

Skunks

Skunks have become urbanized and can be a nuisance to homeowners and their pets



Striped skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*) are the size of an adult house cat with black fur and two white stripes on the head and back. They are active at night searching for a variety of food items including eggs, insects, berries, and pet food. They can accurately spray 6-10 feet when threatened.

Public Health Concerns

Skunk spray is very strong and may cause nausea with burning and temporary blindness if struck in the eye.

Skunks are a primary carrier of rabies. They may give people rabies through a bite. Once symptoms start, there is currently no cure for rabies and it is almost always fatal.

Skunks may also be involved in the transmission of the agents that cause: Tularemia, Trypanosoma, Leptospirosis, Listeriosis, Q Fever, and Canine distemper

Avoid Skunk Bites

Skunks may transmit rabies through their bite. **All bites should be examined by a doctor, no matter how minor.** Avoid skunks wandering during daylight, showing aggressive behavior, or exhibiting no fear of people or pets because these are signs of rabies. Be sure to vaccinate your pets against rabies.

Skunk Control and Exclusion

Skunks will live in rock crevices, culverts, hollow logs, brush piles, crawl spaces, and under decks and patios. They may take over other abandoned burrows enlarging them.

Cut back brush, stack firewood tightly, pick up fallen fruit, take in pet food and water nightly, and keep trash cans sealed tightly. Restricting access to these areas will discourage them from living on your property.

Use 1/4" galvanized hardware cloth to screen off openings under houses, sheds, mobile homes, porches and decks. If possible, bury the wire at least 6 inches and outward 12 inches. **Make sure skunks are not in the den before sealing the entrance.**

Skunk-proofing these areas will keep them from damaging foundations, heating systems, and other underground structures.

Do not attempt to trap skunks yourself. If skunks are destroying property or acting strangely call Vector Control at 408-918-4770 for an inspection.

Odor Removal

There are commercial products available for neutralizing skunk odor. A simple, low cost solution is: Combine 1 quart of 3% hydrogen peroxide, 1/4 cup of baking soda, and 1 tablespoon of liquid dish soap (such as Dawn). Mix when ready to use. Do not store.



Photo courtesy of Tom Friedel

Santa Clara County
Vector Control District

1580 Berger Drive San Jose , CA. 95112
(408) 918-4770 sccvector.org

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