



# Care of Orphaned Skunks Part 1

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[This is a compilation of information from many sources over many years.]

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NOTE: CARE OF ORPHANED SKUNKS PART 2  
For more medical specific information

## INFANTS

**Keep Warm:** Put the baby/babies in a box or cage with lots of rags and place a portion the box on a heating pad on **low**, leaving a portion unheated to allow the baby to move from the heat if necessary. Hot water in a jar, wrapped in a towel or a 'hot water bottle' can be used but the temperature must be monitored

**Find a wildlife rehabilitator** in your area and get the animal to them as soon as possible. Can't locate one yet? Do the following and get the baby to a rehabber as soon as possible.

**Examine** Let's take a good look at it. Do you have some latex gloves? Write down what you find. Each skunk will have a different stripe & nose stripe to differentiate...note also if they are male or female...if unsure it is probably and female.

Watch for **fleas ticks and lice** [some look like dandruff] and treat as you would a feline kitten. Check behind ears, in armpits, between toes. \*Be careful with flea powders or sprays which can harm their lungs, put on to your fingers then apply sparingly to baby. Flea shampoos or Selson Blue can also be used. Frontline or Advantage spray or drops for cats may be used on your skunk. If using drops, give 1/2 the dosage prescribed for cats. OR put a little Garlic Juice in the food almost every day. **Revolution or Advantage** [see your vet] can be applied to help rid the skunk of parasites, however sometimes it takes hours of pulling tiny dots [the size of a period], white or brown from their bodies.

**Discharges** from body orifices?

**Maggots** These are found in body orifices or wounds. They look like white cartilage in the ear but they squiggle! In one baby skunk I checked the ears quickly. Noticed nothing. Next day rechecked and was unsure about one ear. Got some alcohol and q-tips and swabbed the ear canal. From the lack of oxygen the maggots came to the surface and after several hours' work I pulled 31 maggots out of the ear with tweezers. Some about 1/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch up to 1/4 of an inch. Gross but necessary to do as the maggots could have caused, deafness, blindness and eventually death. **Capstar** is a drug you can get from the vet that will kill the maggots in the body, it however does not get them out of the body, you must do that by flushing the orifice or wound. Dose in a 4-5week baby skunk was the 'smallest'. One tablet was cut into four. 1 fourth was crushed added to something sweet [honey, jam]. One a day was given for 3 days. A different vet actually crushed the tablet mixed with water and flushed the ear with it...another has inserted into the rectum [assimilates quickly into blood stream here if the animal cannot swallow.]

**Dehydrated?** Baby has been without Momma for how long? Don't know? Then presume it is dehydrated. Pinch the skin. If it stays 'pinched' it is definitely dehydrated.

**Re-hydrate** all orphans for a day at least or more, if the animal needs it. *Home made version:*

*1-teaspoon salt, 1-Tablespoon sugar and 1 quart warm water OR Gatorade if you have it in the house. If you want to buy something go a pharmacy and ask for Pedialyte a liquid of which you will throw out most of it or powders like Gastrolyte, which you can mix what you need. Administer with eyedropper or preferably a 1 cc syringe [no needle]. If the animal is bigger use a 3cc syringe.*

Wean the baby from the rehydration fluids onto the formula over a day or two, depending on how dehydrated it is. Give 3/4 hydrating formula + 1/4 formula. Next feeding 1/2 + 1/2. Then 1/4 + 3/4 etc.

### **Age, Feeding Schedule & Diet**

*For amounts and weights note chart on the next page.*

**Formula:** Espilac puppy formula has been used for skunks which can be purchased at a pet food store or vets.[2010 saw problems with this formula]. Fox Valley has a special formula for skunks. Mix per instructions. Administer with syringe or bottle. [I find most will not take the bottle] At first they may not want it, as it does not taste like Mom. Slip the syringe between their lips and force some in. Very quickly they get the idea. They are small and will

only take a small amount depending on their size, note the chart below which will give you an idea of the approximate amount of intake. When they don't want more, stop. Watch their belly; do not feed so much it gets distended.

\*Never reheat the formula in a microwave as essential enzymes are destroyed. Mix small amounts and warm it up sitting in a bowl of hot water.

**Poop & Pee:** After feeding stimulate the intestinal and anal area, Momma skunk would have done this by licking in a downward motion to their bum. You can do the same with a warm wet rag or cotton ball. If very dehydrated they may not urinate or defecate immediately. They normally will do this on their own after their eyes are open but at first no matter the age you do it until you are sure they can. [Normally they often go 2x a day]. When eyes open use litter. [Note 'Bathroom' below] stool will turn to soft yellow and should be formed [often looks like grape clusters]-watch for diarrhea. A couple of drops of Kaopectate can be used for diarrhea. [Gloves, hand washing and careful hygiene are recommended here.]

**Age:** How old is the kit? New born with no hair [can usually still see where the stripe will be] Information below is compilation [www.orphanedwildlifecare.com/skunkcare](http://www.orphanedwildlifecare.com/skunkcare) & person information

**NOTE ON CHART BELOW I HAVE ADDED MY OBSERVATIONS –DIFFERENCE MAY BE CANADIAN TO U.S., PERHAPS IN THE SOUTH, BUT THERE ARE SOME INTERESTING DIFFERNECE.**

AGE	FEEDING	STIMULATION	HOUSING	SPECIAL CARE
<b>Birth</b> 30-35g -nearly naked -often showing black & white pattern -eyes & ears are sealed -can	2-2.5cc Formula 5-6 times per day.	-stimulate genital area before and after feeding -use a q-tip or the tip of your finger dipped in warm water.	-vital to house baby animals inside a house or under rags -cardboard box filled with soft, ravel free blankets. - heating pad under cage/box on low with thick padding of rags to not 'burn' baby. They will normally go to the hottest spot. -water bottle must be monitored often to keep warm enough. -protect from drafts.	-when handling the skunk hold its tail between its legs, this way it can not spray. Be gentle and do not startle the skunk and you should not have problems with it spraying. -wrap skunk in a soft towel when removed from box, to protect from drafts. -watch for signs of diarrhea. Stool may turn to a soft, yellow pudding from the formula.
<b>1 week</b> -50-75g -slightly furred -skin becoming pigmented	4-6 cc Formula 5-6 times per day	-same as above	-same as above	-wrap in towel while feeding. If a single skunk put a small stuffed animal in cage.
<b>2 weeks</b> -weight 125g -fully furred -ears open -musk odor is more apparent	8-10 cc Formula 4 times per day	-same as above	-same as above	-wrap in towel while feeding. -any diarrhea from formula should have cleared up by now. (Call your vet if it still has diarrhea). Starts to wiggle around, and needs more attention.
<b>3 weeks</b> -eyes might open	10-15 cc Formula 4 times per day	As eyes open stimulation can be reduced or stopped if they eliminating on their own.. get kitty litter into their cage	-can be moved into a large pet carrier, continue to provide towels and blankets.	-wrap in towel while feeding. Moving around more. -can give strongid a de-wormer to baby-follow directions per weight of baby as per directions or vet. The dose we give to cats

<p><b>4 weeks</b>  <b>Eyes opened</b>  -weight <b>340g-</b>  <b>to heavy for</b>  <b>any skunk I</b>  <b>have had-</b>  <b>200-250</b>  -attempting to  walk spider  like  -teeth are  nubbins</p>	<p>15-20 cc  Formula  4 times per  day  <b>I find this</b>  <b>too much.</b></p>	<p>Once eyes open they  will begin to use kitty  litter on their own.</p>	<p>-same as above.  -can eliminate artificial  heat source unless very  cold or only one or two  babies. Use your  discretion</p>	<p>is 0.4ml per kg (or 0.4ml per 2.2  lb).  -put small container of litter in  cage  Teeth are nubbins [showing  beneath gums]-<b>some will not</b>  <b>eat solids until teeth in longer</b>  <b>than this</b></p>
<p><b>5 weeks</b>  -very playful,  steadier on  legs  -teeth  erupting</p>	<p>Soft dog  kibble- with  formula on  it. 4x/day  10cc/meal</p>	<p>--skunk should  definitely be  Eliminateing on its  own.</p>	<p>Larger 'houses' or hidey  boxes will be needed they  grow quickly.</p>	<p>-introduce dry dog or puppy  kibble, moistened with water,  along with a separate dish of  drinking water. Refresh solid  foods morning and night.-  (increase as needed</p>
<p><b>6 weeks</b>  -teeth full  length</p>	<p>Soft dog  kibble- with  formula on  it. 4x/day  10cc/meal</p>		<p>-if cage is relative small  for this size and number of  skunks, allow them to run  about in a confined area.</p>	<p>*Depending on teeth  development, moistening of  kibble can be eliminated. ), and  introduce natural foods, nuts,  fruits, cooked meat, and  vegetables. These foods are  critical to produce a balanced,  healthy diet.</p>
<p><b>7-8 weeks</b>  -fully weaned  <b>Abt 600g</b></p>	<p>Soft dog  kibble- with  formula on  it. 3-4x/day  10cc/meal</p>		<p>- skunks are now ready to  live in the large outdoor  cage. They must have a  secure nesting box and a  sandbox (change  frequently) for digging if  you cannot put them on  grass. Remember they can  dig their way out of many  enclosures.</p>	<p>-skunk should require very little  if any formula and should be  eating solids consistently.  Wean fully during the 7th week.  Can be move to outside pen.  Adult, skunks cannot climb;  however, as babies they can  sometimes surprise you.  Starting about 8-9 weeks they  will start to sleek out and loose  their cute fluffy kitten coats.</p>



**Juvenile Skunks**

5 + weeks

**Housing**

Soon your little infant will need to be moved into appropriate size caging. Much depends on the number of skunks you have. They need room to run and play and dig. I go through a series of cage sizes ranging from hamster cage; double hamster cage to rabbit cages [3'x2'], indoors. Once the weather is moderate, and they are approx. five weeks old they can go in 'the big cage' outside. This cage is 4'hx4'wx6'1 and made of 1/2" wire around a wood frame. I lay boards on the

bottom for a floor. Kitty litter [note bathroom section below] is placed in two corners. Large plastic container boxes [with lid] have plenty of air holes and a door cut out. Rags are used for bedding and when older you can provide them with leaves, twigs etc. to line their nest. Occasionally the skunks will poop/pee in the house and the plastic and rags allow easy clean up. They are also waterproof.

While small one house is usually enough however they grow quickly and for 6-7 skunks I use two containers, granted most of the time they pile up in one, but you will notice the older they get the more territorial they become.

Even with a cage of this size they will need more room to run and play. I have a small walled 2'high, play area out side of the cage they cannot climb out of. If this play area is on the ground, be sure they can't dig out. Now normally skunks cannot climb as their butt is much heavier than the rest of them, but occasionally during growth spurts they can haul themselves up higher than expect.

They, inside their houses are lifted out of the cage and litter is moved also. [be sure they can't climb out using the litter box as steps.] This area is about 8'square and a child's covered sandbox is placed in it. Put dirt with stones/worms/grubs/plants, in it and watch them dig. Rarely but occasionally they will go to the bathroom in it. The lid is slid over to the side and they love to play under it.

Water and food are always set out. Make sure there is shade for them.

Because this play area is not covered to protect them from large predators [hawks etc] they are always supervised.

Transferring them in their house at this time allows them to become secure in their house during transfers later to vets or to their release site.

### **Solid Food**

*Now comes the decision time. In the wild skunks do not eat dog food, however many rehabbers cannot give the time & money to preparing meals consisting of different fruits, veggies & protein.*

For a balance meal skunks should have different fruits, all veggies [especially broccoli & carrots], fish, boiled chicken & other protein, eggs cheese, cottage cheese, starches [can include rice, pasta, sweet potato etc.] They then can be introduced to vegetation and live insects, small animals they would find in the wild. Rule of thumb: they eat what we should eat all food groups. Do not give them the junk food.

To avoid metabolic bone disease, broccoli and cauliflower and essential. In most cases the skunks can eat what you normal throw in the compost.

### **Supplements**

*Lack of Taurine and bad diets are the major causes of Cardiomyopathy in skunks. It has been suggested that a skunk needs approx. 250 mgs of Taurine daily to help prevent Cardiomyopathy and other health issues.*

Hartz Cat vitamins [50mg], Nutro Ultra Dog Kibble 1000/kg –Taurine capsules 500mg capsules

OR

Kibble dog/puppy food can be soaked in water and given to skunks to wean off of formula [might add formula to it at first to entice them] **never use any type of cat foot or any canned pet food.** A good kibble puppy chow can be used as a base and fruits, veggies and chicken supplemented. As they progress introduce vegetation and live insects, small animals they would find in the wild.

### **The Wild Diet**

They are especially fond of grasshoppers, ground beetles, and even bees, excavating their nests and eating the larvae. Skunks are an omnivore, feeding heavily on a wide variety of animal food in spring and summer, including insects and grubs, small mammals, the eggs of

ground-nesting birds, and amphibians. Some of the more important invertebrate foods consumed are spiders, snails, ants, wasps and crayfish. They eat fruits in season, such as wild cherries, ground cherries, black berries, blueberries, and many others

Skunks are diggers and will get insects from the ground, old stumps etc. If they can't be taken out of the cage to dig then put pots of dirt into the cage or run area and put insects, grubs etc. in for them to find.

A child's sandbox works well.

**Chocolate kills. No fried foods. No sunflower seed in the shell. No cat food. No junk.**

### Bathroom

Put clay, unscented kitty litter in their cage [in appropriate sized container] once their eyes are open. They always back up to poop in a corner [they'll pick the corner] so a high back kitty litter container works best. [Small aluminum bake tins cut down work well and are disposable-fold over sharp edges. Ferret corner litter containers work well as they grow.] On a weekly basis, clean the litter box or floor with a solution of 1/4 cup of Clorox to 1 gallon of warm water. This formula will not cause health problems or damage the skunk's lungs. Be sure to wear gloves when handling

Clean the litter out every day, depending on the number of skunks and their size, several times a day.



### Christmas Trees and Stomping

One day your little baby skunk will turn into an opinionated juvenile. When startled or wanting attention or wanting to play, you will hear a little thump, thump. Their little front feet will stomp on the floor to get your attention. Their whole body is usually rigid and their tails spread like a Christmas tree. It is quite a sight.

In the wild this is the first line of defense which warns predators to PAY ATTENTION! , I AM HEAR! They do not spray from this position. [note Smell/Spraying below]

As adults they make few vocal noises but do use stomping to communicate.

Occasionally when young they will do a running stomp. They run and stomp their front feet and momentum causes their butts to continue in a forward direction, flipping

them right over. A spectacular feat.

**White Stripe?** Each skunk in a litter usually has a different stripe; some have no stripe at all.

If his stripe is yellow or gray there is something wrong. This could be diet, stress or medical. Pay attention to the food groups? Is he eating something from all of them? Too much noise or activity near the animal? You may need to go to a vet to determine the cause. Every skunk has a different length of stripe and blaze on their nose; these will not change as they grow.

The problem can also be roundworms.

## **Roundworms**

**All Skunks Have Roundworms.** *Even if they are not found in fecal testing,* they are in your skunk's body and he must be *wormed twice a month.* Strongid is recommended and sometimes can be purchased at TSC stores cheaper than at the vets. Follow directions by weight. Most doses are .4cc/ 4.4kg of weight. It is given three days in a row then every 2 weeks.

Evict or Nemex 2 liquid dog wormers can also be used.

If you prefer the All-Natural way you can use seeds from Cantaloupe, Fig Juice or Cloves. These will not harm your skunk in any way and are very safe to use.

Many vets will say de-worming is not necessary however it has been proven through experience that this is a problem with all skunks. In adults even a 'depressed behaviour can be rectified by de-worming.]

Symptoms are rubbing diarrhea bottoms on the floor, bad breath, coughing, lack of appetite, bloating, and hiccups and rectal prolapsed. The problem with roundworms and skunks is you cannot kill the round worms until they attach themselves to the intestine. Some roundworms just float around in the blood stream filling up the lungs and the heart and it is so common in the animal world to have roundworms that people just forget how serious a problem this can be. This roundworm is not the same as raccoon round worm however, it is still dangerous and all fecal material should be treat with care using gloves and washing well with soap afterward

**Sensitivities:** Skunks are very sensitive to chemicals/ candles/smoke etc. If bleaching cages or using disinfectants when cleaning cages, be sure to rinse very well.

**Disappearing Skunks:** They can escape and hide in areas, which seem much too small for them [what their head goes through, so to does the rest of their body].

## **Spray & Smell**

Skunks can spray almost from birth. But not too worry. I have rehabbed lots and rarely been sprayed. The scent gland is located in the rectum and when a skunk is going to spray the anus rolls back to expose two nipple like glands. When they spray they go into a horseshoe shape with face and butt facing you. As adults they can spray up to 15 ft with accuracy. Now this cute little skunk kit often smells like 'skunk' when you get it. The younger they are the more they smell. Very young they have little control over with their anal muscle and some of the smell 'escapes'. By 3 weeks when their eyes open, they usually have control.

Occasionally they make a smell, a whiffer, which is much like a fart, which doesn't smell great, but they have not sprayed. Just open a window, it will go away.

A skunk sprays because it is afraid. Don't scare it! They don't see well, even as adults and sudden movements and noises will scare them. Move slowly and speak calmly, especially when you first get the orphans. As they become accustomed to you the danger dissipates.

If the baby does spray don't worry, it washes up well at this age. At puberty [between 3-6months] an oil goes into the gland that causes it to adhere to clothes, skunk, hair etc. but at this age the problem is not as great. Dissolve some ascorbic acid [used for canning, also known as Vit C] in water and use in a spray bottle as an air freshener or to wipe down the area which was sprayed. White vinegar is also good. For an adult's powerful spray there are receipts available that don't turn the dog orange:

### **Eradicate skunk smell:**

*On clothes:* one in ten solution of bleach and water will usually take it out. I have been sprayed on clothing and used only a ¼ C of bleach poured in after the washer begins to agitate has taken care of it. Since spray is actually a watery gel and goes directly to an area, you can wash each area individually. Just follow your nose.

Also, a solution of ½ white vinegar and ½ water will make baby's bottom smell like nice again.  
(Granted, a bit like a salad, but nice again!!)

Or

*On people, pets or other items:* ¼ C Baking Soda

1 teaspoon dishwashing detergent

1 quart Hydrogen Peroxide                      Apply while it is foaming

The detergent breaks down the oil in the spray and the oxygen released in foam neutralizes the Thiols [odor]

*House Odor:* Boil Vinegar for a couple of hours

*Deterrent Spray [for wild skunks]*

8oz liquid dishwashing liquid + 1 gal water

Spray area especially perimeter. It is unpleasant to wildlife but good for plants

**Play time.** Unlike other wildlife, skunks don't play with most toys; they just love to play with each other. If you have a lone skunk, try and find another litter to place it with. If not put a stuffed animal in with it. You then become the playmate. Wear a heavy/fluffy glove when playing as it can be rough and they will know that special glove time is playtime. They will charge at you with back arched, tail up and flared like a Christmas Tree, stamping its feet and scooting backward. It is not mad or vicious it is doing the skunk shuffle and wants you to play. Get down and play. If he stamps, you stamp your hands on the floor. When he scoots away chase him then stop and stamp and he will come back to you.

They also love tug with a towel or rag. They often play soccer with small balls and defend the litter.

Most love to have their tummys tickled and will often run over to you and flop on their backs. All of these games are less and less popular the older they get.

**Noises.** Adult skunks make virtually no noises, except a high pitched scream when in distress. Babies however, tweet like a bird when happy and grunt like a pig when unhappy or wanting attention. They also make full use of the scream when losing the wrestling match.

**Nails.** Their nails grow quickly but should not have to be cut prior to release. If it is necessary to trim them hold a flashlight on nail to see the blood vessel and avoid it.

### **Transporting**

If you need to transport animals to a vet and are concerned about picking them up, place some food in the travel cage and let them go in. Cover the travel cage so movement won't startle them into spraying. Talk softly to the animal and move slowly and you can do just about anything to them. I have never had a skunk stressed from a car ride; they usually just curl up and go to sleep. As they grow older you can block the door of their house/container and transport them in their house.

**Infections:** I had a juvenile skunk develop an abscess and had to soak its foot in hot Epsom salts, incise the wound, squeeze out puss, flush out the wound, apply antibiotics etc and not once did the skunk nip or spray. Skunks, unlike other wildlife allow you to do almost anything to them if you talk nice. [The vet is constantly amazed how docile they are.] Eyes, even when closed can develop infections which require strong antibiotic and much squeezing out of the pus. It does not seem to cause blindness, which amazes me. Our vet said that skunks seem to develop a layer of fat under which bacteria can travel easily through out the body.

Once an infection starts it is very difficult to get rid of it and our vet advised going to a heavy-duty antibiotic immediately.

### **Medical Specifics**

There are more medical specifics following. Part 2

**Contact:** The older the skunk gets the less contact you should have with them. This is very easy if you have several, as they really don't want much to do with you. As release time comes you should be just feeding and cleaning out the cage, however they must remain familiar enough with you that you can catch them [without getting sprayed] in case of vet visits.

**Release:** In Canada 90 days [3 months] is the earliest they can be released and that is as a slow release where someone will provide food for them for a few weeks. If the skunk lingers at the release site and returns for food, use the following guide, unless the animal loses weight:

Week 1: drop food every day same time. Near dusk or dawn is normal foraging time for skunks

Week 2: drop food every other day none of their favourite food. Veggies/fruit and chicken

Week 3: drop food every third day.

Week 4: drop food every fourth day.

Week 5: you have the idea but usually by now they are established on their own. Some animals have more problems than others especially on a solitary release and may require long term assistance. This fact must be factored into your release site from the beginning.

Note: In all the releases I have done I usually I usually never see the skunks again, nor find evidence of their presence. I leave their houses with them but usually by the second or third day they have abandoned their accommodation and disappear. If the food left is untouched after a few days I abandon the schedule and just check occasionally.

**Surgery:** Vets should use ISOFLORINE GAS when doing surgery.

In 2010 - Domitox and Ketamine, 0.01ml each mixed IM where used in surgery

### **HEALTHY SKUNK**

Glossy, thick coat

Eyes bright and clear

No yellowing of the white fur

Solid, formed stools

Active and happy

Not overweight

Good appetite

Not underweight

### **UNHEALTHY SKUNK**

Drastic change in bathroom habits (middle of floor, frequent urination, many locations)

Frequent thirst or increase in the amount of water Dry,

Brittle, dull or thin coat

Coat loses its color-becomes dull,

Dandruff

Yellowing or loss of hair

Obesity (fat skunk)

Dry, cracked feet  
Aggressive behavior and biting  
Loss of appetite  
Makes constant unusual noises  
Runny nose and eyes  
Body odors-Altered skunks should have no body odor  
Coughing and sneezing  
Bad Breath  
Rubs sides of face or head  
Limps

### **Skunk CPR**

Open the mouth and clear any obstructions, use the modified Heimlich above if necessary.

Lay skunk on right side.

Using two fingers under left arm pit do slow and steady compressions, one every two/three seconds, do this four or five times.

Hold mouth closed and place your mouth over nose and blow sharply into the nose two/three times.

Repeat procedure until breathing and normal pulse return.

### **Choking**

Monitor your skunk(s) after meals to make sure they are not choking or have something stuck in their mouth. Skunks that eat fast, or will fight with other pets for foods, will get food or other things stuck in their mouth or throat. Some skunks will eat too much at a meal and throw-up some of the food, occasionally they will aspirate the food. Usually they will try to use their front nails to pull the object out, sometimes they are not successful and need your assistance.

If you have a skunk that is prone to choking, chop the food into fine pieces and make sure that you don't give anything thick, like peanut butter, without watering it down. You should soak dry (dog) food in water, or a 1:1 mixture of fruit juice and water, to soften the food. Sticky foods, like bread and moist grains, should be broken into small pieces and mixed well with other foods. Also make sure fresh water is available after meals.

If the skunk is still breathing (partial obstruction) try presenting sweetened water, juice, etc., to determine if the skunk will drink and possibly clear the object. **Do not force the skunk to drink**, you can try a few drops on the tongue or gums to induce the skunk to drink if necessary.

You should have a few plastic or wooden spoons, wooden sticks or pop-cycle sticks, or a rubber-coated baby spoon, that you can use to pry the skunk's mouth open and dislodge anything stuck in there. **Be careful that you don't push the object farther into the throat! Do not put your fingers in the skunk's mouth!**

If necessary you can use a modified Heimlich maneuver to help dislodge an object stuck in the throat:

Place the skunk straddled across one arm with the head in your hand (you may have to hold the skunk by the sides of the head with your fingertips being careful **not** to hold the neck or throat tightly).

Tilt the head down as much as you can and still maintain control.

Strike the skunk three or four times using sharp blows with the heel of the hand just behind the front legs.

Support the back and turn the skunk over while keeping the head tilted down.

Strike the skunk three or four times with **two fingers** between the front legs.

Inspect the mouth to determine if the object is still there, make sure you don't allow the object to slip back down the throat.

Repeat the procedure as necessary.

If the skunk stops breathing you may have to perform CPR.

**Unreleasable Skunks:** Very occasionally you may have an unreleasable skunk. It may have physical disabilities to limbs, blindness etc, which make it impossible for the skunk to survive. If you are an Authorized Wildlife Custodian under the MNR you could apply for an educational license however more than likely you will be required to take the skunk to a license wildlife sanctuary/zoo or custodian.

Descending needs to be done as early as possible for the sake of the vet; however it is difficult to find one who will do it. Most will not descent after 2-3 months. Good luck.

Spaying and neutering are **mandatory** for skunks in captivity. Females are prone to severe health problems (often kidney related) due to heat stress after their first couple heat cycles. Additionally, skunks undergo dramatic personality changes when their hormones fluctuate and rage. The end result is biting and undesirable behaviorism in about 95% of male skunks and 75% of female skunks. Males should be neutered about 3months of age or as soon as the testicles become palpable and females spayed by 4 months of age. The anesthesia of choice, and the standard for exotic pets today, is called isoflourine. Layers of internal sutures plus surgical glue on the exterior tissue work best because many skunks chew their stitches. It takes 3-6 weeks after the surgery for the hormones to stabilize.

**Zoonoses:** These are diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans. The causative agents are bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi. Possible zoonotic exposure can be eliminated by good personal hygiene and handling of animals in a prescribed manner. Frequent hand and glove washing with an approved disinfectant such as NOLVASANâ surgical scrub must be a priority that is strictly adhered to. Good hygiene will also prevent cross-contamination of non-zoonotic diseases from animal to animal. Do not have hand-to-eye or hand-to-mouth contact while working with animals or soiled animal caging, bedding, and accessories.

Handling animals in the prescribed manner for that species can prevent zoonotic exposure through bites, scratches, and abrasions.

**Estivating:** Skunks aren't true hibernators. They estivate, which means take longer naps, but they should get up regularly to eat....some every 2 days, most every day.

### **Skunks As Pets**

Because they are a loving, happy animal, many people want them for pets. In both Canada and the United States it is illegal to keep or own any wildlife. There are, however, skunk farms in the US which have breed skunks for pets for 75 years, rabies free. They are bred different colours to distinguish them from 'wild' black and white skunks. Each province and state has different laws as to the legality of owning these animals. There are no skunk farms in Canada, however the Federal Government [Canadian Food Inspection Agency], in the past issued permits to import. It is unknown if it is still allowed to day. Please contact them if interested and don't forget to get the information on fees and quarantine. It is not cheap.

For more information Skunks As Pets Canadian representative Viv Chernoff can be contacted at [ace2@ntl.sympatico.ca](mailto:ace2@ntl.sympatico.ca)

**More information:**

There is always more to learn about rehabbing skunks. When you are ready give me a call. **519-842-9416** or [lbeehey@rogers.com](mailto:lbeehey@rogers.com) I am by no means an expert, however I have the contacts to a network of skunkers who are always willing to help.

Good luck and enjoy.

