

Approach: One to one  
 Focus: Evaluating viewpoints and opinions  
 Resources: Video recording on laptop computer

Year: 4 & 8

Questions / instructions:

This activity uses the computer.

We will start this activity by listening to what two children have to say about whether possums should be killed or not.

You will need to listen carefully because after you've heard their arguments, I'm going to ask you about what they said, and what you think.

Click the *Possums* button.



VIDEO VOICEOVER:

**Blair:** Hi I'm Blair and I hunt and trap possums. I earn pocket money for trapping the possums for a local farmer, who kills them. It's not much money but it's good to get rid of the possums because they are pests. The possums kill trees by eating their leaves and buds and some possums carry a disease that can make cows and deer sick. So you can see they are a real problem for farmers. Possum fur can be made into yarn which is used for making clothes, so that is another reason why we hunt them. Did you know that there are about 70 million possums in New Zealand? That's way too many. We need to get rid of the possums now or else we are going to lose our trees and bush!

**Shannon:** Hi, I'm Shannon and I love animals! I think it's really mean that possums are trapped and killed. They've got to eat something. They can't help eating trees! It's really sad when the possum hunters kill the mother possum and then leave the baby possum alone. It can't survive on its own. That's cruel!

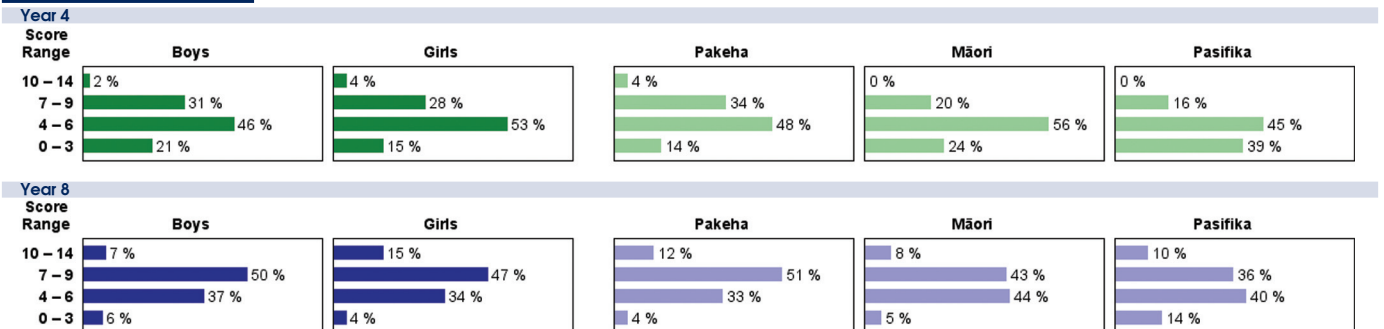
We don't need clothes made out of possum fur when we've got so many sheep in New Zealand. Wool is a far better choice because it doesn't hurt or harm the sheep when it is taken. But taking a possum's fur means killing the possum!

We must stop possums from being hunted and killed. It's really unkind!

Now I want you to think about what Blair and Shannon said about possums in New Zealand.

		% response 2006 ('02)	
		year 4	year 8
1. Try to tell me all the reasons why Blair thinks it is <b>okay</b> to kill possums.			
	gets money	19 (18)	30 (29)
	fur makes useful products	48 (51)	58 (60)
	are pests	31 (26)	48 (41)
	kill/damage trees	84 (85)	92 (91)
	carry disease	45 (45)	59 (49)
	disease affects cows/deer	39 (43)	56 (54)
	bad for farmers (mentioned damage to trees and/or damage to livestock)	11 (10)	18 (15)
	too many	22 (21)	35 (38)
2. Now try to tell me all the reasons why Shannon thinks it is <b>not</b> okay to kill possums.			
	loves animals	39 (31)	35 (35)
	cruel/mean/unkind/unfair	33 (35)	43 (45)
	baby possums can't survive if mother killed	52 (54)	51 (49)
	don't need possum fur, can use wool instead	53 (46)	69 (65)
	possums don't mean to cause harm (have to eat; can't help eating trees)	33 (35)	49 (50)
	use of possum fur means death, not so for sheep	40 (44)	48 (46)
3. Who do you think has the better or stronger argument about possums, Blair or Shannon?			
	both Blair and Shannon	5 (0)	4 (0)
	Blair	52 (51)	75 (75)
	Shannon	42 (45)	20 (20)
	neither indicated	1 (4)	0 (5)
4. Tell me why you think their argument is better or stronger?			
	not marked	•	•
	<b>Total score:</b>		
	10-14	3 (3)	5 (9)
	7-9	30 (30)	36 (42)
	4-6	49 (48)	49 (45)
	0-3	18 (19)	11 (4)

Subgroup Analyses:



Commentary:

Year 4 and year 8 students were good at recalling the arguments over killing possums. About half of the students in year 4 and three quarters of the students in year 8 felt that Blair's arguments in favour of killing possums were stronger than Sharon's arguments against. There were only minor differences by age, gender, ethnicity, or from 2002 to 2006. A slight decline in performance was seen in year 8 from 2002 to 2006.