

Hot tip for placing traps off the ground

Possum traps set on the ground run the risk of catching ground dwelling birds like kiwi and weka. Fortunately, it is easy to place traps off the ground using just a short length of #8 fencing wire bent into a U shape which you staple to a tree. The result is a well set trap which is plainly visible yet will only catch possums that try to climb past it to browse. An added bonus (more on this later) is that the trap drops back to ground level when it makes a catch.

The first step is to shape the wire. Take a 350mm length of wire and bend it into an even U with a 60mm gap between the sides. Next bend the U at its half way point so the top half of the U is about 60 degrees to the bottom half. (A final adjustment to the angle might be needed when it is installed.)

The wire is then stapled to the target tree about a hammer length (350mm) off the ground with the two ends of the wire sticking out from the trunk. These two ends will provide a horizontal mount for the trap. You may need to adjust the bend to suit the location.

A Victa trap can be mounted on the wire by feeding the two ends of the wire through the coil spring and under the trap jaws. Some people prefer to feed the wires in from the other side believing that the trap will release from the mount more easily. It's your choice.

Next anchor the trap chain by stapling it to the tree between the ground and the wire mount. This allows any animal caught to drop right to the ground with the trap rather than hanging off the ground. It also allows you to put any trap that has accidentally caught you onto the ground where you can use your foot and your other hand to get free.

Make sure you check the chain staple with a couple of strong tugs. It is going to have to hold on to an angry possum.

This article isn't about baited versus non-baited trapping but it is worth remembering that possums eat trees. If you mount your traps on trees that the possum wants to eat then the tree will probably serve as all the bait you need.

A short piece of #8 wire, bent into a U and stapled to a tree, changes a Victa trap from an indiscriminate animal and bird catcher to a targeted pest control tool for possums. It also guarantees a securely set trap that is plainly visible and which probably doesn't need any bait.

Kiwis are struggling to survive. This small change to the way traps are laid is surely worth the effort.



