

# Opossum

*Didelphimorphia*



## Characteristics

Opossums are marsupial's mammals, meaning the female has a pouch with an elongated snout, long tail, their fur is grey to black, they have black eyes and an elongated pink nose, with black ears, and a defined sagittal crest, indicating that possums have exceptionally strong jaw muscles. The size of opossums varies from a small mouse to a large house cat. Opossum can be seen both on tree limbs as well as on the ground making them semi-arboreal as well as omnivores (eat both plants and animals). Opossums have a plantigrade stance (feet flat on the ground) and the hind feet have an opposable digit with no claw. Their immune system is

extraordinary having either total to partial immunity to some snake venom and are approximately eight times less likely to carry rabies than wild dogs. It is estimated that only one in eight hundred opossums are infected with the rabies virus. Opossums are nocturnal and slow moving. When frightened they are unable to move suffering from an involuntary shock-like state, "playing possum". Opossums are also known to hiss and reveal all their teeth. These critters, in reality are gentle and prefer to avoid any confrontations.

## Habitat

Habitats range from moist to dry climate. Their environment can be anything from woodsy to open fields. However, opossums prefer to be by swamps or streams. Opossums usually take up occupancy in the burrows of other animals, tree cavities, brush piles as well as attics and garages.

## Control

Laws protecting opossums vary from state to state. It is advisable to contact your local wildlife authorities before removing nuisance animals. Traps are available at your local animal control