

## OPOSSUMS

Common Name: opossum

Other Names: big rat, citrus rat, possum

Scientific Name: Didelphis virginiana

Appearance:

size	- head and body 15-20 inches long; tail 9-20 inches long
weight	- adults weigh 9-13 pounds
color	- gray
distinguishing features	- marsupial pouch, inside toe on hind foot faces in opposite direction of other toes, pointed nose, and rat-like tail

Range: - statewide

Habitat: - wooded or open areas near streams and swamps

Diet: - amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, birds, eggs, insects, fruits, and grains

Reproduction:

- 1-3 litters per year from January to July
- an average of 7 young are born undeveloped and attach to one of 13 teats in pouch for 2 months

Behavior:

- mostly nocturnal and solitary; climbs trees
- play "opossum" dead as a last resort to avoid danger

Problems:

- get into garbage cans
- eat pet food
- eat cultivated fruits and vegetables
- may prey on poultry and their eggs
- enters homes through holes, ripped screens, and vent and duct systems

Solutions:

- fasten garbage can lids with a rubber strap
- do not leave pet food outside at night
- surround garden with electric fencing
- live-trap with cage trap
- if hesitant about handling, contact a local nuisance trapper

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- Legal Aspects:
- the use of leghold and quick kill (conibear) traps is illegal
  - in non-urban areas opossum can be shot at night throughout the year with the use of a dog and light, and a .22 caliber firearm (check local ordinances)
  - may be removed only by a permitted nuisance wildlife trapper