

# Care Guide

## Short Tailed Opossum

(Monodelphis domestica)

### Facts:

Average adult size: **4 - 6 inches in length**  
Average life span: **4 to 8 years with proper care**  
Diet: **Carnivore**



Short Tailed Opossums make excellent pets. They are quiet, active, and inquisitive, and since opossums are not rodents they generally don't gnaw on things. A special bonus to keeping a Short Tailed Opossum, they will eat unwelcome pests such as insects and rodents. *Unlike many marsupials, the Short Tailed Opossum does not have a pouch.*

### Feeding & Nutrition:

#### Food

- High-quality Ferret food
- Fruits and vegetables, mealworms, crickets, pinkie mice (limited amounts)
- Do not feed chocolate, caffeine or alcohol as these can cause serious medical conditions. Avoid sugar, food and treats high in carbohydrates and high fat treats.

#### Water

- Fresh water should be provided daily in water bottles to prevent contamination.
- Bottles need to be kept clean inside by soaking in a 10% bleach solution for ten minutes every two to three weeks and then scrubbed out with soap and a bottle brush. Bottles should be completely replaced with new ones every six months.

#### Frequency of Food

- Fresh food and water should always be available.
- Limited amounts of vegetables and fruits as a treat.
- Vegetables and fruits not eaten within 24 hours should be discarded.
- Treats should not exceed 10% of total food intake.

### Housing:

#### Cage

- The Short Tailed Opossum is an escape artist, and must be kept in a secure enclosure.
- A 10 gallon or larger aquarium with a secure lid or a narrow-mess wire cage works well.
- It is best to provide the largest habitat possible.
- STO's acclimate well to average household temperatures, 68°F to 88°F. The habitat should never be in direct sunlight or in a drafty area.
- For exercise and entertainment they will need things to climb on such as branches, ropes, or bird ladders, and a small wheel. Provide items to allow for hiding.
- Adults must be housed separately.
- **Different types of small animals should not be housed together.**

#### Bedding

- 1-2 inches of bedding should be placed in the habitat
- Proper bedding includes high quality paper bedding, crumbled paper bedding, or aspen

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shavings.

- Avoid Cedar-based products.

## Habitat Maintenance

- Clean the habitat and its contents at least once a week with mild soap and water, rinse and dry completely before placing back into the habitat.
- Remove wet areas daily; change bedding at least once a week, or more often as necessary.

## Care:

### Grooming & Hygiene

- STO's keep themselves clean, but can be spot cleaned with a damp washcloth if needed.
- STO's are basically odor-free.

### Health

- Active, alert, and sociable
- Eats and drinks regularly
- Healthy fur and clear eyes
- Breathing is clear and walks normally

### Normal Behavior

- Because they are naturally solitary animals, they should be housed individually. The only time they should be put together with other opossums is when they are being bred, and then for only a short time. Cage mates will eventually become aggressive toward one another, possibly killing each other.
- Young opossums should be housed separately by the time they reach 9 weeks of age.
- They are friendly and inquisitive.

### Handling

- If handled from a young age, a Short Tailed Opossum can become a loving gentle pet that generally will not bite.
- A good age to acquire your pet is between 3 and 4 months of age, though even some adults will adjust to being handled.
- Both males and females make equally good pets.

### Recommended Supplies:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate Size Habitat | <input type="checkbox"/> Hide           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedding                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise wheel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High-quality Ferret food | <input type="checkbox"/> Toys           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food bowl/Water bottle   |   |

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