

# Code of Practice for humane destruction of Common Brushtail Possums by shooting in South Australia

A permit to destroy wildlife issued under Section 53(1)(c) of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* is required and compliance with this Code of Practice is a condition of permit.

## Background

This Code of Practice was developed by the Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) and was endorsed by the South Australian Wildlife Ethics Committee on 11 May 2007.

All persons involved in the destruction of Common Brushtail Possums by shooting should be aware of the legislative requirements, including animal welfare requirements, for this activity. The welfare of animals is of paramount importance to DEH and the treatment of all animals must comply with the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1985*.

## Purpose of the Code

This Code sets an achievable standard of humane conduct and details the minimum required of persons shooting possums in South Australia.

## Scope of the Code

This Code applies to:

- Common Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*)

The Code is intended for situations where persons are sustaining unacceptable levels of environmental, economic or social impacts from Common Brushtail Possums (specifically on Kangaroo Island).

## Legal obligations

### *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*

In South Australia, possums are protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (NPW Act). A destruction permit (pursuant to Section 53(1)(c) NPW Act) is required to destroy protected animals and may be issued when environmental, economic and/or social impacts are being sustained. DEH is responsible for assessing destruction permit applications and issuing permits.

### *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1985*

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1985* states that a person who ill-treats an animal is guilty of an offence. This includes, but is not limited to;

- having injured an animal fails to take reasonable steps to alleviate any pain suffered by the animal,
- kills an animal in a manner that causes the animal unnecessary pain.

### *Firearms Legislation*

The shooter must comply with all provisions of the *Firearms Act 1977* and all subordinate regulations, including that relevant to storage, transportation and use of firearms and ammunition.

### Things to consider

Shooting is time consuming and in isolation not considered an effective method for large-scale control of wildlife causing impacts. To achieve a reduction in impacts being sustained an integrated management approach should be taken and would include a range of non-lethal methods. Shooting should only be used in a strategic manner to reinforce the effect of the non-lethal methods used.

## Meeting your obligations under this Code

### You should take a shot only if:

1. it is safe to do so,
2. the animal can be positively identified by the shooter,
3. the animal is stationary and clearly visible,
4. your firearm/shot size and distance to target (maximum range) combination meets the requirements of this Code of Practice,
5. the point of aim and firearm combination meets the requirements of this Code of Practice (refer to diagram),
6. the target animal is within your personal shooting range capability, and
7. you are confident of killing the animal. If in doubt, do NOT shoot.

Shooting should be avoided during the Common Brushtail Possums breeding season as there may be dependent young (Note: most populations have a major autumn and minor spring breeding season).

### Ensuring animals are dead

Death must be confirmed before animals are disposed of or left unattended.

### Injured animals

Injured animals must be killed by a method that will achieve a rapid and humane death, where practical by a shot to the brain. In circumstances where killing an injured animal by a shot to the brain is impractical (e.g. the accurate placement of a shot to the brain may require capture and restraint of the animal which would increase the suffering of the animal) then a shot to the heart is the most humane means of dispatch.

### Pouch young

Shot females must be examined for pouch young. If a pouch young is present it must also be killed immediately. Sudden and painless death can be effectively achieved by decapitation with a sharp instrument for very small hairless young, or a properly executed heavy blow to the back of the skull in larger young.

### Disposal of carcasses

Animals must be disposed of in a manner approved by the local Council and cannot be used for a secondary purpose, sold, swapped or traded without further approval from DEH.

### Public safety

Any shooting activity must be planned and undertaken in a manner that avoids the possibility of injury to the public. Before discharging the firearm, the shooter must ensure that the background to the target area is free of persons, property, infrastructure and/or assets to eliminate any risk of collateral damage from spent shot.

The use of centre fire or rim fire rifles presents a serious risk to the public when fired without due regard for the background. These rifles should not be used in a built up area.

A shooter intending to use firearms in a built up area must seek approval from the local Police prior to commencing the activity.

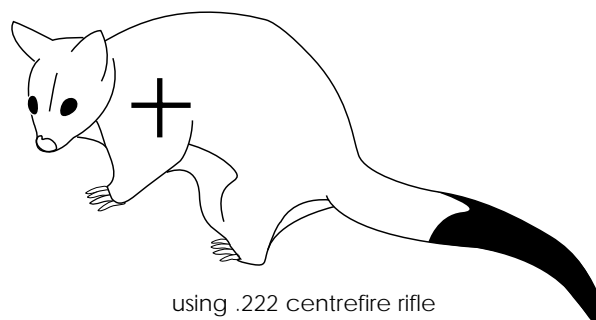
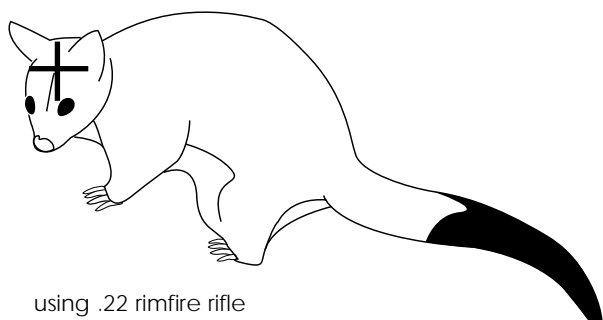
Onlookers should be discouraged wherever possible.

### Firearms and shot size specifications

Species	Firearm	Optimum range (m)	Maximum range (m)	Shot size
Common Brushtail Possum ( <i>Trichosurus vulpecula</i> )	12 gauge shotgun (close range eg. in trees)	25 m	35 m	No. 4
	.22 rimfire rifle (close range eg. in trees)	25 m	50 m	High velocity hollow point
	.222 centrefire rifle (Open paddocks eg. Kangaroo Island)	50 m	100 m	50 grain soft point/ hollow point

At all ranges when using a shotgun ensure that the most appropriate choke/shot size combination for the given range is used to maximise the number of pellets hitting the target.

### Recommended point of aim



#### Disclaimer

Code of practice for the humane destruction of Common Brushtail Possums by shooting in South Australia Dated: June 2007

This code is based on the knowledge and technology available at the time of publication and may need to be varied in the future in light of new knowledge.

While reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the contents of this publication are factually correct, the Department for Environment and Heritage makes no representations and accepts no responsibility for the accuracy, completeness or fitness for any particular purpose of the contents, and shall not be liable for any loss or damage that may be occasioned directly or indirectly through the use of, or reliance on, the contents of this publication.

Reference to any company, product or service in this publication should not be taken as a departmental endorsement of the company, product or service.

#### Further Information

Contact your nearest Department for Environment and Heritage Office

[www.environment.sa.gov.au](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au)

FIS 2828.07 6/07



**Government  
of South Australia**  
Department for  
Environment and Heritage