

TRAP SMARTER



Taranaki Taku Tūrangā

**Towards
Predator-Free
Taranaki**

A GUIDE FOR TARANAKI TRAPPERS





A MESSAGE FROM OUR TEAM

This guide is packed with everything we've learned from years of trapping predators.

We've also included tips from other predator control experts and of course, nuggets of wisdom from you, Taranaki's dedicated trappers.

There is something for everyone - from the basics for those new to trapping through to expert tips to help experienced trappers up their game and increase their catch rates.

By following these tips and using best practice you can kill predators effectively and humanely.

The goal of Towards Predator-Free Taranaki is to protect our native species and ecosystems from introduced predators. Unless we act now many of our native species may become extinct or have their populations decimated.

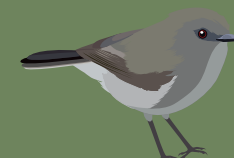
We're off to a great start, but we need to keep at it. Together we can make a difference.

Enjoy the guide!

- *Towards Predator-Free Taranaki*

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THE BASICS

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Always wear gloves when handling traps and dead animals. This is both for health reasons and to keep your human scent (soap, perfume etc) off the traps.

Ensure the trap is placed in a box off the ground and out of reach of young children. Always supervise children when handling traps.

SETTING THE TRAP

It's important your trap is properly set so it will trap a predator humanely and effectively the first time. A predator that has encountered a trap and survived can become trap shy and harder to catch.

Ensure the trap box is stable on the ground. A trap box that is unstable or wobbly will deter most animals from entering.

All rat traps (e.g. T-Rex or Victor) should be placed inside a wooden box to prevent catching non-target species. Place the trap at the very back of the box - a trap at the front may accidentally catch a bird if it pokes its bill inside to get bait.

Place your trap in the best location to catch your target predators. See p16 for tips on trap placement.



CHECKING TRAPS

Check your trap every day when you start as you are likely to catch something soon after that first set. Then check every one to two weeks. The more often you rebait your trap with fresh bait the better your chances as most catches come within a few days of applying fresh bait.

Frequently checking your trap means you will be handling freshly killed animals rather than old, smelly, decomposed animals. More importantly, removing a dead pest quickly means the trap can be re-set so it's ready to catch another.

* MAKE * IT A HABIT

Make checking your trap part of your regular routine. We check ours when we put our rubbish or recycling bins out each week. That way, we're less likely to forget! Or it's a Saturday morning job with the kids? Whatever works with you and your lifestyle.



THE TRAPS

This guide will focus on the following traps, which are the main ones we use to catch rats, mustelids (stoats, weasels and ferrets) and possums - the target species of Predator Free NZ 2050 and Towards Predator-Free Taranaki.

RAT TRAPS



T-REX

Easy to set and use.



VICTOR

Traditional, reliable. A bit more difficult to set, but more powerful than a T-Rex.

MUSTELID TRAPS



DOC 200

Main target is stoats. Will also kill rats, hedgehogs and larger weasels.



DOC 250

Main target is ferrets. Will also kill rats, hedgehogs and stoats.

POSSUM TRAPS



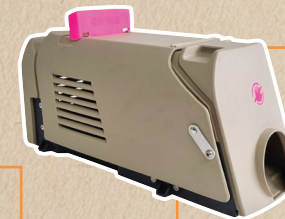
TRAPINATOR

A NAWAC approved possum kill trap.



POSSUM MASTER

A noose-style possum kill trap.



THE F-BOMB

Main target is ferrets. Will also kill rats, hedgehogs and stoats.



PODITRAP

Main target is ferrets. Will also kill rats, hedgehogs and stoats.

BAIT AND LURES

RATS

PEANUT BUTTER

The go-to bait for rats, it will also catch hedgehogs. Chunky style peanut butter lasts a bit longer than smooth as it is not as runny, but both should do the job. Mixing fine rolled oats into the peanut butter makes it firmer and more long-lasting.



*** KEEP IT FRESH ***

Most catches occur in the first few days after a trap is serviced, when the bait is fresh. Just like us, predators don't like rotten, stinky food. So regular re-baiting is key!

BEYOND PEANUT BUTTER

Try changing up your bait if peanut butter isn't working. Other options include mayonnaise, cheese, a chocolate spread (e.g. Nutella) or milk chocolate.

Rat traps only need about a teaspoon of bait to work effectively. Too much may allow the rat to eat the bait and not set off the trap.

Bait can be placed in two places in a T-Rex – in the bait cup or at the back of the treadle plate. Both work, but the back of the plate is a bit more effective. It ensures the rat will put its head into the best killing area and helps prevent just catching a leg, resulting in a live rat you must kill, or a maimed trap-shy rat.



MUSTELIDS

STOATS, FERRETS, WEASELS

When it comes to luring mustelids into your DOC 200 or 250 think fishy, meaty and eggy for edible/smelling lures. Our favourite options are:

FRESH HEN'S EGG

Place it in a horizontal position on the three nails behind the trap plate (eggs sit horizontally in nature as opposed to vertically). This is a visual and scent lure for the mustelids. You can also try a plastic egg as a visual lure only.



Hen's egg

FRESH MEAT

Try fresh fish, rabbit or hare, fresh possum. A chunk of meat the size of a table tennis ball is ample. Place it on the nails as opposed to the base of trap. This allows air to get underneath to dry the meat out rather than allowing it to rot.



Rabbit meat

Raw mutton fat is a great lure for both mustelid and rat traps although it can be hard to find - asking your local butcher is your best bet. Raw beef fat is another possibility, but not pork fat. Freeze raw fat to prolong its lifespan. Rub the mutton fat on the mesh of your trap tunnels and add some inside your trap. You can also leave a trail of fat leading to your trap. Don't use cooked or rendered fat like

dripping which will go rancid and attract wasps in warm weather.

EGG MAYO

Egg-based mayonnaise attracts stoats (as well as possums, rats and feral cats) however be aware it won't last very long.

ERAYZ PASTE/BLOCKS OR SALTED RABBIT

Useful in the summer months when fresh bait can go off and quickly become unappealing to mustelids.

Dispose of old dehydrated or salted rabbit meat well away from the trap. Leaving it near the trap can lead to mustelids being turned off by the taste.

VISUAL LURES

Visual lures work well when used with a scent lure. Examples include:

- Overturned dirt at the entrance of the trap
- Rabbit/mustelid tails
- Plastic eggs
- Feathers

MIX IT UP

Vary baits seasonally e.g. use eggs in spring when they are naturally occurring and mustelids will be expecting to see them.

POSSUMS

OUR FAVOURITES

Possoms love peanut butter, jam, apple, citrus or carrot dusted with cinnamon. Fresh fruit works well but doesn't last very long. For something a bit longer lasting, try a bit of possum dough, which can be made (see p20 for recipe) or bought.

BLAZE

Rub blaze (a flour/icing sugar mixture – see p20 for recipe) along a branch or trunk just below the trap. Blaze serves as both a visual and scent lure. The white is easy to see in the bush at night and will attract the curious possum to the trap.

Throw blaze around the trap site to create interest and attract animals to the area. They will take the scent away on their paws, in their fur and on their breath, communicating the food source to others.



CINNAMON SCENT

Cinnamon is a good lure for possums because it smells like kawakawa, one of their preferred foods. Cinnamon-scented flour works well.

Use oils that duplicate the lures in other devices e.g. if there is cinnamon-based toxic bait, or you are using 'Blue Smooth' lure on your kill traps, use cinnamon oil in your flour.

LONG LASTING LURE

Try a long lasting re-soakable ceramic possum lure that has been soaked in cinnamon. Attach this to the trigger bar using wire or a small plastic zip tie. This has a strong scent that will last for weeks and is sure to attract possums. When the scent dissipates you can soak it again and reuse it.



EXPERT TIPS TO IMPROVE CATCH RATES

TRAP SMARTER, NOT HARDER

Did you know 80% of pest encounters with a trap do not get a result? As trapping guru Cam Speedy says: "We need to start pushing the animals' caution down and pushing their inquisitiveness up."



MAKE YOUR TRAP ATTRACTIVE

SCUFF THE GROUND

Scuffing the ground around a trap site with your hands or feet creates interest and will encourage predators to come over and investigate.



HAZING

Show them the way! Use logs, ferns or branches to create a natural barrier to direct animals to the entrance of your trap.



GIVE A FREE FEED

It works for us! If you haven't caught anything for a long time close the trap. Provide free bait for the next seven to 10 days in or beside the trap to win the confidence of the predators. Then reset the trap with the same bait.



EXPERT TIPS CONT'D

REMOVE SHARP EDGES

Ensure the edges on the mesh baffles are smooth to prevent predators catching themselves, getting a fright and backing out of the trap. One solution is to file down the sharp ends. Another option is to cut the mesh long and fold it over. Or plastic piping can be fixed along the bottom edge to make it smooth; it will also protect the galvanising and make the baffles last longer.



USE FRESH CATCHES AS BAIT

If you have a fresh catch, leave it near your trap so it attracts other predators to your trap. Of course, if it is a bit old and ranky, you may prefer to just bury it or throw it into the bush nearby.

THE SOCK TEST

Every couple of visits, set off your DOC traps to ensure they are working – chucking in an old pair of socks is a good way to do this because 'dry' or empty firing of traps can result in trap damage and unnecessary wear.



Blaze spread around the front of the trap

BLAZE IS BEST

Try spreading blaze on the ground outside the entrance to the trap box and in the general area. This will attract more predators and hopefully entice some to enter the box.

CREATE SCENT TRAILS

Rats and mustelids are social animals and learn from each other about food sources. Try putting blaze on a tree near your trap to get animals into the area. The blaze gets on whiskers and fur which other animals will smell, learn about the food source and head to the trap area themselves. Another way to create a scent trail is to drag a freshly caught stoat or rat along the track towards your trap.

AVOID RUST

If you are using stainless steel DOC traps, ensure you also use stainless steel screws to attach the trap to the box, otherwise the screws will rust out.

THE RULE OF THIRDS

$\frac{1}{3}$ of the bait on the trap bait holder

$\frac{1}{3}$ around the outside of the trap

$\frac{1}{3}$ at the entrance to the trap

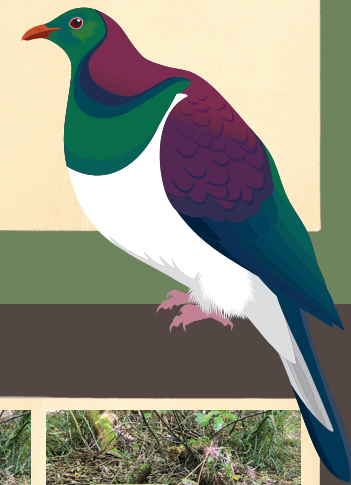
Those tasty bits outside are free samples to entice the predator into the trap itself.



WHAT IF I'M NOT CATCHING ANYTHING?

All trappers go through a period where they're just not catching. The key is not to give up. You may have caught all the predators in your area, but they can quickly reinvade if you don't keep up the trapping.

Try a different bait or shift your trap to a different part of your property. It's vital to keep at it – be persistent!



DON'T LET THE BOX LID DANGLE

When opening a trap be sure to leave the lid resting on the end of the tunnel as opposed to dangling off one side. This will help look after your trap screws and give you a stable surface to put things on.



How to use trap.nz

Adding your trap to **trap.nz** is crucial as it helps Towards Predator-Free Taranaki monitor the success of the programme and identify any gaps or areas we need to focus on. Once you're registered it just takes a few seconds to record your catch (or no catch!) each time you check your trap.

1. Register at www.trap.nz

Once you've registered, you can download the app onto your device.

2. Join a project

Click on **Find Projects** at the top of the page.

Use the map to find your location or type your town or suburb into the search bar. In Taranaki we have a number of 'Restore' groups, e.g. Restore Vogeltown.

Click on **Request to join project**. Please include your name and address in your request.

Any Questions?

Check out www.trap.nz/help on our website.

We are also happy to help – email pftaranaki@trc.govt.nz or call 0800 736 22 and ask to speak to one of the Towards Predator-Free Taranaki team.



3. Add your trap(s) to a project

Once your request has been accepted you can add your trap(s).

Click on **My Projects** at the top of the page.

Click on your project name.

Click **Traps** then click **Add a new trap**.

Fill in the details of the trap(s). Use your address for the code/name of the trap.

4. Add a new trap record (catch or no catch)

Click on **Traps** and select the trap you have just checked.

Click **Add a new trap record** and fill in the details of your catch. If you did not catch anything, please also record this.

WHY DOES MY BAIT KEEP DISAPPEARING?

It happens to all of us and there are a few possible reasons. The trigger plate on all traps is set to fire at the weight of the trap's target species. For example, a T-Rex is set to fire off at the weight of a rat but will not usually go off if a single mouse, wētā or slug is on the trigger plate. A DOC 200 is set to catch a stoat, which means it will not set off at a mouse or smaller rat. Bait can also wash off in heavy rain.

WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?

RAT TRAPS

Try setting the trap so that it's more sensitive and will fire off at a lighter weight, thereby also catching mice.

With the T-Rex, set the trap by squeezing on the back. Then hold firmly on the back so that it won't close. Next gently push down on the trigger plate so that it is lower, making it more sensitive. If you push too far it will set off (but your hand on the back will prevent it from closing on you). Try again from the start and don't push down quite as far.

The Victor can be set to a firm or sensitive setting depending on the placement of the trigger arm on the yellow treadle plate. The far-left side is firm and far-right is sensitive. To catch mice, slide it to the right – the sensitive side.



Set the T-Rex for mice



Using a tea strainer



Mouse trap in DOC 200

MUSTELID TRAPS

To prevent bait from being stolen by mice and slugs, place the bait in a mesh tea strainer and suspend high on the side of the box at the bait end. Being up high has the added benefit of allowing the scent to carry.

Adding a mouse trap in the back of your trap box helps catch mice that might be stealing your bait, while a fresh dead mouse or rat will also help attract stoats and rats. **IMPORTANT:** Do not place the mouse trap near the entrance, if a stoat enters and triggers it, the mouse trap won't catch the stoat but will scare the animal away.



Set the Victor for mice

EXPERT TIPS: MUSTELIDS



Punctured egg

SPREAD THE SCENT

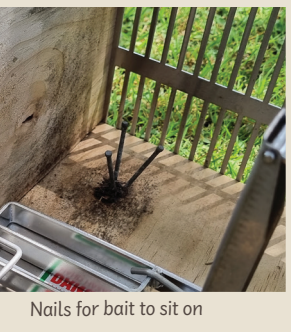
Don't let a fresh catch go to waste. Rub the anal scent glands of a freshly caught mustelid around the trap box and on the trap plate itself. This scent will attract other target animals.

PUNCTURE AN EGG

Here's one to try. Puncture both ends of an egg then blow or spread the yolk around the outside of the trap box to attract mustelids. Then place the empty eggshell on the nails inside the trap as a visual lure.

KEEP YOUR BAIT HIGH

Place a single or multiple nails or screws into the box from the outside so the tips extend into the box. Then set the bait on those nails/screws rather than on the base of the box. Keeping bait high helps it last



Nails for bait to sit on

longer and allows the scent to disperse and entice predators.

STOAT OR FERRET ODOUR/BEDDING

Stoat and ferret odour or bedding can be quite attractive to other mustelids. Try spreading the ferret bedding in the trap box as a lure, putting it where the bait goes just past the trap mechanism.

USE A SETTING TOOL

The DOC 250 is bigger and stronger than a DOC 200 so can be a bit harder to set. Some people like to use a trap setting tool, which has been specially designed for this trap. Get in touch with us at Taranaki Regional Council if you'd like to try one.

GIVE THEM EASY ACCESS

Add a wooden ramp from the base up to the hole in the inside baffle so it's easy for the predator to access the trap. They are also then level with the trap plate.



Ramp for easy access

CREATE A CRIME SCENE

Ferrets and stoats are difficult to catch. Your trap must be appealing, or they will run straight past. They like fresh meat, especially rabbit. Try making the area look like a crime scene, where a rabbit was just killed. Spread plenty of fresh blood and meat around the trap and inside the trap itself.



Crime scene

EXPERT TIPS: POSSUMS



A wooden ramp up to a trap.

MAKE IT EASY

In non-urban areas where domestic cats aren't a concern, create a ramp up to the trap to give the possum easy access to the bait in the trap.

MAKE A RAMP TO THE TRAP

If there may be kiwi around it's best to set your trap off the ground. A wooden ramp from the ground to the trap makes it easy for a possum to walk to the trap and get at the bait. Attach the wooden board firmly at both ends so it doesn't wobble, as a shaky board may deter the possum from climbing up.

USE A BITE BLOCK

Possum Master traps have a metal bait hook onto which the bait (fresh fruit or possum dough) is attached. A possum that bites onto that bait may touch the metal and be turned off and not get caught. Try using a small wooden dowel as a bite block. Cut a wooden dowel into 3cm long pieces. Attach a staple to it, leaving the staple sticking out of the side of the dowel. Next slide the staple onto the lower prong of the metal bait hook so the dowel is hanging. Bend the top prong of the metal bait hook so that it closes and the dowel can't slide off. Apply possum dough generously onto dowel and set like normal.

CREATE A POSSUM HOTSPOT

Think of it as a nightclub! Leave traps regularly unset for a while. Feed possums regularly over seven to 10 days (longer where populations are low, shorter when populations are high) with horse cereal, carrots or fruit. Once possums are clearly visiting the site and eating the pre-feed, set the traps. This is particularly effective during the mating season in March/April and again in September/October.

USE AN ANGLED TREE

The best spot for your possum trap is a tree that has evidence of possums and is at an angle. The angle makes it easier for a possum to climb up to the trap and get its head into the trap. We want to make traps appealing and easy to access for our target species while avoiding non-target species. Use with caution in more urban settings as there are more non-target species around.



A Trapinator on a nicely angled tree.



Bite block on Possum Master

TRAP LOCATION

GENERAL TIPS

Consider what's in your area. If you've got important non-target species like kiwi nearby you need to take this into account to prevent them being harmed. Introduced species, such as pigs or cows, can also interfere with your equipment.

THINK HIGHWAYS, NOT BYWAYS

Look for areas that predators are likely to visit. Set traps along regular travel channels (linear paths) such as fence lines, tracks, paths, ridges, rivers, tree rows and bridges.



Rat trap along a wall

WATERWAYS ARE GOOD

Animals like to travel along waterways or come to water sources. Place traps near waterways, such as a river, small stream or wetland. Don't place the trap in an area that is always wet or will be covered in a flood as the trap may wash away or be damaged.



Multiple trap setup

MULTIPLE TRAPS

Installing multiple traps at one site can make it more attractive for introduced predators and makes it easier for servicing. For example, place a stoat/rat trap and a possum trap at the same site.

ANIMAL SIGN

Look for well-worn areas animals are travelling through, also known as pad runs, or where the bush or trees have signs of possum damage e.g. claw scratching, bite marks or scat.

AVOID DAMP SPOTS

Don't place traps in cool, wet or damp places like gullies, as most animals won't visit these places. Instead, place traps in sunny, dry locations like spurs and ridges or even just up a little on a dry terrace.

TUNNEL, NOT CAVE

Make sure traps are placed parallel to trails and that there is a clear line of sight through the trap (mesh at both ends of the trap allow this).

AVOID OPEN AREAS

Do not place traps out in the open. Choose a spot that is covered, either by vegetation or synthetic structures such as wood.

CHANGE IT UP

Try a new spot if the trap isn't catching anything. Even turning a trap around or moving it a few metres can make a difference.

RATS

For urban backyards place rat traps in the locations rats will visit – i.e. near compost piles or gardens.

ARBOREAL RAT TRAPPING

Ship rats spend a large percentage of their lives up trees where they feel safe from predators and can actively hunt nesting native birds, lizards and insects. There is often also fruit and seeds for rats to eat in trees. Norway rats also climb trees but not as often as ship rats.

A range of wooden and plastic traps can be screwed onto vertical, angled or horizontal tree branches. Being off the ground can also widen the lure scent so the attraction to the trap is increased. Place bait such as peanut butter on the trap treadle, at the entrance of the trap and down the branch to draw rats into the trap. Blaze dusted below the trap on the branch is also a good rat attractant.

FERRETS

ROAD EDGES

Ferrets are often found along roads as they like to scavenge roadkill. Try placing traps in verges and culverts along road edges.

EDGES OF FARMLAND

Ferrets often thrive along the edges of farmland as they have some cover but are still close to their preferred prey. Try to protect bush blocks by placing devices along the boundary between farmland.

POSSUMS

FAVOURITE TREES

Possoms prefer certain trees, such as māhoe, rātā and kamahi. Look for one of these trees with obvious possum sign on it, such as scratches or bite marks.

LEMON TREES

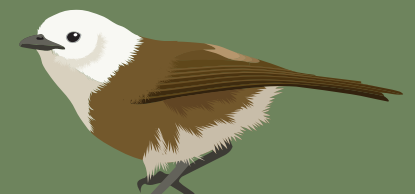
Possoms enjoy eating the peel of citrus fruit, including lemon. If you find the peels of your lemon are being eaten, those trees would be a good spot to place a trap.

PINES IN SPRING

Possoms love eating pine pollen catkins on Pinus Radiata trees, so these make great trap sites in the spring.



Possum scratches



TRAP MAINTENANCE

ALL TRAPS

Keep traps clear. Clear around the trap entrance and remove grass from around bait stations to prevent bait going mouldy.

Test regularly. At least once a year take the time to ensure the trap functions properly – the sock test should do the trick!

RAT TRAPS

Brush your trap. At least once a year, use a small wire brush to clean your rat trap. Clean off all the gunk, bones, fur etc.

Oil it down. Lubricate traps with beeswax, lanolin, vegetable or linseed oil. Use a vegetable-based oil as a petroleum-based one will deter animals.

Soak Victor traps. The entire Victor trap can be soaked in oil (canola, soya, peanut or any salad oil) overnight or longer. Then drain excess oil. If you have a lot of traps, you can soak them at the same time then use a bucket with holes in the bottom, like a colander, to drain excess oil.

Tap in staples. Sometimes the staples on the trap can pop out. To prevent this happening, tap the staples in with a hammer.



Overgrown trap

DOC 200/250 TRAPS

Clean out the box. Unset the trap then clean out any bones and excess fur/hair blocking the trap mechanism. Remove the two screws fixing the trap to the box and lift the trap mechanism out to clean. Removable baffles inside the trap make it easier to clean the trap and remove any catches.



Oil your trap with vegetable oil

TRAPPING KIT

It's a great idea to have a trapping kit, with everything you need in one place. These are the essentials we recommend:

* TOP TIP *

Tie coloured ribbon or tape around any tools or screws so they can be easily found if they are dropped. Something we may or may not have learned the hard way!



SCREWDRIVERS
Square head and Tek head.

TONGS
For removing dead animals.

WIRE BRUSH

METAL SCRAPER

GLOVES

NOTEBOOK AND PEN

BAIT
Peanut butter, rabbit meat, smooth, jam, apple, blaze or whatever you use.

FLAGGING RIBBON

SAFETY CLIP
For DOC traps

BAGS
Can be useful for carrying out old bait, extra screws or carcasses.

RECIPES



POSSUM DOUGH

This is a good, simple, long-lasting paste that can be used as the lure on possum traps.

INGREDIENTS:

- 4L cooking oil
- 3.5kg icing sugar
- 3.5kg flour
- Two packets of ground cloves
- Half a bottle of aniseed oil
- Small bottle of blue food colouring

MIX:

1. Use a 20L bucket.
2. Add flour and icing sugar to bucket and mix.
3. Add cooking oil a little at a time to get desired consistency.
4. Add food colouring and mix.
5. Add ground cloves and mix.
6. Add aniseed oil and mix.



Possum dough ingredients

BLAZE

Blaze should be rubbed or sprinkled on trees below possum traps or on the ground by traps to attract possums. It can also be used outside rat trap tunnels or DOC 200/250s to help increase your catch rate.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1kg flour
- 100g icing sugar
- 100g milk powder
- 15ml cinnamon, peach, eucalyptus or vanilla essence.

MIX:

Mix ingredients in a large tub or bucket. For a larger batch multiply the recipe by 10.

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Towards Predator-Free Taranaki

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