

Ringtail Possum (RTP) - *Pseudocheirus peregrinus*

General Information

Subclass Metathera or Marsupialia. Newborn marsupials are similar to an embryonic eutherian: tiny, naked, with undeveloped hind limbs and tail. Their cerebral hemispheres are less developed than those of similar eutherians and they lack a corpus callosum. **Order Diprotodonta** (herbivorous marsupials; this sp. caecotrophic): possess a pair of strong lower incisors (diprotodont). II and III digits on the hind feet are fused (syndactyly). The mandibular symphysis in possums does not fuse and remains mobile. **Family Petauridae.** Common. Size of a guinea pig. Body grey with chestnut brown limbs, white underneath (occasionally russet red), small round ears, furred nose, and long, slender, white-tipped, smooth, prehensile tail. Build nests (dreys) in hollows or in dense branches.

Strictly **nocturnal** and arboreal, most active in first half of night. Social: several overlapping home ranges and adjacent nests (up to 8 in a cluster). Groups of one male and 1-2 females with offspring. Breed mainly April - November. Four teats but usually carry twins. Vacate pouch at 4 months, weaned at 6 months. Local abundance probably affected by availability of nest sites. Weaning juveniles ingest mother's caecal contents. Juveniles always fare better in pairs or groups.

They are specialised folivores, but also eats flowers (especially eucalypt) and fruits.

Mass 700-1100 g. Marsupial metabolic rates are about 70% those of eutherians. Normal body temperatures are mostly 35-38°C. Can vary markedly with changes in the ambient temperature. Blood values etc are generally similar to those of eutherians, but low metabolic rates lead to low urinary creatinine levels.

Hb	HCT	RBC	WBC	Neut.	Lymph.	Mono.
13.4-15.4	0.40-0.48	4.4-6.8	2.3-9.9	1-3.0	1-8.3	0-1.1

Requirements for Release

Animals are releasable only if they are fit enough to climb, eat, build a drey, escape predators and cope with competitors. They can be released only if a suitable habitat is found with vacant niches (e.g. regenerated forest).

In Care Requirements

Captive diet: 200 g of at least 3 types native new leaves (not too red) or liquid amber, plumbago, mulberry, red plum, crape myrtle and 3 vegetables/fruits (corn, peas, carrot, broccoli, melons, apple, grapes, kiwi fruit, paw paw, stone fruit). Do not feed young juveniles sweet fruits or flowers!!

Best kept in a cage protected from sun, wind and rain with extra height (> 2.5 m high). Require individual nest boxes high in cage and many climbing pathways. Provide plenty of leafy plants (growing or cut) for seclusion to minimise stress. Juveniles should be buddied.

Disclaimer

WAIF provides all information to the best of its knowledge as a guide only. An experienced veterinarian should be consulted before treating any animal.



Wildlife Assistance & Information Foundation