

Possums are a national plague.

*They threaten trees and forests,
and they threaten your livelihood.*

*But they can be checked – and we
want to join forces with you to do it.*

THE THREAT

Trees

Possums have devastated many stands of pohutukawa and rata, the focus of concern for Project Crimson. They systematically strip a tree of its leaves, not only killing the tree but threatening the surrounding forest. Farm shelterbelts can also be damaged.

Crops

An estimated \$35 million of damage is done each year by possums eating horticultural crops and pasture. They show a particular liking for clover and herbs.

Stock

Possums are the main transmitters of Bovine TB in New Zealand. Stock become infected by licking or sniffing the lesions of infected possums, which often lie out in the open.



Mainland pohutukawa
(Metrosideros excelsa): Grows to 20 m high by 35 m. Grows throughout the North Island, particularly north of New Plymouth and Gisborne. Prefers warm, drier areas close to the sea.



Northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*): One of New Zealand's tallest flowering trees. Grows to 25 m or more in height with a trunk up to 2.5 m in diameter. Grows from Hokitika northwards, preferring warm moist areas such as north-west Nelson and Northland. Northern rata grows from sea level to a maximum of 900 m.



Southern rata (*Metrosideros umbellata*): Grows to 15 m high – sometimes more – with a trunk up to 1 m through. Grows throughout New Zealand, particularly along the South Island's West Coast. Best suited to the South Island and cooler, high rainfall regions. Occurs from sea level to 760 m.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Narrow tracks of flattened grass to the affected crop, or from one stand of bush to another.
- Smoothed bark on trees, clawmarks around the base and on the trunk, unevenly torn leaves and jagged leaf stumps.

CONTROL TIPS

- **Eliminate potential nesting sites.** Check dark, dry sites such as sheds and compost areas.
- **Trapping and killing** – talk to your local or regional council about the best techniques. These include setting bait stations and hunting. Live traps are good only if you are prepared to kill the possums.
- **Protect individual trees** with a corrugated iron fence, a barrier such as a 20-200 litre container around the base, or a metal bracelet around the trunk.
- **Protect stands of bush** by corrugated iron fencing.
- If you have pohutukawa or rata stands you can apply to Project Crimson for funding assistance. See over for details.

