

Skunk

Why do they have such a potent defense mechanism? Because it is basically their only defense and they are perfect size prey for many predators! The reality is their sense of sight is rather poor which is why you can 'sneak up' on them. They are not quick (fleet of foot) & poor climbers. When they sense a threat coming, they would prefer to scurry away and not spray.

Baby striped skunks can spray as young as 8 days old. The eyes are not open thus no 'aim' is possible. Once an adult releases the spray it is not 'out of scent'. The scent gland provide enough for two or three times before requiring about 30 minutes to make more.

Born in May through June. Only the female cares for them. At 8 weeks of age, the young follow her out on her nightly foraging sessions. Full independence happens between 10 and 12 weeks of age. (If a baby less than 8 inches (tail excluded) in size is seen during daylight, or alone at night, acting clumsy, has bugs and flies around it, is not responsive to human approach - they are in need of assistance). Skunks are not hibernators. They do remain in the den much of the winter and survive off the fat reserve accumulated in the fall. It is not uncommon to see a skunk out and about on a warm winter day.

Nomadic animals. Only require a few hundred acres to find adequate shelter and food. Dens may be communal or solitary, depending on the season and gender. Diet is primarily insects with plant and animal supplements. They dig for grubs, earthworms, etc. "A fair number of the insects that skunks eat are pests to humans". They also eat mice.

Is your dog being frequently sprayed by skunk? There is most likely a den around! As previously stated, Skunks are timid; they usually only spray when being provoked, i.e. being followed into their den. Do not let the animal out at night. Keep your pup in the fenced yard. There are a variety of 'home remedies', if you know one that works – great! If not, try 1 quart of 3% hydrogen peroxide, ¼ cup baking soda, 1 tsp. liquid soap (laundry or dishwashing). Good for clothes, skin, hair, NOT eyes! Flush with a large quantity of water and consult your veterinarian.

Are skunks digging up our yard? "Bugs" also are commonly found in the soil under bird feeders. Make sure you pick up the spilled seeds daily or move the feeder frequently. Grubs are responsible for killing grass by feeding on the roots. The skunks are feasting on the wormlike larvae of beetles – *grubs*. You may treat the lawn with 'beneficial nematodes', an organic, environmentally sound grub treatment that will not harm animals or the grass. This is not an instant fix. Late summer or early fall is when the grubs are most susceptible to the treatments (before they are established and begin lawn damage). Immediate deterrents for skunk activity is to install motion sensor sprinklers.

What are the warning signs that the skunk is ready to spray? Stamping their feet & Tail flashing – raising up and down. Hissing, short forward charges, and twisting their hind end around. When you see the signs, simply stop approaching and wait for the animal to calm down.

A skunk has taken up residence under my house/porch/shed...now what? Remove any food items such as pet food and garbage. Do not overwater the lawn—this bring grubs close to the surface, therefore easy food for the skunk. Remove enticing den sites—easy crawl space access, rock or wood piles near the home, etc. Be aware of the fact that during courtship (late winter – early spring) frequent discharge is common. Most dens are temporary! Wait until they move along then take action. (See 'master list for removal') To ensure they have gone- stuff paper at the entrance. If undisturbed, they are gone.

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