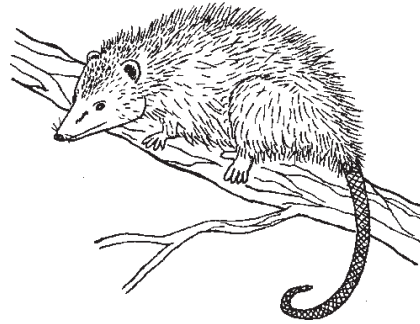


PEST CONTROL BULLETIN NO. 25

OPOSSUMS



GENERAL INFORMATION

The opossum, *Didelphis marsupialis*, is the only mammal in California with an abdominal pouch for carrying its young.

Opossums are cat-sized or larger. They have grizzled, gray, and black fur including long rat-like tails by which they hang.

These animals were introduced into California about 1906 and now occur in most of the state west of the Sierra Nevada and west of the desert areas.

BIOLOGY AND HABITS

Opossums have one or two litters per year with a breeding season from mid-January to mid-October. Litter size averages about seven and are weaned young, however, up to 18 or more young may be born. The young, born very immature, must crawl unaided into the pouch and find a teat. Young opossums remain in the pouch ten weeks or more before they are weaned.

Opossums prefer wooded country. They are usually found along streams, in mixed orchards, and in some residential areas in California. They nest in hollow logs, holes, in trees, rock crevices, woodpiles, and sometimes in or under buildings.

They eat practically anything including insects, fish, berries, fruits, vegetables, meats, and carrion.

Opossums are nocturnal. They move slowly and need good protective cover to escape their enemies.

Nightly movements range from a few hundred feet to a half mile or so.

CONTROL

Areas under houses, sheds, and openings into poultry houses should be screened with hardware cloth or chicken wire in order to keep opossums out. Opossums are easily trapped with cage traps or steel traps. Fish, dog food, or meat scraps are effective baits. To reduce the possibility of trapping cats, cut up fruit can also be used as bait.

These live animal traps may be purchased or rented from your local farm supply or feed store. If additional help is needed, contact with a registered pest control operator is suggested.

OPOSSUM TRAP OPERATION

Refer to the diagrams on the other side.

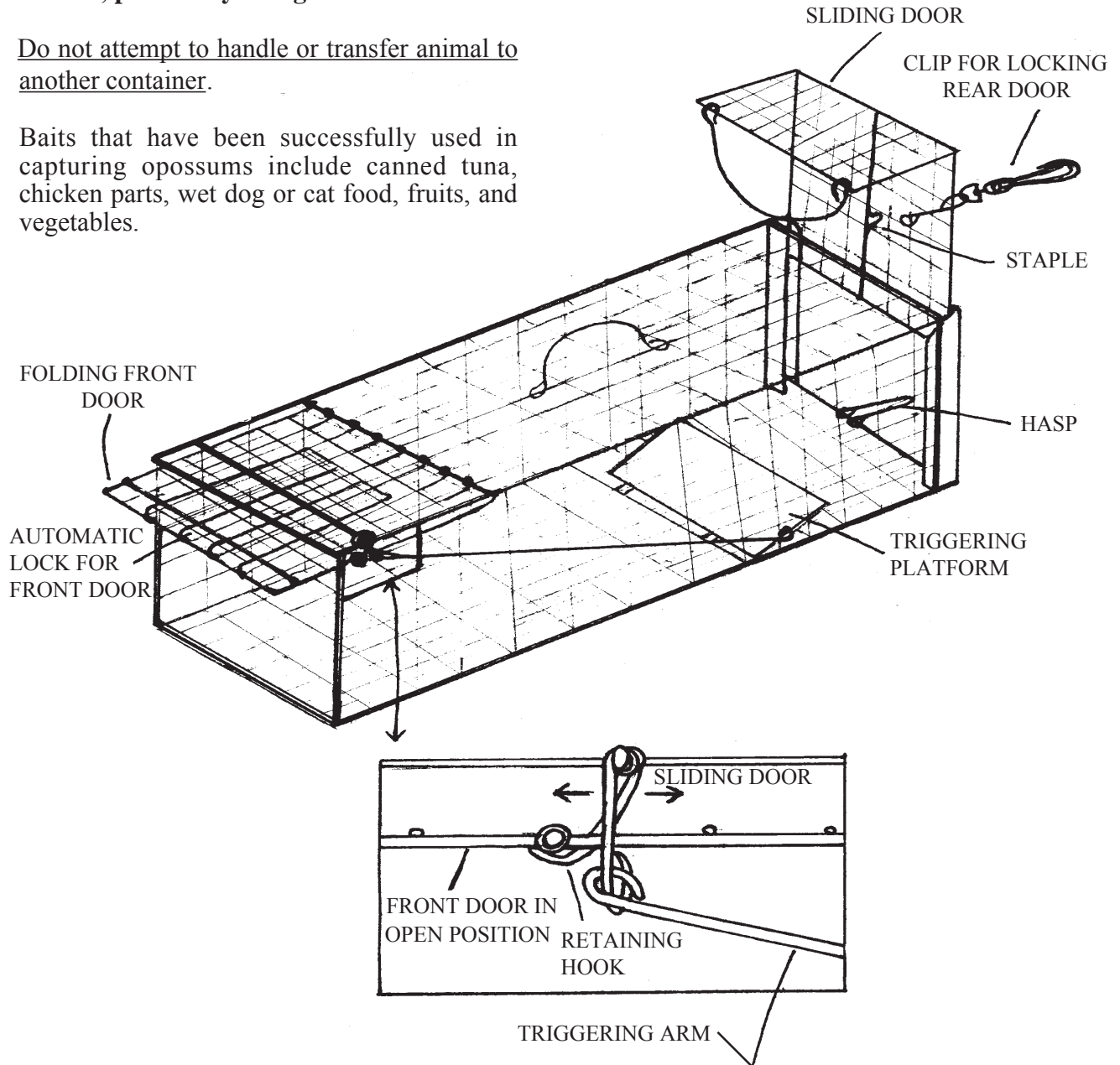
1. Push in on automatic locking device on front door to release and lift door to open position.
2. Slide triggering arm forward until retaining hook catches under front door and secures the door open. Platform should be raised off bottom of trap.
3. Place bait on bottom of trap between sliding rear door and triggering platform.
4. Make sure hasp is in locking position over staple on center of rear door and secured with clip before capturing animal or animal may escape!

5. Gently place trap on ground in area to be trapped, preferably in the shade. Trap can be covered with towel, blanket, cardboard, etc., to create shade.
6. When the animal is captured, it should be left in the trap and kept out of extreme heat or cold. The trap should be covered up to keep the animal calm while moving the trap around and/or to **relocate the animal to a wildlife habitat, preferably at night.**
7. Do not attempt to handle or transfer animal to another container.
8. Baits that have been successfully used in capturing opossums include canned tuna, chicken parts, wet dog or cat food, fruits, and vegetables.

Orange County Animal Control will respond if:

1. The animal is injured or has died.
2. The animal is trapped in the house and cannot get out.
3. The animal has bitten someone.

Orange County Animal Control
 561 City Drive South
 Orange, California 92868
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