

Whether rural, residential or in the wilderness, opossums are a benefit to any area they inhabit. Their diet includes all types of bugs and insects including cockroaches, crickets and beetles. They love snails. They also eat mice and rats. The nocturnal opossum is attracted to our neighborhoods by the availability of water, pet food left out at night and overripe, rotting fruit that has fallen from trees. The opossum in turn helps keep our neighborhoods clean and free of unwanted, harmful garden pests and rodents, which may carry diseases. The opossum has earned the title of "Nature's Little Sanitation Engineer."



Information contained here is provided courtesy of The Opossum Society of the United States

PORTSMOUTH ANIMAL CONTROL

*Animal Control Officer
603-610-7441*

ANIMAL CONTROL

Opossum



Animal Control Officer
(603) 610-7441
Portsmouth Police Department

Legal Status of the Opossum

Opossums may be considered desirable game animals. They can be trapped or hunted with a license during the open season established by the State Fish and Game Department. At other times of the year, opossum can only be killed or removed from property under the conditions set by the Game Department. Call Wildlife Services 603-223-6832 for more information.

How do I trap and relocate an opossum?

Do not trap! Opossums are normally transient animals, staying only 2-3 days in an area before moving on. Removal is neither necessary nor desirable. If opossums were eliminated from an area, the population of roof rats and other pests would proliferate. Opossums serve an important role by controlling the unwanted, harmful pest population around our neighborhoods.

Trapping and relocating does not work. If you are determined to remove an opossum then encourage it to do so on its own by removing whatever is attracting it to your area. You must determine what is attracting the opossum to your area and remove the attractants or other opossums and animals will come and fill the vacated niche. Opossums are usually attracted by pet food left outside and dense shrubs to hide under.

- **Do not** leave pet food out at night

- **Do not** leave garage doors, pet doors or unscreened windows open at night.
- **Do** pick up fruit that has fallen from trees.
- **Do** cover garbage cans at night.
- **Do** clear dense bushes, woodpiles and other hiding places.

There is an opossum in my attic or under my house or deck. What do I do?

First you must locate the access hole(s) the opossum is using to get under or into your house, or under your deck; check all vent screens. Then purchase and have the material handy to replace or repair the screen, stucco, wood or other material that is in disrepair. There is no need to exclude the opossum if you aren't going to correct the attraction.

Wait for the opossum to leave at night. Opossums are nocturnal and will leave shortly after sundown to hunt for food. Once it leaves, seal the entrance thoroughly.

If the opossum is using a tree to access the hole, cut the branch away from the house after the opossum leaves. Opossums cannot jump so trim back enough just so they can't reach by stretching. Allowing branches of trees to touch your house also gives bugs access to your roof area, which will attract the opossum and other animals as a food source.

You must keep up your house in its originally pest-proof state. Not doing so will provide (or maybe is already providing) other animals to seek refuge including: skunks, raccoons, mice, rats. If your home is so old that it was never built to exclude animals, contact your local pest control for them to come out and "pest-proof" your home by exclusionary methods.

There is an opossum in my yard. What do I do?

Nothing. Leave it alone. Opossums are beneficial, eating the harmful, unwanted pests around your home such as snails, slugs, spiders, cockroaches, rats, mice and snakes.

Health Concerns

There are diseases you can get from any animal (including pets) and you should not attempt to pet or get too close to an opossum. As long as you exercise common sense, the chance of getting a disease from an opossum is slim. Any mammal can get rabies. However, the chance of rabies in an opossum is EXTREMELY RARE. This may have something to do with the opossum's low body temperature (94-97° F) making it difficult for the virus to survive in an opossum's body.