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**CROW Case Of The Week:**

## Another Virginia Opossum



by Emilie Alfino

October was a bad month for local opossums, a species that has never had an easy time living with people – and people’s BB guns and automobiles. Two days after an opossum arrived



Virginia opossum

at CROW full of BB pellets (last week’s case), another came in from Fort Myers where he had been hit by a car. The person who found him thought his back leg was broken, but that turned out not to be the case. The animal obviously had severe head trauma, as he had blood coming from his nose and mouth and severe facial swelling. There was also a laceration on his lower lip.

“Because there was obviously head trauma, we took X-rays and we didn’t see any major fractures, but there could have been a hairline fracture we didn’t see,” said Robin Bast, CROW wildlife rehabilitator.

The staff administered pain and anti-inflammatory medications as well as antibiotics because of the opossum’s open wounds. He received subcutaneous fluids and was put on a normal opossum diet of soaked kitten chow, mouse bits and fruit bits.

By the next day he hadn’t touched any of his food. “We decided maybe he couldn’t eat because his jaw hurt too badly so we made a slurry that’s pretty high in calories that you can force-feed,” Bast said. “He lapped that up very well from a syringe – he could lick but he really couldn’t chew. We fed him that way for quite a while.”

“The opossum was also suffering from congestion and sneezed frequently, most likely because his sinuses were swollen and inflamed from the trauma,” Bast explained. A symptom of great concern to staff was that he was turning more to the right, probably as a result of his head trauma. “This is what we call a ‘right head tilt and circling issues,’” she said. This indicated the animal had some neurological

issues and needed to be monitored closely to make sure the issue resolved itself over time.

Four days later, the opossum started eating the slurry on his own when it was put in his cage, and after about a week he no longer had the head tilt. He was walking normally by that time, too, and had started to eat solid food on his own. The laceration on his lip was healing quite well and he finished 10 days of antibiotics on October 16. The swelling had gone down and he was no longer congested.



Virginia opossum

“He was also hissing, which is good because it’s part of normal defensive opossum behavior,” Bast said. “When he first came in, he was so dull that he didn’t care what you did to him.”

Bast said this was one of CROW’s more successful car accident cases. “Car accident injuries vary from minor to very serious, so this opossum was lucky not to have any major internal injuries,” Bast added. “What he had was like a concussion but more severe, and its effects lasted longer.”

Sometimes the symptoms brought on by these injuries never go away and CROW staff has to reassess the case. “An animal injured like this who doesn’t recover can’t survive in the wild and, sadly, it could be a case for euthanasia,” Bast said.

Once this opossum was finished with his antibiotics, he was ready to be released and now lives somewhere on Sanibel, hopefully away from any roads.

CROW (Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife, Inc.) is a nonprofit wildlife hospital providing veterinary care for native and migratory wildlife from the Gulf Coast of Florida. The hospital accepts patients seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mail donations to PO Box 150, Sanibel, FL 33957. Visit [www.crowclinic.org](http://www.crowclinic.org) or call 472-3644.✪

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