

Wilmette Pet Center

"the place for people who love pets"

Skunks are becoming much more common in the suburbs, as they have adapted to humans and our cities. They have even been making their way into downtown Chicago, looking for food and shelter. They also have little fear of humans and our pets, trusting to their defenses to keep them safe. This means an increase in encounters and the inevitable spraying.

Typically, the coloring of a skunk should serve as a warning to most animals that they are not to be messed with. When encountered, their first instinct is to run. If they are unable to run, they then display a threatening behavior, charging with a raised tail and stomping their feet. They'd much rather threaten you than spray, as it takes time and energy to make more of their chemical defense. If that fails to warn off an intruder, or if they feel threatened, they can spray with amazing accuracy for up to 10 feet!



Skunk's spray smells so terrible because of a mixture of sulfur containing chemicals called thiols (mercaptans). Besides the smell, their spray is an effective deterrent because it can also cause irritation, extreme drooling, and even temporary blindness, and is strong enough to deter bears and other predators. Some dogs, though, do not seem to get their warning colors and threatening behaviors - some not only don't learn their lesson the first time, but even seem to enjoy getting sprayed.

Ways to decrease encounters with skunks:

- Don't feed your pets outside, or, if you have to feed cats, place their food up high. Skunk cannot climb well and this will reduce the draw to your yard.
- Fill in any holes around porches, patios, and garages. Keep stumps and wood piles to a minimum. These are ideal hiding spaces for skunks, and making your area less appealing to them will help reduce encounters.
- Keep all trash cans and compost heaps closed and covered. These are sources of food, and skunks will quickly take advantage of any spills or messes (like ones caused by squirrels searching for food).
- Treat your yard for pests such as grubs and beetles. These are the natural foods of skunks, and reducing their numbers will help discourage them from coming around.
- Don't walk your dog around dusk; it's the time that skunks are most active, and when you're most likely to encounter them. Keep your dog close to you, so they don't have a chance to chase after a skunk or find one hiding under a bush.

The best thing to do when you encounter a skunk is to slowly back off, keeping your dog close to your side. But when that's not possible, for those dogs that just seem to head toward skunks no matter what, or those times you surprise or can't avoid a skunk, we have the best solutions!



First of all, the tomato juice treatment just doesn't work. The compounds in a skunk's spray just laugh at the juice, as there's nothing to remove them, and they are quite formidable. The other common treatment you'll see online of hydrogen peroxide and baking soda can reduce the smell, but doesn't eliminate the deep down odor, and you have to be extremely careful around the eyes and mouth. Our favorite solutions:

De-skunk. De-Skunk by SynergyLabs was formulated to efficiently & effectively remove the skunk's volatile sulfur compounds & odor like nothing else on planet Earth. Use promptly after your pet was sprayed in the same way you would use a shampoo. Made with the world's most powerful de-greasers, De-Skunk is your only remedy for getting the skunk-out, guaranteed. It's non irritating and safe for pets, carpets, and furniture.



Nature's Miracle skunk odor remover. This enzymatic cleanser breaks down the smell and eliminates it right at the skin. Saturate your dog and let it dry. For the face, soak a cloth and gently dap it around the mouth and head, taking care to avoid the eyes. Then give them a bath to help remove the odor and the oils from the spray; we like to use Earth Bath's Tea Tree and aloe vera shampoo. It leaves a clean scent and helps soothe irritated skin. It can also be used on carpets, rugs, floors, and bedding,

should your dog spread the smell around.



Pure Ayre is a highly concentrated enzyme cleaner that is safe, non-toxic, and highly effective. Pure Ayre is also the only food-grade solution, so it can be sprayed right into their ears, nose, and mouth. Spray a towel or cotton ball and wipe it around their eyes. Spray them down with the Pure Ayre, then bathe them with a great smelling, pet safe shampoo. It can also be used around the house to remove any stray odors.

Skunks do have a purpose in the yard; they are great for ridding gardens of large pests like caterpillars and beetles. They're also great mousers, and some find them quite fun to watch. But only do it at a distance, keep your pet far from them, and have some solutions ready on hand should you or your dog have an unlucky encounter with one.