



The opossum is an animal commonly found in urban areas, and generally poses no threat to human or pet populations. However, some people have concerns about the opossum's nightly forages in their yards.

The opossum is the only marsupial (pouched animal) in North America. It is a house cat-sized mammal with moderately long white gray fur. Its face is long and pointed and it has dark rounded, paper-thin, hairless ears. The opossum's tail is long, hairless, scaly and can be used for grasping. The opossum has 50 teeth, that it readily shows when it is afraid; however, showing its teeth is usually the extend of its actions. Playing "possum" is another defensive mechanism frequently used, but misinterpreted by many that the animal is sick or injured. The fore feet act like fingers and their hind feet have a thumb like a big toe.

Opossums, as well as most wildlife, stay in certain geographical areas as long as the three life elements are present: food, water, and shelter. Without these elements, the opossum will not remain. Opossums eat a wide variety of foods including fruits, vegetables, nuts, meat, insects, pet food, and garbage. In urban areas, opossums have been found to live in attics, garages, woodpiles, under houses and decks, or in any other place that offers protection. Although common, they are often not seen due to their nocturnal habits.

The following steps can be taken to discourage opossum activity on your property:

Keep pet food indoors and do not leave food of any kind outside at night

Remove fallen fruit

Do not leave plastic trash bags outside

Remove garbage, debris, lumber, etc.

Check fencing, eliminate access points and seal house and decking foundations