

WILDLIFE INFORMATION ON SKUNKS



Orange County has two types of skunks. The common striped skunk and the smaller spotted skunk. Both species are not very good fighters and protect themselves with their strong smelling spray. The skunks can spray up ten feet and up to five times in succession.

Skunks are nocturnal, meaning they are out at night, usually seen searching for food. Their diet consists of fruit, berries, eggs, all kinds of insects, small rodents and reptiles. They usually live in underground burrows or vacant homes of other rodents, hollow logs, rock piles, or under houses. A skunk will stay in an area as long as there is food, water and shelter. Most damage caused by skunks occurs when they tear up lawns and shrubbery with their long claws, looking for insects and grubs.

Skunks have a leading role in wildlife rabies and because of the rabies hazard; California Public Health law prohibits sale, possession, import or export of skunks as pets. Eradication and/or relocation programs are costly and ineffective. Animal Control experts agree that education and cooperation are the keys to solving many wildlife problems.

Westminster Animal Control Officers will respond to and/or impound any skunk that is observed during daylight hours, is injured, sick, dead, or has had intimate contact with a domestic animal.

- Do not feed the skunks. They can easily become dependent of human food sources.
- Never leave pet food outside.
- Never discard edible garbage where skunks can get to it.
- Secure garbage containers and eliminate their odors. Use a small amount of ammonia in the garbage to discourage scavenging.
- Install one-way doors on entrances to skunk dens, allowing the skunk to leave at night but barring it from re-entering. Watch for any new holes. Do not use one-way doors during May through August, when babies may be in the den.
- If a skunk strays into your garage, leave a door to the outside open and let the skunk exit on its own.
- Debris and brush piles should be removed or stacked neatly to eliminate suitable cavities.
- Keep pet doors closed at night to prevent entry by a skunk.
- Keep fruit trees picked and do not leave rotted fruit on the ground.

To prevent skunks from establishing themselves under buildings, seal holes in foundations and all other openings through which they may enter. If a skunk has settled under a building, seal all openings except one; then sprinkle a patch of flour near this opening. Examine the area after dark. If tracks show the animal has left, close off this last opening immediately. A pound of moth flakes placed in the den may hasten his departure and encourage him not to return.

If you live in an area where skunks occur, be sure your dogs and cats are routinely vaccinated against rabies. Some dogs will confront skunks whenever they get an opportunity. Be sure to bring your cats and small dogs inside at night time and secure your pets against skunks.

Home remedy for neutralizing skunk odor:

- 1 quart of 3% hydrogen peroxide
- 1/4 cup of baking soda
- 1 teaspoon of liquid soap

Normal bathing procedures should be used to protect the pet's eyes. Following application, the solution should be rinsed off the pet with water.

Because rabies is endemic in the skunk population, Westminster Animal Control assists in the control of skunks by providing skunk traps to residents to remove them from residential areas. Fish and Game regulations prohibit the relocation of skunks without written permission of the Department of Fish and Game. The prevalence of rabies in the skunk population is one of several major reasons for denying relocation.

Westminster Animal Control emphasizes peaceful co-existence with our indigenous wildlife. If you have any questions regarding how to cope with our wildlife, please contact Westminster Animal Control at (714) 898-3315 extension 365 or you can visit the University of California • Agriculture and Natural Resources website at www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/index.html for downloadable information and materials.



Service with Integrity

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PRESENTED BY

**THE WESTMINSTER
POLICE
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