

OPOSSUM



The opossum is a cat size mammal that resembles a silver rat, with its naked ears, long scaly tail, and silver-tipped fur. The face of the opossum is almost pure white, with four rows of whiskers, a pink nose, and eyes like black shoe buttons. The average adult is 24 to 26 inches long, including the tail, and usually weighs between 6 and 12 pounds. The opossum is a passive animal, but it looks dangerous when it displays all 50 teeth, drools and hisses. If threatened they may go limp and appear dead, hence “playing possum”.

Opossums are solitary animals, except when females are with their young, or for brief interludes during breeding season (end of winter). Only male opossums are territorial, and they will fight violently during mating season. .

The age of maturity for males is 8 months, and for females 6 months. Gestation is only 12-13 days and 6-20 babies are born (the average litter is 7). Opossums may have two litters in one year.

Opossums are nocturnal animals, but they are often seen during the day when their natural habitat has been destroyed, when they are searching for food, or when young and not yet street wise.

FOOD SOURCE

Opossums are attracted to virtually any type of available food, including garbage, pet food, or cultivated fruits and vegetables. To prevent attraction of opossum’s garbage cans should be secured with rubber straps, and pet food should be taken in at night.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DO NOT FEED the opossums. They can easily become dependent on human food sources.
2. Never leave pet food outside.
3. Never discard edible garbage where opossums can get to it.
4. Secure garbage containers and eliminate their odors. Use a small amount of ammonia or cayenne pepper in the garbage to discourage scavenging.
5. Start a nontoxic insect-control program (especially for grubs) to discourage digging.

**CLEVELAND DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENT
1925 ST. CLAIR AVENUE
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44114**