



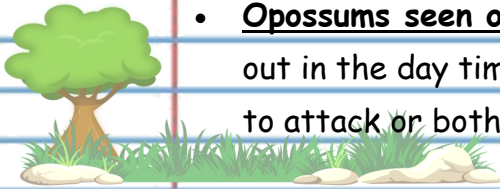
Wildlife

Fact Sheet: Opossums

Opossums are shy, non-aggressive creatures who have the unfortunate circumstance of scaring people due to their odd appearance. They have little ability to defend themselves, and their defense is often misinterpreted of having rabies.

Opossums are also known to be scavengers.

***FUN FACT:** Opossums provide free pest control services by eating all kinds of bugs, small snakes, mice, dead birds killed by cats, and even baby rats.



- **Opossums seen on the Lawn or in a Tree:** It is normal behavior for opossums to be out in the day time, but will be seen a lot around dawn or dusk. They are not looking to attack or bother anyone. They are actually gentle, harmless creatures.

- **Potentially Rabid Opossum Seen:** Opossums are 8x less likely to contract rabies than a dog. If the opossum is hissing, drooling, swaying and/or opening its mouth wide, it is a bluff routine to scare a human or other animal off. It is normal defensive behavior.

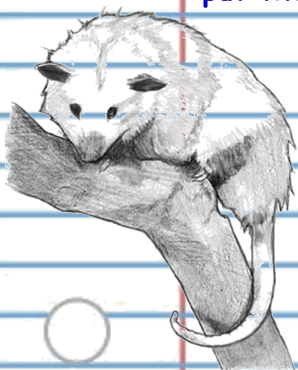
SELF HELP OPTION: Leave the location or bring your dog in for a little while until the opossum leaves, realizing the threat is gone.



- **Opossums eating your garbage or stuck in garbage cans:** If your garbage can is open, or there are spilled garbage containers, an opossum will take advantage of it. They easily get attracted to the smell of garbage. Sometimes they do get stuck in the garbage cans and have trouble getting out and just go to sleep.



SELF-HELP OPTION: If they are stuck inside, tip the can over on its side and wait for them to get out. You can secure the garbage cans by using bungee cords and put the trash out on the morning of pick up. **USE GARBAGE CAN LIDS!**



- **Baby opossums:** Baby opossums stay in their mother's pouch until they are 3 months old. At this age, they ride on their mother's back and can fall off without her noticing.

SELF-HELP OPTION: If the baby opossums are less than 7 inches long (not including the tail) they are too young to be on their own. Contact the **PATERSON ANIMAL CONTROL** for assistance.



***FUN FACT:** Opossums are marsupial mammals that are very smart and play dead when there are unknown things in their surroundings.

- **Opossums Stuck in a Fence or Tree:** Make sure the opossum is REALLY STUCK before calling Animal Control.

SELF-HELP OPTION: Wait a while to see if the opossum has moved. Sometimes they stay very still if there is a threat to them. If you see an opossum is stuck in a fence, **MAKE SURE THE OPOSSUM IS REALLY STUCK BEFORE CONTACTING ANIMAL CONTROL.**

- **Opossums under decks:** No need to do anything when opossums are under your deck. They are nomadic and will leave on their own. They are gentle and non-aggressive animals who will not attack anyone.

SELF-HELP OPTION: Once all the opossums leave, if you no longer wish to have them, then seal off their entry hole with galvanized mesh. It is **EXTREMELY CRITICAL** to make sure that no animals are entrapped or babies are left behind to starve before sealing

***Opossums really do play dead. When threatened or harmed, they have an involuntary response mimicking the appearance and smell of a sick or dead animal. If left alone, they will regain consciousness, but that can take up to 40 minutes or more.**



- **Opossum in Window well:** If an opossum falls into a window well, it's easy to get them out.

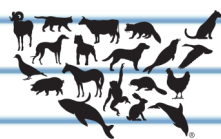
SELF-HELP OPTION: Put a thick branch or board in the window well so the opossum can climb out. They will not jump out and attack, once they leave. Consider investing in a window well cover to prevent this from happening again.

***If you trap a opossum, the only thing an Animal Control Officer can do is release it back on your property depending on the situation. Make sure a wood board is placed underneath the trap. RESIDENTS WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AN ANIMAL THAT IS CONTAINED IN A TRAP. An outside wildlife service can help remove the opossum from the area humanely (A fee may be involved). ***

Any other questions?

Visit www.humanesociety.org/opossums for more information.

Call the Paterson Animal Control at 973-881-3640



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

