

The useful possum

Body part	Use	Use	Use
fat (animal fats in general were used in these ways)	moisturiser and insulator Fat rubbed on the skin keeps it from drying out and helps to keep the body warmer, when it was cold.	medium To mix dry ingredients for paints and ointments.	To make the body greasy for wrestling contests.
muscle/meat	food Gutted, then quickly roasted on hot coals.		
bone	engraver (Lower jaw was attached to a wooden handle with twine bark and gum.)	needles	Toothpick (? - This is just a possibility)
skins	blankets (dried, sewn together, fur on inside, engraved on outside)	cloaks (dried, sewn together, fur on inside, engraved on outside)	water containers (after fur was singed off)
fur (removed from skin)	string (spun with plant fibres to make bags and aprons)	body decoration (often combined with teeth, grass, feathers etc.)	
sinews	strapping (to fix objects together)	'thread' (to sew skins together for blankets and cloaks)	

The possum was not only a staple food of the peoples of the woodland but also valuable for the many 'comforts and conveniences' it could be utilised for. Not only was it to be found in plentiful numbers in the undisturbed woodland environment, but it was also relatively easy to find and harvest from the hollows of older gums in which it slept during the day. Even young children were skilled at recognising the telltale marks and signs of a possum hollow.

You may find it useful to follow up this activity using an animal that is currently farmed on land in the white box woodland areas. Eg sheep, cattle - dairy and beef, poultry etc.

The useful possum

Think-pair-share the body parts/resources a possum could be divided into. Write your responses in the box.

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When your class has talked about the uses of these various body parts/resources, complete the following table.

Body part	Use	Use	Use

- Do you think it is a good idea to use animals used for food for other purposes as well? Say why?

Think about something you have eaten today. What animal did it come from? _____ Now complete the table below the way you did for the useful possum.

Body part	Use	Use	Use

Is the animal you selected a native or introduced animal?
