



Opossums - Quick Reference Sheet¹

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Table 1.

Common Name:		opossum
Other Names:		big rat, citrus rat, possum
Scientific Name:		<i>Didelphis virginiana</i>
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

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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
Legal Aspects:	the use of leghold and quick kill (conibear) traps is illegal unless authorized by a special permit
	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)
Fact Sheet Available:	yes