

‘Possum Purge’: To Cleanse and Purify

From [Framing Speciesism](#)

September 2021

Every year, Paparoa School, an elementary school in Northland, New Zealand, runs a ‘Possum Purge’ fundraiser. The event, referred to as a ‘Gala Day’ is heralded as an opportunity for the community to come together and win some prizes. These prizes are given for various categories, including the most unplucked possums per team and the “Les Tilby Trophy”, which is awarded to a child who shoots or traps a possum with a specific weight, assuming they are “assisted by a responsible adult”. Due to COVID-19, their ‘purges’ for 2020 and 2021 were – thankfully – cancelled.

12TH ANNUAL Paparoa Possum Purge
9th–12th September

\$500 SPOT PRIZE
For ADULT Entrants
Registered by 3rd September

BBQ, Bouncy Castle, Raffles, Fire Engine & more!

Entry forms from
Paparoa School, The
General Store, Thirsty
Tui and 100% Appliance
Maungaturoto

\$10
per entrant.
4 per team.
School age
kids FREE

Gala Day & Prizegiving
From 11am September 12th

Purging begins midday 9th September
Gala Day 11am Sunday 12th @ Paparoa Showgrounds

For more details and online registration see www.paparoa.school.nz or
call 09 431 7379.
Registration forms available at Paparoa School, Paparoa Hotel and 100%
Fergus Appliances in Maungaturoto.

What you need to know:

- Registration is \$10 per adult, up to 4 per team. School age children are free, up to 4 per team.
- Register EARLY by Friday 3rd September and all adults will go in the draw to win \$500 cash!!
- Registrations close midday Friday 10th September - **NO late registrations**

Prize Categories

- Most possums unplucked** – clean dry possums only. We have 4 top prizes to choose from! 1st place will choose first from:
\$500 dinner and drinks voucher from The Thirsty Tui
4 Family Passes for a Puhai River Canoe Adventure
Fishing Charter for 4 people with Blue
4 Family Passes to Adventure Forest, Whangarei.
- Hand plucked clean dry fur**
- The Les Tilby Trophy** – Possums must be shot or trapped by the child (assisted by the responsible adult). The possum closest to the average weight of all possums in this category wins.
- Best team name.**

Possums accepted for plucking at Paparoa Showgrounds on:
Saturday 9th 11am – 1pm
Sunday 10th 9am – 11am
To be eligible for prizes all possums and fur must be in by **11am Sunday 8th September**

Adventure Forest

Hunting & Fishing NEW ZEALAND
Register now to receive a 10% discount on ammunition from Hunting and Fishing in Dargaville!

FOREST WOODLOT OWNERS
We are looking for possum control services for our woodlots. Please contact us for more information.

ACACIA LODGE
The best of both worlds. A beautiful lodge with a swimming pool and a golf course.

Battensby Brothers Contracting Limited
GLENN 021 983 734 | ROSS 021 983 594

aaron's contracting

ArborCare TREE MAINTENANCE

MAUNGATUROTO AUTO CENTRE WORKSHOP

Advertisement for the Paparoa Possum Purge - Source: Paparoa School's Facebook Page

Paparoa School's 'Possum Purge' is unfortunately not the only event where communities, including young children, are encouraged to participate, and celebrate, in the killing of 'pest' animals. Drury School, located south of Auckland, was heavily criticised for its possum hunt in 2017 where young children were witnessed drowning live joeys who were plucked from their dead mothers in buckets of water¹.

Uruti School, a primary school in Taranaki, was host to a 'best-dressed dead possum competition' in 2012^{2,3}. Critter Day in Whangamomana, Taranaki, saw young children bringing in their 'best kills' and

posing for photographs⁴. These are only a select few. While possums are the primary targets for many of these events, pigs, rabbits, wallabies, and goats are also paraded for their deaths at annual hunts.



• *'Best Dressed Possum Competition' - Source: Jonathan Cameron*



© Jonathan Cameron/Taranaki Daily News

'Best Dressed Possum Competition' - Source: Jonathan Cameron



Whangamomona Critter Day - Source: Glenn Jeffrey

These events are often transparent about their mission (e.g. purge to conserve) and are forth-coming about their deliberate inclusion and education of young children. For example, the Hororata Pig & Possum Hunt claimed their event was “designed to encourage children to enter” and included “family photo

competition[s] as well as a possum throwing competition for juniors”⁵. The advertisement for the Paparoa ‘Possum Purge’ above was clearly marketed to young families and school-age children with the bouncy castle and fire engine.

Additionally, participating in these events can get you rewarded. There are often a dazzling list of prizes, ranging from cash awards, donated vouchers from local businesses, and big-item prizes, including firearm silencers and chainsaws (i.e. there’s something for everyone!). Of all prizes that could be offered, why these?



Chainsaw Prize for Paparoa School's 2021 'Possum Purge' - Source: Paparoa School Facebook Page



Waiau Pig Hunt Fundraiser

September 6 at 8:35 PM · 🌐



Entries for this years Waiau Pig Hunt Fundraiser can be submitted online. Early Bird Entry draw closes Friday 1st October 2021 - Entries received before this date go into the draw for a Hardy Magnum Suppressor valued at \$565. Sponsored by Rivers to Ranges.

<https://forms.gle/8cvQ7LEKoXWc6X3A9>



FUNDRAISING FOR WAIAU NETBALL CLUB & WAIAU TENNIS CLUB

Early Bird Entry Closes: Friday 1st October 2021.
Entries close: Wednesday 20th October 2021

Entries: Open Section - \$45 per person
Junior Section - Heaviest Junior Pig & Heaviest Junior Deer - \$25 per child (age 8-16 years)

Free Entry: For children 14yrs and under - Heaviest Possum, Hare, Rabbit & Most Small Pests

Weigh in: 1pm - 4pm, Sunday 24th October 2021 at the Waiau Rugby Grounds.

For further information on prizes visit www.facebook.com/WaiauPigHuntingCompetition/

DOCS.GOOGLE.COM

FUNDRAISING FOR WAIAU NETBALL CLUB & WAIAU TENNIS CLUB

Early Bird Entry Closes: Friday 1st October 2021. Entries close: Wednesday 20th October 2021 E...



7

3 Shares



Like



Comment



Share



Waiau Pig Hunt's reward: a Hardy Magnum Suppressor - Source: (left) Waiau Pig Hunt Fundraiser Facebook Page, (right) Nick M.

While these events have been heavily criticised by activist scholars such as Dr Lynley Tulloch and Dr Marc Bekoff⁶, little has been done regarding the ethical considerations towards not only the animal victims of these hunts, but the children being raised alongside this as well. These children, ranging from pre-school-age to elementary school-age, are amidst incredibly important years for their empathy development and healthy socialisation. It has been well established by researchers that there is a strong link between animal abuse in childhood with potential human abuse in adulthood^{7,8}. This is not to say that every child who participates in hunting and killing of 'pest' animals will turn into domestic abusers, but statistically, it is much more likely.



Relatives search for family members amongst exhumed bodies from the 'Great Purge's Vinnytsia Massacre - Source: Ukrainian American Youth Association – Crime of Moscow in Vynnytsia

As I taper off for this blog post, I am reminded about the importance of words and how much power they hold. It is not difficult to see the vein of violence which underpins these events. The association with eradicating 'pest' animals with a 'purge' is a very interesting decision. 'Purge', while ranging in etymological meanings, typically meant to cleanse or purify.

This process of 'cleansing' New Zealand of its unwanted 'pests', through events called 'purgues', draws parallels with other historical 'purgues', such as the 'Great Purge' by Stalin and the U.S.S.R. The 'Great Purge', or 'Great Terror', saw the murder of an estimated 750,000 people between the years 1936-1938^{9,10}.

Importantly, this is **not** to equate or make light of the devastating human rights violations that have occurred in the past, or are occurring now, but it does make me question why humans can hate something so much that 'purging', or 'cleansing', the environment of them is worthy of rewards and a celebration.

References:

1. Polley, N. (2019, June 21). *Petition Started to Stop Drury School Possum-killing Fundraiser*. Stuff. Retrieved from: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/113663171/petition-started-to-stop-drury-schools-possumkilling-fundraiser>
2. Tulloch, L. (2017, August 11). *Uruti Possum Hunt and School Violence*. Scoop. Retrieved from: <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL1708/S00023/uruti-possum-hunt-and-school-violence.htm>

3. Tulloch, L. (2018, January 22). *Teaching out kids to kill in the name of conservation*. Stuff. Retrieved from: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/100695495/teaching-our-kids-to-kill-in-name-of-conservation>

4. Tulloch, L. (2018, October 11). *Highway to Hell: There are other ways to prove 'Kiwiness' than animal hunts*. Stuff. Retrieved from: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/107760453/highway-to-hell-there-are-other-ways-to-prove-kiwiness-than-animal-hunts>

5. Stuff. (2014, April 10). *Hororata Hunt Launched*. Stuff. Retrieved from: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/marlborough-express/news/kaikoura/9927093/Hororata-hunt-launched>

6. Bekoff, M. (2018). *Youngsters encouraged to kill possum joeys in New Zealand*. Psychology Today. Retrieved from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/nz/blog/animal-emotions/201707/youngsters-encouraged-kill-possum-joeys-in-new-zealand>

7. Ascione, F. (2008). *The international handbook of animal abuse and cruelty: theory, research and application*. Purdue University Press: Chicago.

8. Newberry, M. (2017). Pets in danger: Exploring the link between domestic violence and animal abuse. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 34, 273-281.

9. Shatz, M. (1984). Stalin, the great purge, and Russian history: a new look at the "new class". *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, (305), 48.

10. Conquest, R. (2018). *The Great Terror: Stalin's purge of the thirties*. Random House.