

NWRI ... Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. ... is a 25+ year old, not-for-profit (501c3) organization whose mission is to *rehabilitate and release orphaned and injured wildlife, and through education, preserve and protect the natural habitat and species indigenous to Nebraska and the Great Plains. The means to accomplish this mission is to educate the public to an understanding of our Great Plains ecosystem and its component parts.*

P.O. Box 24122
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Living with....

Opossums



Urban Wildlife Series

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



About Opossums

Opossums regularly consume insects, snails, worms, rats, mice, and carrion. They can actually help keep your yard free of these pests.

They are far less of a health risk to you or your children or pets than nearly any other wild animal. Rabies and viral diseases (e.g., distemper) are practically unheard of in the opossum.



Opossums are exceptionally non-aggressive and non-destructive. They will not dig up your lawn, chew wood or wires, or create burrows. They do not bite anything that is not a food source, and is not threatening them.

Adult cats and adult opossums generally get along together, or ignore one another. Dogs are a serious threat to opossums, but not vice versa.

Just because you see an opossum around does not mean that it is the animal causing your trouble. Opossums are much less secretive than animals that cause damage, and you are more likely to see them, when it is actually another animal doing the deed. It is very unusual for them to be the culprits of any damage to property or lawns.

Opossums are unique animals, being the only marsupials in North America. They are nocturnal, and will frequently "play dead" in the face of danger. Don't assume a motionless, drooling opossum in your garbage can is dead. Gently tip the can on its side, and allow the opossum several quiet hours to leave the can itself.

Discouraging Opossums

Remove Food Sources: Keep garbage cans covered with secure lids. Bring cat or dog food inside at dusk. Keep fallen fruit from fruit trees off the ground. If you have a compost pile, insure that it has a secure lid, and cover any scraps with a generous amount of leaves and clippings.

Minimize Hiding Spaces and Habitat: You may have to clear low-lying shrubbery or brush to make your yard less inviting to opossums. Install trellis or grate material around the sides of porches or decks to eliminate denning areas for opossums under these structures.

Security: Keep your yard well lit all night. Do this for quite awhile so that transient opossums will not consider your property attractive. Being nocturnal, they are most comfortable in the dark. This is one of the most effective things you can do.

Access: Fences are sometimes effective in keeping opossums out of specific areas; however, opossums are excellent climbers. You could try blocking any path or route normally traveled by opossums in your yard. Barriers might include branches or small temporary fences that make it hard for them to get through.

Opossum Repellants

Mixtures made with food items such as peppers and onions may be cooked and strained, and used with a standard garden sprayer around perimeters and other areas you wish to discourage animals from visiting.

Success has been reported to encourage animals to leave a particular place by placing lights or a radio during the day when the animal is trying to sleep, if they are denning on your property. Flashing Christmas lights are particularly effective.

If there is one particular place that you wish to discourage the animal from coming to, you may try this: Puncture a coffee can in various places, and place rags soaked in ammonia inside. Put the lid on the can and place it in the desired area. Use several if necessary, and replenish the ammonia daily. **DO NOT USE AROUND BABIES!**

If gutters or other vertical surfaces are being climbed, you can try covering them with an 18" high length of sheet metal, or covering them with vegetable shortening up to an 18" height to make them slippery.

Opossum Relocation

NWRI does not advocate the trapping and relocation of wildlife. See our Top Ten to find out why!

10. It is not an effective solution. If you remove one animal from your property, another will come to take its place.
9. You will never succeed in eliminating wildlife from your property. As long as you have a source of food or shelter (e.g. accessible trash, pet food left outside, grubs in your lawn, uncapped chimney, holes in your eaves) they will come. Eliminate, fix or secure the source of your problem, and you will solve it with much less wasted effort.
8. Trapping is indiscriminate—you may trap your neighbor's cat or another animal completely unrelated to your nuisance problem.
7. It's not fair. Where do we expect wildlife to exist? Never-ending expansion of urban areas to accommodate the ever-growing human population has left wildlife no choice but to adapt to us. Don't we owe them a little tolerance?
6. It's illegal in the off season. Although it is widely ignored, all forms of trapping are legally limited to designated hunting and trapping seasons. These seasons are defined to allow animals to breed and raise their young during non-hunting and trapping seasons, free from harassment.
5. It is highly stressful to an animal to be trapped and to be relocated. Most animals do not survive in unfamiliar territory. Resident animals will drive off the intruder, or the animal will not know where to find food or shelter, if it is even available. A recent study notes that over 90% of relocated raccoons die within a short period of time.
4. "Humane" traps are anything but humane. Frequently animals do serious injury to themselves trying to escape during the hours they are confined in a live trap.
3. Fear, as a reason for trapping, is irrational. Wild animals have no interest in attacking you, your pets, or your children. Their only reason for aggression is self-defense, and their first choice is always to escape the perceived danger.
2. With just a little effort, we can coexist peacefully with wildlife. If they cause you minor inconvenience, please remember their only motivation is survival. They have no concept of property or damage. There are many more effective and less disruptive alternatives to trapping.

**And the #1 reason NOT to trap and relocate...
When you trap and relocate, someone's mother might not come home.**

From early spring until late fall, chances are 50/50 that the animal you trap is a mother, whose babies depend on her for their survival. Taking a mother away from her babies condemns them to a very cruel fate - starvation and death.