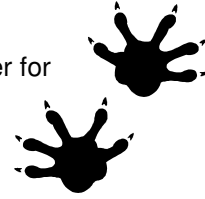


## ***I Found a Baby Opossum....What Do I Do?***

Anytime you find a baby opossum alone, it is in need of help, call the Center for instructions.



### **Opossums in the Yard**

Opossums often take the blame for damage caused by other animals. Contrary to urban myths, they don't destroy yards, kill cats, or pluck goldfish from ornamental ponds. But they do carry diseases such as salmonella, toxoplasmosis, rabies, yellow fever and tuberculosis. They also have a very strong odor and are often infested with fleas and ticks. This makes them unattractive visitors, especially if you have pets or small children.

Opossums don't dig on their own, and prefer to move into abandoned burrows, into crawl spaces, under porches and sheds, and even into attics. Like many other wild animals, opossums are drawn to the sources of food, water and cover to be found in our yards and houses. The best way to discourage an opossum from turning your house into its home is to make it as inhospitable as possible.

- Screen off the entrances to your crawlspaces, basement and porch. This should keep opossums and other animals from setting up house in the first place.
- Remove piles of wood, kindling and brush from your yard. Mow your lawn on a regular basis and weed-whack thick vegetation. Removing concealing cover will make your yard less attractive to wildlife.
- Bring your pet's food and water inside at night, and always secure any pet doors. Opossums can find their way in through a dog or cat door, but they're bad at getting back out again.
- Secure your trashcans with tight-fitting lids, clasps and rubber straps.
- Set up motion-sensitive lights near your trashcans, crawlspaces and garage. Opossums and other nocturnal animals are easily startled away by bright lights.
- Pick up any overripe fruits and vegetables from trees and gardens, and clean the areas under birdfeeders regularly.
- Trim back branches that overhang your roof. Opossums often access the attic via gaps under the eaves.
- Cover compost piles at night. Many nocturnal animals find these to be an irresistible source of food.

Prevention is the easiest way to deal with opossums. But should you find one living on your property, you can easily evict them. Set a radio near the entrance to the den and play loud music during the day, when these nocturnal animals sleep. Opossums generally leave to forage for food about two hours after dusk. Watch for its departure, and then block off all but one of the entrances and exits. You can cover them with screen or wire mesh, stone, wood or just fill it in with dirt. Loosely pack the last hole with straw or netting, so that any animals remaining inside can get out, but the returning opossum won't be eager to dig to get back in.

Because they are marsupials, which carry their babies with them, opossums are easier to evict than skunks or groundhogs. You don't have to be as concerned about orphaning a litter of opossums. But it's still best to wait a few days before securely blocking off the last exit. Sprinkle some flour on the ground outside the hole, and watch for footprints leading away from the den.