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THE POSSUM PROBLEM IN THE MANAWATU-WANGANUI REGION

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

Since their introduction to the Manawatu-Wanganui region possums have increased dramatically in number and are now causing problems in both rural and urban areas. They are responsible for the destruction of indigenous forests and the spread of bovine tuberculosis, a disease that threatens the access of dairy, meat and several other animal products into a number of key overseas markets. The study addresses this by looking at the problems associated with possums and the value that the region places on their control. This was done via two contingent valuation surveys, one in the form of a dichotomous choice question and the other in the form of an open ended question. It was found that 97.8 percent of respondents were aware that possums were causing problems in New Zealand. The region placed a value of between \$1.5 million and \$7.0 million per year on possum control. Farmers' valuation of possum control was approximately twice that of nonfarmers, possibly reflecting the adverse effect that possums could have on farmers' income stream.