

5.5 Brushtail possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*)

Why is it a threat?

The brushtail possum (known as possums) originates from Australia. They were released in New Zealand in the late 1800s to establish a fur trade similar to that flourishing in Australia at the time. Possums selectively browse preferred plant species. They cause extensive canopy defoliation in native forest. They also cause economic damage in exotic forest plantations.

Possums will prey on ground and tree nesting birds and their eggs. The possum is a recognised vector in the spread of the disease bovine tuberculosis to domestic livestock.

Whilst the brushtail possum has long been established on mainland Marlborough, numerous islands in the Marlborough Sounds are free from the impact of brushtail possums. These islands range from small island sanctuaries through to the large islands of Rangitoto ki te Tonga/D'Urville Island and Arapaoa Island. Protecting these islands is the focus of this programme.



Objective

Over the duration of the RPMP, prevent the establishment of brushtail possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) on islands currently known to be possum-free in the Marlborough Sounds (see Appendix 2, page 113 and Map 5, page 22) to prevent future impacts on the environment and to enable enjoyment of the natural environment.

Intermediate Outcome:

Exclusion	Eradication	Progressive Containment	Sustained Control	Site-led
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Principle measures to achieve the objective

1) Council Inspection and Service Delivery

Inspection by Council, in conjunction with the Department of Conservation, may include staff or contractors:

- Delivering a service to respond and investigate sightings of possums on the islands.
- Delivering a service to eradicate possums in liaison with land owners/occupiers if applicable.
- Carry out surveys to determine whether pests are present.
- Monitoring effectiveness of control.
- The use of administrative powers of the Biosecurity Act 1993, if necessary.

2) Requirement to Act

Land owners and/or occupiers or other persons may be required to act where rules or statutory obligations dictate:

- The presence of pests is to be reported.

3) Pests are not to be spread (bred, sold or distributed). Advocacy and Education

Council may:

- Encourage land owners and/or occupiers and other persons to report any pests they find.
- Facilitate or commission research.

Rules

Rule 5.5.2.1

Any person is required to notify Council of the presence of brushtail possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*), observed or suspected on any of the possum-free islands, within 24 hours of the initial observation or suspicion.

A breach of this rule will create an offence under section 154N(19) of the Biosecurity Act.

Rule 5.5.2.2

No person shall transport, move or distribute brushtail possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) to or within 1 kilometre of a possum-free island listed in Appendix 2, page 113 and shown on Map 5, page 22.

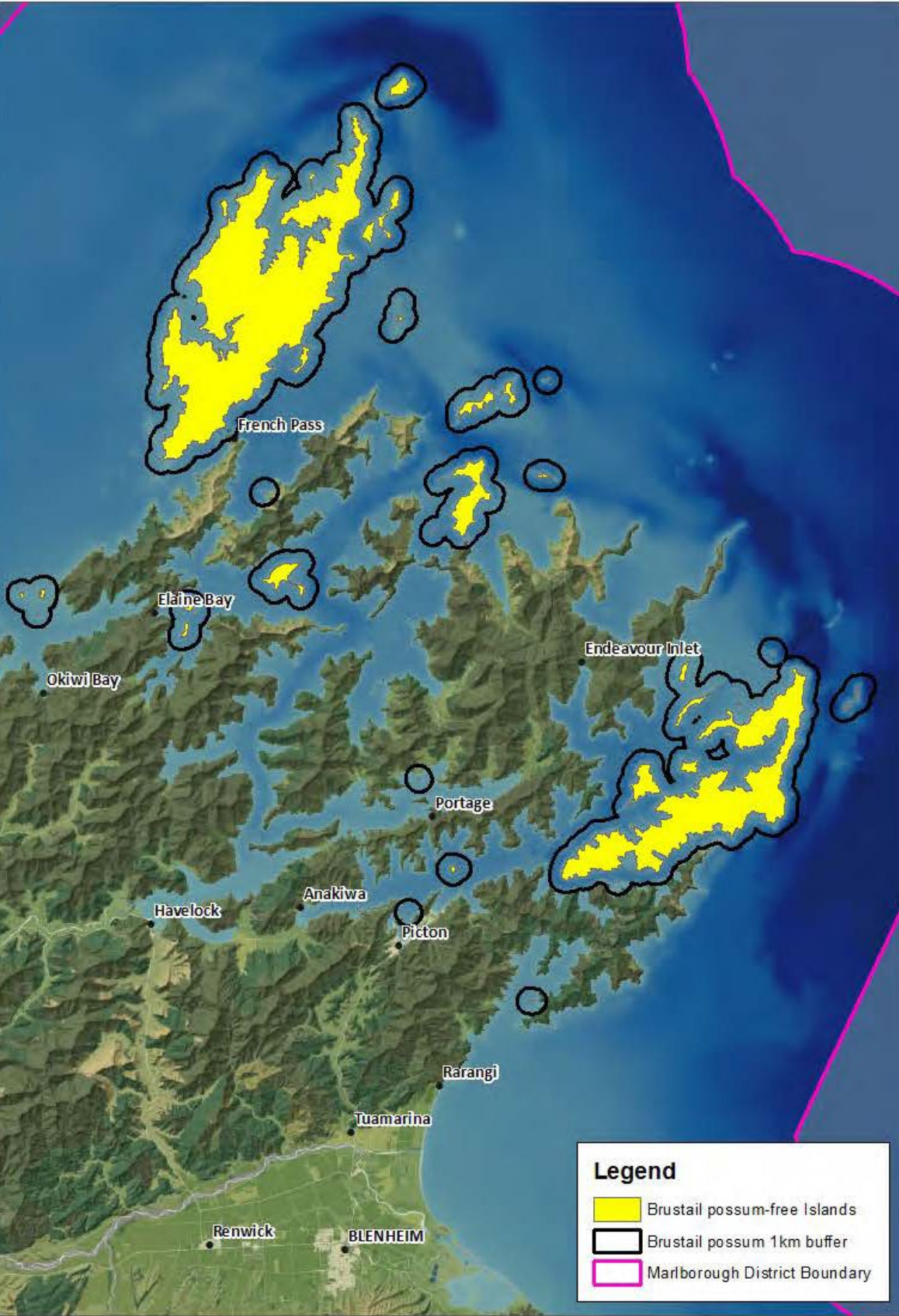
A breach of this rule will create an offence under section 154N(19) of the Biosecurity Act.

Explanation of the rule:

The purpose of Rule 5.5.2.1 is in accordance with section 73(5)(a) for the entire community to assist Council with surveillance. Requiring people to notify Council, in addition to the Department of Conservation or Council's own surveillance, will assist Council in achieving the objective of the programme.

The purpose of Rule 5.5.2.2 is in accordance with section 73(5)(e) in that the transport, movement or distribution of possums within 1 kilometre of the possum-free islands is seen as an activity that can affect measures taken to implement the RPMP. There is an increased risk of the assisted introduction of possums over and above the background risk of self-introduction via swimming or arriving on flotsam.

Council as the management agency will administer these rules.



Map 5: Brushtail Possum Programme