



## OPOSSUM FACTS / INFORMATION

### GENERAL INFORMATION

- **White Face:** There will be a "widows peak" of dark hair on their forehead and the white face will confirm it is an opossum.
- **50 Teeth:** More teeth than any other mammal. Opening their mouth and showing their teeth "gaping" is a natural defense mechanism. "Gaping" is what babies will do too.
- **Pouch:** That means it is a marsupial, not a rodent. Females carry the young in their pouches like the kangaroo. The opossum is North America's only marsupial.
- **Furless Tail:** The tail is prehensile: it is used as a 5th limb, to help balance or lower to the ground. They do not hang by their tails, which is an old wives tail.



### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**There is an opossum on my fence:** Leave it alone, it will move on. Or, if you have a lot of snails, roaches or crickets, it may drop in for a snack and then leave. Trying to scare it away or push it along with a stick will just make it freeze. Opossums do not like the sound of crumpling plastic bags; try crumpling one to make it hasten away.

**My dogs bark at opossums:** Dogs are territorial. Without specific obedience training, dogs will bark at anything. Put the dogs up at night to keep them from barking.

**There is an opossum in my trashcan:** Tip the trashcan over and walk away, so the opossum can make its escape. In a dumpster, prop a solid branch or something similar so that the opossum can climb out. You must make sure the animal can climb to the branch then to the ground or fence so it can escape.

**My dog has cornered an opossum:** Bring your dog in the house or garage. The opossum will not try to come after you. Make sure the opossum has made its escape before letting the dog out again.

**There is a sick opossum in my yard:** Drooling or blowing bubbles is a common defense mechanism, which makes an opossum look sick so it won't be eaten. Is it standing or lying on its side? When an opossum is cornered or is in an unusual situation, nothing will budge it. If it is in a crouched position, and there are no visible signs of injury, and it is keeping an eye on you, it is probably just too frightened to move. Walk away and leave it alone.

**I have found a dead/injured opossum:** Are you sure it is dead? It may be "playing opossum." Is the opossum immobile or nonresponsive to prodding? Are its eyes closed or fixed open? Is blood visible? Don't put the opossum in a plastic bag or in a covered trash can; give it the benefit of the doubt and a chance to revive and survive its attack. If it is just playing dead, it will walk away when left alone. If you see blood or an obvious sign of injury, call your local animal control and they can help you further.

**There is an opossum swimming in my pool or spa:** If it is an adult you can net it and put it in a quiet place on the ground to escape. If it is a baby, under 9 inches, fish it out and wrap it up in a towel to keep it warm. **Careful**, they have teeth. Then call your local animal control agency.

**Are Opossums Rabid?:** Opossums are not carriers of rabies, unlike raccoons, fox, bats and skunks. There have been a few cases but it is **VERY RARE** that an opossum will ever have rabies.

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## REPELLENTS

- Mixtures made with food items such as peppers and onions may be cooked and strained, and used with a standard garden sprayer around perimeters and other areas you wish to discourage animals from visiting. (Cayenne pepper is very effective).
- Place security (motion) lights for nighttime or play a radio during the day when the animal is trying to sleep.
- If there is one particular area that you wish to discourage the animal from coming to, you may try this: Puncture a coffee can in various places, and place inside rags soaked in ammonia. Put the lid on the can and place in the desired area. Use several, if necessary, and replenish ammonia daily. (Do not use when you know baby opossums are present).

For any other questions, please call Irvine Animals Services Field Office at 949-724-7092.