

Trapped, starving in trees, say activists RSPCA to act on possums



In the spotlight: nowhere to go but up for one possum (above and right).

Danny Buttler

environment reporter

THE RSPCA will investigate claims that possums have been stranded in trees without food and water.

Animal rights campaigners believe metal bands placed around 25 palm trees in East Melbourne have trapped the marsupials since Australia Day.

Rheya Linden, of Animal Active, said volunteers had kept the brush-tailed possums alive by placing food above the bands, which were attached to the trees to prevent the spread of a lethal plant disease.

Possums were believed to help spread palm fusarium wilt, which had killed hundreds of palms in Sydney and was recently found in Victoria.

Ms Lynden said possums had been injured as they tried to jump from above the bands, which were placed up to 3m from the ground.

Ms Lynden said if the possums could get down they would.

"The palms don't offer them food, they only offer them habitat," she said.

Melbourne City Council spokeswoman Kimberley Kitching said the council had taken advice from appropriate authorities and had experts



Height of despair: animal rights activists during one of their food runs. Pictures: CRAIG WOOD

check there were no possums in the trees before the bands were installed.

Any possums that remained in the palms were there because Animal Active was feeding them, Cr Kitching said.

"There might be some possums stuck up the tree ... I can't tell you

that categorically yes or no," Cr Kitching said. RSPCA chief inspector Kevin Apostolides said the MCC had complied with all regulations, although three bands needed to be adjusted after an initial inspection of Powlett Reserve found they were too high.