

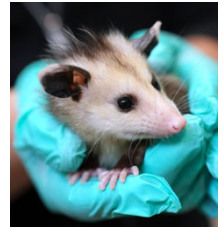


MEDIA CONTACT:
Nina Thompson
619-372-0916 cell
nthompson@sdhumane.org

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National Wildlife Week: San Diego Humane Society Urges Public to Check for Opossum Joeys After Roadside Collisions

SAN DIEGO — In recognition of National Wildlife Week, San Diego Humane Society’s Project Wildlife program is urging the community to take a simple but life-saving action: check for baby opossums when encountering a deceased opossum on the roadside. During baby season, many mother opossums who are killed by cars still have living joeys in their pouch, and a quick check by a community member could save their lives.



Project Wildlife sees a significant number of orphaned baby opossums each year, especially in spring and early summer. Opossums are marsupials, and their joeys remain in the pouch or cling to their mother even after an accident. Babies who are old enough to be out of the pouch may also be close by. If a mother opossum is found deceased, surviving babies should be brought in immediately for evaluation.

“People pass road-struck opossums every day and often don’t realize there may be live babies still in the pouch,” said Chantal Larose, Associate Director at San Diego Humane Society’s Project Wildlife program. “If it is safe to stop and check, that one action can make the difference between life and death for those joeys. Our team can raise and rehabilitate them, but first they need to be found.”

The public should only intervene if they can do so safely. Opossums rarely bite, though they may hiss, growl, or appear dead as defensive behaviors.

Three steps to save opossum joeys:

1. **Make sure it is safe before approaching.** Only stop if you can pull over safely and are out of traffic — do not put yourself at risk. If you notice the opossum is still alive when you approach, please wrap it securely in a towel if you have one and bring the animal directly to an SDHS Project Wildlife location. It is always recommended that you wear latex gloves or work or gardening gloves when handling wildlife. While opossums are generally not aggressive, any injured wild animal may react defensively.
2. **Check the pouch and immediate area for babies.** If the opossum is female and no longer alive, gently check for a pouch and look for surviving joeys inside. Also scan the area around the mother, since older babies may have been thrown and may be nearby. If babies are inside the pouch, gently remove them and place them in a secure box lined with soft fabric. Keep the babies in a warm, dark and quiet place.
3. **Do not feed them — bring them to San Diego Humane Society right away.** Do not give the joeys any food or liquids. Bring them to a San Diego Humane Society Project Wildlife location as soon as possible. Do not attempt to raise an opossum at home.

Opossums play an important role in San Diego County’s ecosystem. They are beneficial neighbors because they eat ticks, rats, mice, snails, slugs and other insects, as well as fallen fruit and carrion. By helping clean up organic waste and control pest populations, opossums contribute to a healthier local environment for wildlife and people.

If you find injured, sick or orphaned wild animals visit sdhumane.org/wildlifehelp or call 619-299-7012 (press 1 for Dispatch).

[Photos/video of opossums in care at San Diego Humane Society for media use here:](https://spaces.hightail.com/space/vS2GDV7uHM)

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Photo/video credit: San Diego Humane Society

About San Diego Humane Society

San Diego Humane Society’s scope of social responsibility goes beyond adopting animals. We offer programs that strengthen the human-animal bond, prevent cruelty and neglect, provide medical care, educate the community and serve as a safety net for all pet families. Serving San Diego County since 1880, San Diego Humane Society has campuses in El Cajon, Escondido, Oceanside, Ramona and San Diego. For more information, please visit sdhumane.org.