



POSSUM DOCUMENTS

Policy - Protocols

Houndstooth
Studio by Alex Cairns



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Possum Policy
Possum Rescue Protocols
Possum Positions & Responsibilities



POSSUM POLICY

Introduction

1. This document covers the rules and procedures for the rescue, rehabilitation and release of orphaned, pinky, baby, juvenile and adult Possums.
2. Positions appointed and to be approved by the Fauna Rescue of SA Inc committee are:
 1. Possum Coordinator
 2. Assistant Possum Coordinator
 3. Team Leaders
3. It is recommended that all possum rescuers/foster carers ensure their tetanus vaccination is up to date.
4. It is the requirement of Fauna Rescue of SA Inc. that before Possums are placed in care, all carers:
 - Are current financial or complimentary members of Fauna Rescue of South Australia Inc
 - Have attended:
 - New Members Orientation Workshop
 - Beginners Care Possum Workshop
 - Have been assessed by a Possum Coordinator or Team Leader who has confirmed that the rescuer/foster carer has the necessary equipment ready to provide appropriate care to possums, including all cages and aviaries.
5. All Possum carers will be required to supply a current National Police Clearance to Fauna Rescue of SA Inc.
6. All Possum carers will require a wildlife permit from the Department of Environment and Water (DEW).

However new members when starting will be temporarily free from applying, as two references are required for the wildlife permit so rescuer/foster carer will need to have training, assessment and experience.

- A Possum Coordinator or Team Leader must confirm that the rescuer/foster carer has passed the probationary period of three months to have a reference written for their Application for a Wildlife Permit through Department of Environment and Water.
- A Possum Coordinator or Team Leader must confirm that the rescuer/foster carer has been mentored by an experienced member of the Possum team approved by the Coordinator.

All advice and assistance provided by a Coordinator or Team Leader should not be seen as a question about the rescuers'/foster carers' abilities but a way to get to know the rescuer/foster carer and determine they are able to provide the standard of care required and to pass on their experience.

Please remember that our number one priority is the care and welfare of the animals.

Anyone not attending the appropriate workshops and signed off by a Coordinator or Team Leader will not receive an animal for care.

7. After the rescuer/foster carer has attended the appropriate workshops and has been signed off by a Coordinator or Team Leader they will be ready to receive possums for care. There are several stages of development:

- Pinky (Advanced Carer)
- Baby (Advanced Carer)
- Juvenile
- Adult

Beginner carers will start with 250g+ Brushtails and 150g+ Ringtails

8. The rescuer/foster carer will be ready to care for Juvenile to Adult as per the following table below:

| Housing | | Brushtail Weight | Ringtail Weight |
|---------------------------------------|----------|------------------|-----------------|
| Medium Flight Bird Cage (81x54x157cm) | Juvenile | 250g to 500g | 150g to 300g |
| Aviary (6' X 4' OR 2m x 1.5m) | | 500g to 800g | 300g to 450g |
| Release | Adult | 800 g | 450g |

9. All Possums rescued (dead or alive) **MUST** be recorded and submitted to Fauna Rescue of SA Inc via Animal Records on website as soon as possible.
10. All Possums rescued showing any signs of injury **MUST** be taken to a vet for Veterinary attention and it is recommended that rescuer/foster carer out of courtesy notify the vet clinic prior to arrival.
11. Possum team members may apply to the Fauna Rescue of SA Inc committee for reimbursement of kilometres and food supplies as per the reimbursement policies available on the website.
12. Possum carers must maintain appropriate daily husbandry for all Possums in their care.
13. Possums undergoing rehabilitation are not to be used for any invasive scientific procedures.
14. Possums are not to be publicly displayed, unless the member holds the appropriate permit from DEW which allows an animal to be publicly displayed as part of a presentation or talk.
15. Possum team members are expected to be courteous, respectful and polite to the public, DEW, Vets and their staff, as well as other Fauna Rescue of SA Inc members at all times.
16. Possum team members are **NOT** to leave their personal contact details with Vets or their staff for direct calls. Remember all rescue/transport/care **CALLS** are to be placed with the Fauna Rescue of SA Inc hotline for statistics, however, if a vet has built up a relationship with an **advanced carer** and is unable to get through on the hotline, the vet should call the advanced carer direct.
17. Possum team members **MUST** read the social media policy and not post any general information or information relating to vet care on social media platform unless approved by the Possum Coordinator/Committee. The closed Possum Team Facebook page is a forum for training and information with all posts being approved by Administrators before post becomes public on that forum.
18. All Possum team members must abide by the Possum policies and protocols contained within the "Possum Documents" and sign the agreement on page 10 and return to the Possum Coordinator.

Non-compliance

Non-compliance with the "Possum Documents Policies and Protocols" will be dealt with by means of three stages:

- Following consultation a verbal warning may be issued.
- A written warning will be issued and a documented investigation produced. At this time any team member under investigation will be taken off call pending a resolution.
- Continued non-compliance will result in expulsion from the Possum Team.

Any Possum rescuer/foster carer under investigation have the right of reply under the Laws of Natural Justice.

For your information only

Advanced Care Possums UNDER 250g Brushtails and 150g Ringtails

Once a rescuer/foster carer has had possums in care from rescue to release they can be trained in Advanced Care

1. Upon rescue, rehabilitate and releasing a number of approximately 5 plus sets of brushtails possums and 3 plus sets of ringtail possums rescuer/foster carer may request from the Co-ordinator or Team Leader to arrange one on one training or should there be more than one member an advanced workshop may be held to become an Advanced Carer for pinky or baby possum as per the following table below:

| Housing | | Brushtail Weight | Ringtail Weight |
|------------------------------------|-------|------------------|-----------------|
| Incubator/controlled heat mat | Pinky | 50g to 150g | 80g downwards |
| Basket with a heat pad | Baby | 150g to 200g | 80g to 100g |
| Small Bird Cage/heat pad if needed | | 200g to 250g | 100g to 150g |

There are three advanced stages of care as per the table below ranging from 5 hourly feeds down to possibly 2 hourly feeds throughout a 24 hours period. These feeding regimes are very time consuming and tiring so remember there may be at least two in care at any one time.

Advanced training will start at Stage 1 and to progress through the stages the rescuer/foster carer will need to have cared for, rehabilitated and released approximately 5 plus possums in each stage.

| | Brushtail | Ringtail |
|---------|--------------|-------------|
| Stage 1 | 150g to 200g | 120g - 150g |
| Stage 2 | 100g to 150g | 80g to 120g |
| Stage 3 | 100g down | 80g down |

An orphan possum rehabilitation program will consist of:

Rescue

1. Fauna Rescue of SA Inc Phone Operators will contact you to organise the rescue.
2. Data to be recorded will include;
 - LOCATION FOUND (*vital if a baby has fallen off mum there maybe the possibility to reunite*)
 - Species
 - Weight
 - Sex

If collecting a baby from a deceased Possum please take photos of the injuries and send to the Possum Coordinator/Team Leader as this may be vital in caring for the baby if there is evidence of poisoning or vehicle impact.

3. The rescuer/foster carer will not automatically be allocated the Possum for care.
4. The rescuer/foster carer must keep the Coordinator/Team Leader informed of the possum they have in care as the possum needs to be placed with the carer most suited to meet the needs of the possum and/or have animals of similar age.

Initial care: Stabilising

1. All initial care/stabilising will be supervised by the Coordinator/Team Leader or appointed experienced carer approved by the Possum Coordinator.

Rearing

1. All carers must be trained and approved by the Possum Coordinator/ Team Leader and have a DEW wildlife permit.

Please refer Introduction item 6 above regarding DEW wildlife permit.

2. Carers must read the Beginners Guide Caring for Possums manual, obtain equipment, commit the time to caring, follow husbandry standards and use as a guide the feeding charts.
3. Carers must regularly keep detailed records of possum weights. For Brushtails over 300g and Ringtails over 150g, weight can be checked weekly or fortnightly until aviary stage, unless it is believed the possum is not eating well - speak with a Co-ordinator if you are concerned about their rate of growth.

Creching

1. Orphans are to be creched by liaising with the Possum Coordinator/Team Leader.
2. Orphans will be creched with other possums of a similar weight and age or individual specific needs as deemed appropriate by the Coordinator/Team Leader. Preferably brushtails need to be creched in groups of 2 before they are 400g.
3. Orphaned ringtails are more social and can be creched in groups of two or more. Boys may be together, all girls together, but ideally 1 boy with many girls but not 1 girl with many boys as they will not get along.

VERSION 1.2

Version 1.1 Accepted and authorised at a Committee Meeting held on 12th May item 2 (v.1.2 with minor amendments accepted and authorised via email vote on 17th May)

Release

1. Rescued possums in short term care are required by DEW to be released back to within 50 meters of the capture site.
2. Soft Release - In the past, we released possums through a system of aviaries placed at release sites around South Australia. Research interstate however has shown that with ongoing release of possums these sites attracted significant numbers of predators. Also reports from previous release sites suggests there have been too many released in the same area causing over population. The ratio is usually 1 pair of brushtails and 2 pairs of ringtails on one site.
3. Hard Release - Orphans are hard released and may require supplement feeding for as long as necessary. Again it has been noted on previous studies interstate that the hard release possums do just as well as the soft released possums. Hard release involves putting your possums in their own specific nesting box high up a tree. The advantage of this method is that the release population is dispersed limiting predator concentration and minimizing competition for nesting sites.

Volunteers Occupational Health & Safety Requirements

1. Your first priority is your own safety so please view your surroundings and if near a road ensure you are safe before attempting rescue. Call Police 131 444 for traffic control to assist or ETSA/MFS/CFS/SES if possum is near power lines.
2. Please use appropriate PPE (gloves, towel) when handling any Possums dead or alive.
3. You are not permitted to use a ladder or climb a tree to undertake a rescue.
4. Rescue is only to be undertaken if the possum is on the ground.
5. In bushland areas beware of snakes and spiders.
6. Look where you are walking due to underlying or overhanging branches which you may fall over or walk into causing injury.
7. If a major injury is inflicted by a possum the wound must be washed thoroughly, disinfected and a tetanus booster shot sought if not up to date by seeking professional medical attention and report the incident immediately to the Coordinator.
8. Always carry your mobile on you especially if you are on your own. For personal safety maybe let someone know your whereabouts if you are going out on a rescue on your own.

Non members of the Possum team attending can help with crowd control but are not to handle the possum in any capacity as they are not covered by Fauna Rescue's insurance.

POSSUM RESCUE PROTOCOLS

Establish a safe rescue environment by assessing:

- Inherent dangers associated with traffic.
- Assess the condition of all structures including trees around the rescue site.
- Establish a safe perimeter for members of the public.
- Consider the effect of diminishing light on the rescue
- Consider if you can safely carry out the rescue or if extra personnel or equipment is required.
- Do you need assistance from CFS, MFS, SES, RSPCA.

Personal Safety:

Your personal safety is paramount to a successful rescue. Observe the following for best safe practices.

- Phone containing Possum contacts.
- Protective gloves.
- Long sleeved shirt.
- Appropriate footwear for the situation - always "closed footwear".
- Always carry bacterial wash
- All bites and scratches need to be washed and disinfected immediately and reported to the Coordinator.
- Dispose of all towels from a Mange possum.
- Disinfect all baskets/cages thoroughly after each rescue.

Rescue Kit List: (What you will need)

- Carrier
- Pouch
- Heat source (wheat bag, hot water bottle, car lighter plug in heater)
- Gloves – leather or welding
- High vis vest
- Blanket or towel
- Spare towel to cover carrier in car (dark is soothing)
- Water (legal requirement for any animal. Realistically you are not going to try and feed animal on the roadside) – and check at intervals water is fresh.
- Antibacterial Hand Sanitizer
- Appropriate temperature in car
- Quiet environment in car (no music, voices or yelling)
- Record precise location the possum was rescued

- You may want optional:
 - Bird net
 - Plastic bags for deceased possums
 - Scissors for possible pouch young removal and safety pins.

POSSUM POSITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Positions:

1. Possum Coordinator
2. Assistant Possum Coordinator
3. Team Leaders
4. Rescuer/Foster Carer

Election of Positions:

1. Possum Coordinator – Elected by the Fauna Rescue of SA Inc Committee.
2. Assistant Possum Coordinator– Elected by the Fauna Rescue of SA Inc committee in consultation with the Possum Coordinator.
3. Team Leader – Nominated by the Possum Coordinator and Assistant Possum Coordinator and approved by the Fauna Rescue of SA Inc Committee.
4. Rescuer/Foster Carer – Must be a current financial or complimentary members of Fauna Rescue of SA Inc, must have attended New Members Orientation Workshop and Beginners Care Possum Workshop, be approved by the Possum Coordinator or a Team Leader in consultation with Coordinator to go on call.

All positions above can be stood down immediately should evidence be provided to the Fauna Rescue of SA Inc Committee that the position responsibilities have not been fulfilled.

All position holders & Rescuers/Foster carers:

- Must abide by Possum Policy and all of Fauna Rescue of SA Inc's Policies and Procedures.

POSSUM COORDINATOR

Responsibilities of the Possum Coordinator

- Coordinate rescues coming in via the Fauna Rescue of SA Inc hotline and RSPCA.
- Ensure all rescuers/foster carers have completed all appropriate training courses.
- Ensure all rescuers/foster carers have appropriate equipment/facilities to undertake hand-rearing/rehabilitation procedures.
- Organise creching of possums for hand-reared young/juveniles.
- Attend Possum training courses when required.
- Update policies and documents when appropriate.
- Comply with confidentiality requirement, Database Agreement and be granted access to the Fauna Rescue of SA Inc Database.
- Comply with privacy and granted access to the read-only Fauna Rescue of SA Inc mapping tool.
- Provide advanced training for rescuers/foster carers.

ASSISTANT POSSUM COORDINATOR

Responsibilities of Assistant Possum Coordinator:

- Will cover responsibilities above in the absence of the Coordinator.
- Assist the Possum Coordinator in decision making matters when required and updating documents.
- Assist the Possum Coordinator when any unforeseen issues arise.
- Assist in the organisation of Possum training.
- Comply with confidentiality requirement, Database Agreement and be granted access to the Fauna Rescue of SA Inc Database.
- Comply with privacy and granted access to the read-only Fauna Rescue of SA Inc mapping tool.
- Keep an inventory of release site information.

Team Leader

Responsibilities of Team Leader:

- Ensure all carers hold a Possum permit issued by Department of Environment & Water (DEW).
- Ensure all carers have correct equipment set up before possums come into care.
- Contact Possum Coordinator as soon as new carer is assessed and ready to rescue/care for possums
- Ensure possums are stabilised or transferred to advanced carer.
Possums that have been successfully stabilised within the stabilising period (48 hours to 5 days) can be transferred to carer with appropriate level of training and/or experience.
- Liaise with Possum Coordinator with problematic animals throughout the stabilising process.
- Comply with privacy and granted access to the read-only Fauna Rescue of SA Inc mapping tool.

RESCUER/FOSTER CARER

Responsibilities of Rescuer/Foster Carer:

- Ensure all wildlife permits are registered with Possum Coordinator/Team Leaders
- Ensure all appropriate training courses have been attended as considered appropriate by Possum Coordinator.
- Contact Possum Coordinator with your availability for rescues and caring and level of commitment e.g. days free, number of feeds per day you can manage.
- Ensure all equipment is available and set up to successfully undertake rescue/ caring procedures
- Send your animal records to Fauna Rescue of SA Inc as soon as possible.
- Ensure possum received veterinary attention and is transported to creche appointed by Possum Coordinator.
- Ensure National Police Clearance is provided to Fauna Rescue of SA Inc and renewed every three years.
- Complete the DEW Annual Stock Return Under Section 8 within 14 days of 30 June each year. Ensure appropriate records are kept and submitted as DEW can randomly audit these records. DEW will forward annually a re-application notice which confirms the terms and conditions to continue your permit.

POSSUM PROTOCOL/POLICY AGREEMENT

I, _____ (CAPITAL LETTERS),
have read and will comply with the "Possum Documents, Policy and Protocols"

1. Possum Policy
3. Possum Rescue Protocols
4. Possum Positions & Responsibilities

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Membership Number: _____

Date: _____