



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

January 5th, 2024

An Opossum Family



Mother keeping baby warm and safe.



Mother and baby in enclosure.



Mother alert and protecting baby.

On December 9th, 2023, a member of the public brought us an injured adult female Virginia Opossum that was found in Thousand Oaks. During their initial exam, our wildlife technicians saw dried blood around her nose that was blocking her nostrils, blood in her mouth, and a small, crusted lesion at the center of her forehead. She was also noticeably thin. Our technicians suspected the patient was hit by a car due to her visible injuries, including a broken canine tooth, a suspected broken rib, and minor respiratory distress.

They also found that there were three open-eyed baby opossum joeys in the mother's pouch that appeared to be uninjured and in good health. One of the babies started to climb onto their mother's back and leg as our technicians carefully cleaned her abrasions. After all wounds were treated and patient received anti-inflammatory medication and antibiotics, our wildlife technicians assessed that the mother could continue to take care of the babies if her health does not decline. If necessary, the joeys can be rehabbed independently from their mother, as they are old and healthy enough.

Since intake, the mother's wounds have continued to heal, and there have been no signs of infection, swelling, or inflammation. Her respiratory sounds are improving, she has a great appetite, and has been active at night (opossums are nocturnal). Our patient has made much progress, appearing brighter, and continually gaining weight. The mother is visually tracking well and becoming more defensive by using all four limbs during wound care. Our team is moving forward with the treatment plan in place, and increasing daily diet as patients are consistently eating all food provided.

As the mother's health continues to improve and the babies continue to grow, they will all remain together until release as a family unit.

In 2023, we received 162 Virginia Opossums here at California Wildlife Center. Many of them had been orphaned due to the mother sustaining injuries that have been mostly from vehicle interactions. Orphaned baby opossums are kept in the NICU of our hospital until they are old enough to survive in the wild on their own.

If you happen to see an injured opossum, please contact us at 310-458-9453 to find out the next step to take. You can do even more to help wildlife by donating to cawildlife.org.