



A FAUNA RESCUE OF SA INC PROGRAM INITIATIVE

THE REUNITING / RINGTAIL WILDING RELEASE PROGRAM A PREFERRED OPTION TO HANDREARING!

What to do as a member of the public if you find a joey OR any native animal

*The very best option for a rescued joey is to organise **getting it to an experienced wildlife carer or vet immediately.***

Please don't attempt to feed or care for a possum as they require experienced carers who have the appropriate specialised possum milk (*possums do not drink cows milk*) and correct species permits.

- If the joey appears to be injured you must take it straight to a vet **OR** call the phone hotline for advice or assistance (8289 0896).
- Survey the location to see if you can see mum in the tree OR deceased nearby. Young joeys can be reunited (however, there is NO chance of a reunite if mum is deceased or euthanised).
- Record the **exact address** where the joey came from – we depend on the member of the public and it is extremely useful if you take **photos** of the location tree and include a **dropped pin in Google maps** at the location.
- Keep the joey warm, place them in a sock or similar, use a heat pad or hot water bottle (hot water from tap not boiling). If the joey does not have fur or shows signs of what we call velvet fur, place immediately down your top to warm, as they should be at a temperature the same as our body.

Unfortunately, mum does not just come down and collect her joey!

*Please **do not attempt to reunite** the possum back to its mum as there can be injuries that are not visible and any possum that is on the ground **should be examined by a vet or a carer for any injuries or sickness.** If it has fallen from mums back it may have an injury.*

Possums in South Australia

Unfortunately, possum populations are declining in some regions **due to habitat loss**, with the urban populations indicating an adaptation to the presence of humans.

In South Australia, possums are **fully protected**, and permits are required for trapping possums in human residences, keeping non releaseable possums and rescuing sick or injured wild possums.

Differences between Brushtail and Ringtail Possums

Brushtail



The common **brushtail** possum which is normally varying shades of grey in colour with a white, yellow or golden belly. They commonly have a black tail, white patches on the back of their ears and a bright pink nose. They have rabbit like ears and an elongated face when compared with the common ringtail possum.

Did you know that female brushtails usually only rear one joey (twins is rare).

An adult common brushtail possum should weigh between 1.5 - 4kg, with males often reaching a larger size than females.

Ringtail



The common **ringtail** possum which is normally varying shades of grey, brown or black in colour with a white belly. They commonly have long tails with a white tip, and a small triangular ears with a short face.

An adult common ringtail possum should weigh between 0.7-1.1kg, with males often reaching a larger size than females.

Did you know that female ringtails are different to brushtails as they usually rear up to three joeys (twins and triples are common).

*You may be asked **What colour is the tail?**
Brushtail **black tail**, Ringtail **white tail**.*

Breeding

The busy breeding season for carers of possum usually starts in Spring **1 September to approximately 1 April** when the joeys are born.



Researching Reuniting

In 2019, I had wondered if a joey can be reunited to its mum?

I have been **researching reuniting** for some time now and found that **REUNITING** is quite **complicated** and **time consuming** as there are many factors to take into consideration.

I knew the reuniting process I was developing was special and would be a great outcome for both joeys and carers.

ADVANTAGES of reuniting

- joeys are in care for a short period of time 1-7 days instead of 4-5 months
- joeys are back in their habitat, with their family group
- carers have more time to rehabilitate other possums that must be in care

DISADVANTAGES of handrearing possum joeys

- possums are easily imprinted
- possums can suffer from stress creating behavioural problems.

Ultimately the best care that a joey can receive - is from its mum!

Statistics

It has been extremely rewarding work to care for our wildlife and for me personally it is such a joy especially when I am able to return the joeys back to their mums.

In that first year I **reunited 3** joeys! In the second year I exceed my expectation with **9 reunites**. I commenced training a few dedicated volunteers in 2021/2022 and as a team we **reunited 27** joeys back an increase of over 60% reunited from the previous year.

The table below displays statistics on reuniting Ringtail and Brushtails possums, as you can see, reuniting has steadily increased since commencement of the program in 2019 with the first three year increasing by more than 60%.

Year	Kerrie Reunite	Team Reunite	Total	Increase	%
2025/2026	68	2	70	-5	-7
2024/2025	66	9	75	7	9
2023/2024	66	2	68	-14	-21
2022/2023	51	31	82	56	68
2021/2022	17	9	26	17	65
2020/2021	9		9	6	67
2019/2020	3		3		

Vision

Our vision is to continue to increase the numbers of joeys each year returned to their mums through the Reuniting / Ringtail Wildling Release Program and provide education and training.

