



ANIMAL CONTROL



What's the Skunk All About?



What's the Stink All About?

There's more to know about skunks than their unique appearance and smelly spray. It is more likely you will smell a skunk than see one. Persistent faint musk smells under a building or wood pile may suggest that a skunk has taken up residence. Occasional skunk sightings in a neighborhood are not a cause for alarm. Skunks are generally easy-going and will not intentionally bother people. In fact skunks are beneficial by eating insects and rodents many regard as pests.

Warning Signs

Skunks use their powerful defense only when they or their young are threatened and cannot escape. Even then, they give you ample warning -stamping front seat, a raised tail, hissing, short forward charges and especially the twisting hind end in your direction. Move away slowly, and quietly. By nature, dogs tend to ignore these warnings, so it is important that they may be restrained for their own good.

Tolerance

Because of the lingering odor, and fear of being sprayed it may be hard for some people to tolerate skunks living under a deck or old shed. But skunks need shelter like this when they are most vulnerable - during the coldest parts of the winter and when raising young. How many skunks are killed each year simply because of fear is not known, but it is surely a large number. This is unfortunate, because it is common knowledge among those who work closely with these animals, that it actually takes a lot to get sprayed. The nocturnal habits of skunks, their aggressive nature, and generally beneficial role they play in nature by consuming insects and rodents are all good reasons to leave them alone until they have moved on their own accord (which they readily do) or can safely be harassed away from an area where they are not wanted.

Habitat Modification

Skunks are attracted to things like garbage and pet food left out at night an convenient denning sites such as wood and rock piles, elevated sheds, openings under concrete slabs in porches, and access to crawl spaces under houses. Preventative measures, such as removing attractants around houses, will decrease the likelihood of an unpleasant skunk encounter. This includes securing trash, feeding pets indoors, or if fed outdoors, removing food immediately after pets eat.

Skunks also dig for grubs in lawns when wet soil conditions push grubs close to the surface. When the soil dries, the grubs move deeper, so the problem can generally be stopped or prevented in the first place by not over watering lawns.

Removal From a Window Well

Thanks to their weak eyesight, it is not uncommon for skunks to stumble into a window well and become trapped because of their poor climbing abilities. If a skunk becomes trapped in a window well or similar steep sided pit, provide a means of escape. Place a rough board (or one with cleats, carpet, toweling, chicken wire, or other materials to give animal traction) that is long enough to serve as a ramp out of the well. Skunks are poor climbers, so the board should lean no steeper than a 45° angle. Try to stay out of sight of the skunk and slowly and carefully lower the board. Regardless of how you end up getting the skunk out, you can prevent the situation from reoccurring by installing covers over window wells.

Behavior

Even though skunks are mostly active at night, they sometimes look for food by day - particularly in the spring, when they have young. Don't be concerned if you see an adult skunk in the daytime unless they are also showing abnormal behaviors:

- Limb paralysis
- Circling
- Disorientation
- Staggering
- Uncharacteristic tameness



Don't approach the skunk yourself. Call your local animal control officer or Police Department for assistance.

Neutralizing Odors

The traditional remedy for a skunk is a tomato juice bath. To neutralize the smell, however, the chemicals in spray must be changed into a different type of molecule, and tomato juice does not do that. Tomato juice can, along with vinegar, and any other mildly acidic solution will wash off the oily spray to at least reduce the smell. Odor neutralizers are also for sale on the market that works effectively to eliminate skunk smells.