

## 1.20 Information about possums

**Topic:** Animals  
**Subtopic:** Mammals  
**Activity type/skill:** Three-level guide  
**Literacy focus:** Reading  
**Genre:** Information reports

### Objective

- Read with understanding.

### What you need

- Student worksheet (see next page)

### What to do

1. Introduce possums as mammals. Look at the first two pages of the student worksheet and talk about the pictures together. Draw attention to the headings and talk about the words in the glossary.
2. Look at the third page of the student worksheet. Explain that they will need to answer these questions after they have read the text about possums. Explain that this group of questions is called a three-level guide:
  - The first set of questions is all answered literally in the text – ‘on the lines’.
  - The second set of questions requires them to think about the information in the text – ‘between the lines’ – and work out the answers.
  - The third question asks them to relate what they have read to a wider context – ‘beyond the lines’.
3. Have students read the text about possums then circle an answer for each question.
4. Working in pairs or small groups, have students talk about their answers and say why they chose them. They should then compare their answers and reasons with the wider group.

### Answers:

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1 a) Possums live in New Zealand and Australia.                                | True  |
| b) Some possums are brown.   | True  |
| c) Possums have big babies.  | False |
| d) Possums eat plants.   | True  |
| e) Possums have short, thick tails.  | False |
| 2 a) Baby possums come out of their mother’s pouch when they are 5 months old. | False |
| b) Possums eat apples.   | True  |
| c) Possums sleep during the day.   | True  |
| 3 New Zealand needs more possums.  | False |

## Possums

Possums are marsupials. Marsupials are mammals that carry their babies in a pouch.

### Appearance

Possums are grey, brown or black. Their bodies are covered with fur and they have large furry tails. They have very sharp claws. They use their tails and claws to hold on to the branches of trees.

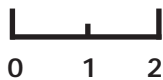
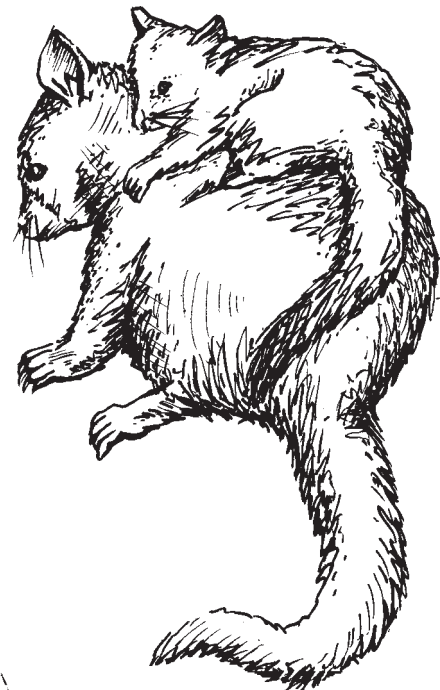


### Habitat

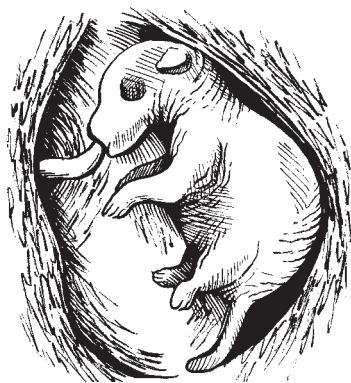
Possums live in most parts of New Zealand and Australia. They usually live in holes in trees.

### Reproduction

Female possums have one baby a year. The babies are very small. The babies cannot see or hear when they are born and they have no fur. The babies live in their mothers' pouch and drink their milk. They stay in the pouch for about 20 weeks. Their fur grows and they come out of the pouch and ride on their mothers' back. The babies stay with their mothers for about eight months.



(Scale: cm)



## Feeding

Possums feed at night. They see well in the dark.  
They eat leaves, buds, flowers, fruit and insects.  
They like flowers and fruit best.



## Why are possums a problem in New Zealand?

Possums eat the flowers and fruit in gardens and they are a danger to New Zealand native plants and birds. Sometimes they eat all the leaves from a tree and the tree dies. When the trees die, there is no food for the birds.



## Glossary

**appearance:** what something looks like

**habitat:** where something lives

**reproduction:** how living things produce new living things like themselves

**feeding:** is about how something eats (1) *Possums feed at night.*  
(2) *Female possums feed their babies milk*

**problem:** something that is difficult to make right

## Activity twenty

**1**

- |   |             |              |
|---|-------------|--------------|
| a) Possums live in New Zealand and Australia. | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| b) Some possums are brown.                    | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| c) Possums have big babies.                   | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| d) Possums eat plants.                        | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| e) Possums have short thick tails.            | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |

**2**

- |   |             |              |
|---|-------------|--------------|
| a) Baby possums come out of their mothers' pouch when they are five months old. | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| b) Possums eat apples.  | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| c) Possums sleep during the day.  | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |

**3**

- |                                 |             |              |
|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| New Zealand needs more possums. | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------|