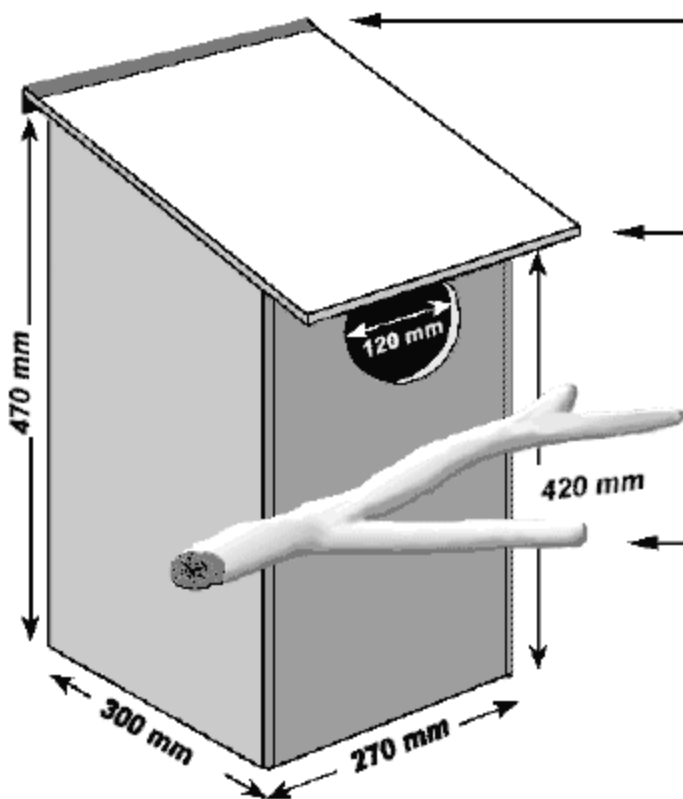
For advice regarding injured/distressed/orphaned wildlife contact the DEC Wildlife Helpline – 9474 9055.

For advice on how to get possums out of your roof call your local DEC office.

Photo of ringtail possum taken by Tim Shingles

How to build a new home for your “guests”

Constructing your box from scrap wood is fine, but make sure you remove any toxins and nails or staples. 3cm thick plantation pine or structural pine plywood is idea.



The top edge of the roof should be weather sealed with a folded strip of sheetmetal, aluminium angle or a rubber flap. (An old rubber inner tube is OK)

To stop rain getting in, eaves should overhang by 110mm to 120mm. The entry hole (which doesn't have to be round) should be located directly under it and be between 110mm to 120mm wide.

A sturdy branch screwed firmly to the front of the box is an optional extra that will help the possum enter and exit more easily.

Drill four holes (approx 5 mm) through the floor near each corner, to allow any water that might get in to drain out.

Remember it can be helpful to construct the box so that the top can be opened up for inspection. Hang it from branch against the trunk of a tree with a piece of chain threaded through a scrap of garden hose. The hose will prevent damage to your tree.

We also suggest that you include some mesh on the inside and outside under the entry hole, to allow juvenile possums to climb up to the entry.

However, we still suggest adding the branch to help possums 'get a grip' on their way in.

The box will last longer if screwed rather than nailed together and finished off with filler in any gaps. A coat of primer undercoat and lastly a dull acrylic finish in a light cool colour.

Until your box is tenanted, resist the temptation to look inside. Your new neighbours may be checking the box out and waiting to move in when they feel safe.

A little time and money spent on providing an alternative abode for your furry friends may save you many sleepless nights.

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