

# Skunks!

## Quick Facts:

Adult skunks are about two feet long, including a 7 – 10 inch tail. They weigh 3 – 12 pounds, depending on sex, age, physical condition, and time of year. Skunks molt yearly, beginning in April and ending in September. Skunks will have at least one litter a year and possibly two, each litter consisting of two to ten young.

A skunk's eyesight is very poor and their awareness of their surroundings is limited. By nature, skunks are placid and sluggish. They move slowly, walking, slow trot or gallop. They have an acute sense of touch. Their sight is fair.

Skunks do not hibernate, although they may remain dormant underground all winter. They mostly leave their dens at night to feed during mild weather. However, may occasionally venture out during the daylight hours.

The skunk's defense is his musk. Musk is an oily substance, creamy or yellowish in color. Musk can make a predator sick, or if the musk gets into the eyes, it can temporarily cause blindness. A skunk can shoot musk about twelve feet, but generally uses it as a last resort. If threatened, a skunk drums its forefeet on the ground, snarls, arches its back and raises its tail. It can spray in any direction by twisting its rump toward the target.

Skunks eat what is available. In the summer they feed on insects and eat wild berries in the winter, as well as small mammals and some plants. Chiefly nocturnal, they hunt from dusk to dawn. Once they find a source of food, they are likely to take up residence. It is common for the skunk to move in under houses and sheds, porches and crawl spaces. Trashcans and pet food left out in the open are favorites.

Most skunks live 2 – 3 years in the wild. Most die as a result of disease or highway kill. Skunks are known carriers of rabies and while that is a big problem for a large part of Texas, it is not a serious threat to central Texas at this time.

## What to do If a Skunk Establishes Residence in your Yard:

- Skunks are difficult to trap. For that reason, we are limited in what we can do, as are other cities we surveyed. We have rental traps available for your use. We offer tips on how to get the skunks to voluntarily leave or on how to go about trying to trap a skunk. We will pickup the trapped skunk during weekday business hours if you are successful. We wish that there was more that we could do, but we are limited by manpower.
- First and foremost, you must remove the food source. Close trashcan lids tightly, clean up untidy areas, and do not leave cat or dog food sitting in the feeder.
- Try using a skunk repellent that can be purchased at any feed or hardware store to deter the skunk from returning or to encourage then to leave. Mothballs can be tried under the house or in crawl space however, these can be lethal to household pets. Cayenne pepper or red pepper can also be sprinkled around the area. Skunks are also said to dislike perfume. Cut off the ends of nylon hose and tie a knot in one end. Spray perfume on a rag or old yarn and place it in the hose. Tie off the other end and place the pouch in the area you believe the skunk to live.

## **Wildlife Repellent Home Recipes:**

### **Ingredients:**

1 whole Spanish Onion  
1 jalapeno pepper  
1 tablespoon cayenne pepper

### **Directions:**

Chop up the onion and pepper  
Mix together and boil in 2 quarts of water for about 20 minutes  
Let cool, strain through cheesecloth

Using a garden sprayer, spray any area outside where wild animals or even neighborhood pets are being a nuisance. This process may be repeated several times for two weeks to ensure success.

### **Ingredients:**

8 ounces of Castor Oil  
8 ounces of any liquid dishwashing soap

### **Directions:**

Mix well together. Add to one gallon of water. Spray the entire area.

- Traps can be purchased at feed stores or rented from these stores or from the Lockhart Animal Shelter. The best baits have been peanut butter, vanilla poured on a sponge, tender vittles, eggs, or sardines. Skunks are very intelligent and tend to avoid traps. Once a skunk is trapped, Animal Control can be contacted if it is during the week, and they will come by and remove the skunk and trap from your property.
- Since skunks are at risk for rabies, Animal Control should be contacted immediately for a skunk that appears during daylight hours and acts "sick."  
The police department dispatches Animal Control 398-4401

## **Skunk Odor Remover:**

The following are home remedies for skunk stench:

1 bottle hydrogen peroxide  
½ bottle of water  
¼ cup of baking soda  
1 teaspoon dog shampoo

Mix hydrogen peroxide with water. Add baking soda and dog shampoo. Mix and pour into a squirt bottle or sprayer. Spray entire bottle onto dog, being careful not to get directly into the eyes or nose. Let stand for 5 – 10 minutes while working the solution into the fur. Rinse.

You can also use this solution minus the shampoo as a spray to the affected outdoor area. Mix as needed. Do not store premixed.

Use equal amounts of vinegar and water. Wash the animal thoroughly and rinse with clear water followed by another good dousing of the vinegar and water solution. Make the second rinse weaker.

In a well-ventilated area, wash the animal down with tomato juice before washing thoroughly with shampoo and water. Rinse with a gallon of water to which a few tablespoons of ammonia have been added. Rinse the pet thoroughly with clear water.

NOTE: The first remedy is widely recommended and supposedly does not leave any lingering scent.