



# Traps... for possums & other pests

Although control of most pests in New Zealand rely on the use of poisons, traps continue to be an essential tool for both control and population monitoring. The range of traps currently available fall into three broad categories: kill, leg-hold, and live-capture traps.

## Commonly used traps for different pest species

Kill traps	Leg-hold traps	Cage/Box traps
Bulldog ✓ † Timms Conibear 120 Conibear 160 Conibear 220 BMI 160 Electrostrike Duke kill traps	Lanes-Ace [gin](serrated jaws) ✗ Victor No.1 (smooth jaws) ✓ Victor No.1½ (smooth jaws) ✗ Victor No.1 Soft Catch Victor No.1½ Soft Catch BMI No.1½ (smooth jaws) ✗ Bridger No.1(smooth jaws) ✓ Sleepy creek No.1 Duke No.1	Havahart Several locally made designs
<b>Ferrets</b>		
Tunnel Fenn Mk 4 & 6 Y ✗ Conibear 120	Lanes-Ace ✗ Victor No.1½ ✗ Victor No.1½ Soft Catch	Locally made designs
<b>Stoats</b>		
Fenn Mk 4 & 6 ✗	Lanes-Ace ✗ Victor No.1½ ✗	Wooden continental live-trap
<b>Feral Cats</b>		
Conibear 160 Conibear 220	Victor No.1½ ✗ Victor No.1½ Soft Catch Lanes-Ace ✗	Locally made designs
<b>Rodents</b>		
	Nil	Metal cage trap

✓ The most cost-effective traps currently available for catching possums

✗ Unlikely to be acceptable under new Animal Welfare Legislation

Currently there are no restrictions on which traps can be used for trapping animals in New Zealand. However, new legislation (the Animal Welfare Act 1999) enables some traps that are not acceptable on welfare grounds to be prohibited.

Some of the different possum traps used in New Zealand have been assessed by Landcare Research scientist, Bruce Warburton. He has been identifying which traps are effective at catching the possums but which also minimise any pain and suffering caused by the trap.

The humaneness of kill traps is assessed by the time taken to render the captured animal unconscious –

three minutes being the maximum time permitted in at least 70% of the captured animals (National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee draft guidelines). Of six kill traps tested, only three have passed the 'three-minute to loss of consciousness' requirements. The work by Landcare Research shows that it is possible to design kill traps that can kill rapidly, and the challenge now is to make these traps light weight and capture efficient.

Another challenge for trappers is to eliminate non-target captures, particularly native birds such as weka and kiwi. Research has just been completed testing a cubby or box-type set for kill traps that is commonly used in the USA and Canada. These sets allow kill traps to be set on the trunks of trees above the reach of flightless birds. Trial results indicate that the capture rate of possums are about the same as that obtained from leg-hold traps on the ground. However these cubby sets do take more time to set up and are heavier to carry.

The research by Landcare Research will bring 19<sup>th</sup>Century trap technology into the 21<sup>st</sup>Century. It will result in significant improvements in the welfare of trapped animals without compromising capture efficiency.

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