

**Help...
I Found A Baby
Possum!**



General Information About Opossums

- Are North America's only marsupial (pouch carrying animals)
- Are omnivores (They eat just about anything)
- Are small to medium size and usually move slowly
- Are white to whitish gray with coarse fur
- Have a long, naked prehensile (hand-like) tail, and a pointed snout (It is easy to confuse a juvenile for a rat.)
- Their ears, tail and feet are usually black and pink colored
- They have opposable thumbs which make them excellent climbers
- Adults weigh between 4 to 15 pounds
- Are polygamous and breed at about 1 year of age
- Babies "swim" through mother's fur to pouch and "lock" themselves to a nipple.
- Opossums carry leaves and twigs entwined in their tails to build a nest.



Usual Calls Involving Opossums

Mother Found Dead/Hit By Car

Because they are omnivores, opossums are known to scavenge dead animals in the road. Unfortunately, because of this, many of them are struck by vehicles and are often found dead in the road themselves. A passerby may notice the stomach area of a mother moving about or a few young ones still



Babies coming out of pouch.

There may be up to 13 young



Please wear rubber gloves!

Often female opossums are carrying young in their pouch when they are struck by cars or attacked by dogs. Babies can often be saved by removing them from the pouch.

hanging around the dead body. Since opossums are marsupials, the babies live in the pouch until they are old enough to climb up onto the mothers back. If the mothers' belly is "rippling" or babies are suspected, roll the mother over onto her back (if necessary) and check the pouch. Many babies can survive through this type of incident due to the protection received from the body of their mother. It is best to wear plastic gloves or wash thoroughly when finished handling dead animals and/or retrieving the babies. When attempting to remove babies from a mother's pouch, be aware that they may be difficult to "pull" off. Regardless, you should gently but firmly do so. If you are squeamish or afraid to do this, use a shovel and put the carcass into a sturdy cardboard box for transport to a Wildlife Rehabilitator. If older babies are "loose" from riding on the mom's back, catch them with gloves or a heavy towel, blanket or fine meshed net. Baby opossums will also hiss nastily and make a "sneezing" type sound when they are scared. This is normal.



Injuries Involving Adult Opossums

Adults Struck by a Car

If an adult is struck by a car and is severely debilitated, capture it with a net or shovel, using heavy gloves. Transport it in a sturdy box or cat carrier. If the opossum is injured, but still capable of inflicting injury to a human (opossums have 50 teeth), then you should immediately transport the animal to a wildlife rehabilitator or call one for assistance.



Opossums Attacked By A Dog

Opossums have run-ins with dogs quite often due to the nature of them "strolling obliviously" through neighborhood yards in search of a free meal. When an opossum is attacked and can no longer defend itself through bluffing (baring his teeth/hissing nastily)

or biting, it will go into a catatonic state known as "Thanatosis." Thanatosis is a defense mechanism that apparently makes the attacking creature believe the animal is dead with the hopes of it losing interest in "killing" it. The opossum will actually appear dead when this happens. If the injuries are not severe, the opossum should be left alone to recover safely on its own. Meaning, remove the dog and people from the area until he "comes to". This may take a little while. If the injuries are severe, then the animal should be admitted. Capture with a net or shovel, using heavy gloves. Transport it in a sturdy box or cat carrier. Even if the opossum is injured, it is still capable of inflicting injury to a human.

Trapped In A Garbage Can

Many people find opossums digging through their garbage cans or eating food left out for pets. Always remove outside food and tightly "lid" your garbage cans to avoid this. If an opossum is trapped in a garbage can or similar item, knock over the can with a broom and leave the area. The opossum should disperse. If he has been trapped for an extended period of time, he may need to be rescued due to dehydration and starvation. If this is the case, the opossum will appear listless and non-aggressive acting.

Always contact a wildlife rehabilitator if you have any questions or need further assistance in rescuing the animal. For additional rescue information, see the [General Guidance](#) section of this web site.