

De-Skunking Your Pet!



For many of us, evening walks with the pup are one of life's greatest joys. Smelling the distinctive odor of a skunk, clearly is not! Fear of being sprayed by a skunk should not keep you, or your dog, stuck inside at dusk (when skunks are most active). It's rarely dangerous, and if you're prepared, clean up isn't too bad.

Skunks do not seek out people and pets to "spray". It is their only defense in a world that is sometimes startling to these timid critters. They only have a limited amount of "ammo" at any time, so they will only spray when they have no other option. Their spray causes temporary blindness when directed towards the face of predators, and allows the skunk to escape.

The noxious odor is created by Thiol, a chemical compound made of sulfur and hydrogen that is "fired" from the anal glands. This same combination is, not surprisingly, found in feces and rotting flesh. What makes skunk spray just a bit worse is that it is quite oily and contains additional compounds that, when mixed with water, release even more of the smell. So clearly it's important to treat this as a unique problem, and one that a long bath will not resolve!

The key to ridding your dog, cat, clothes, etc. of the skunk smell is to create a chemical reaction that will neutralize the odor. Even though the ingredients are fairly common, you may not have sufficient quantities on hand (especially if you have a big dog) when you need them. So it's a great idea to stock up now, before you need them, and have all the items ready to go in a stinky emergency!

- 32 fluid ounces 3% hydrogen peroxide (this ingredient will expire in time, so replace your stock a couple times a year)
- ¼ cup baking soda
- 2 tsp liquid soap
- 1 quart lukewarm water
- Plastic bowl (one that can be thrown away)
- Plastic mixing spoon
- Protective eye ointment or mineral oil
- Rubber gloves
- Towels

Steps:

It's important to start right away. The longer you wait, the worse it gets (another reason to stock up ahead of time)! It's best to do this as you would bathe your dog outside, or if inside, be sure to open as many windows as you can.

- 1** – Put on rubber gloves and check your pet for any injuries. Check the eyes for redness or any discharge, since pets often are sprayed in the face. If you see any injuries, contact your veterinarian before doing anything else!
- 2** – Rinse out the pet's eyes, nose and mouth with warm water, as best you can. Then put a few drops of the protective eye ointment or mineral oil in your pet's eyes. This protects them from getting any of the remedy solution in their eyes.
- 3** – Combine the hydrogen peroxide, baking soda and liquid soap. Add some lukewarm water if you're treating a large dog. The solution should start to fizz (remember elementary school volcanoes?), which means the chemical reaction is happening. Start using the solution as soon as you see this! This combination will oxidize the volatile thiols, and neutralize the smell.
- 4** - Massage the solution into the pet's coat using a sponge or cloth. Massage it down to the skin to break up the oily skunk spray, and leave it there for at least ten minutes (20 minutes is better). Avoid the pet's eyes, mouth and ears, and keep them from licking any of it.
- 5** – Rinse your pet with lukewarm water. You may need to repeat the previous step 3 – 5 times to fully neutralize the odor. The smell of skunk oil can last up to a year, so when in doubt, repeat step 4 one more time! Once you feel it's really, truly gone, dry off your pet and give them a big treat!

You may be able to avoid skunks by not venturing out at dusk or early evening, but what fun is that? It's best to keep your cat inside at night (and during the day), but a nighttime trip (if even to the bathroom) is unavoidable with dogs.

When walking your dog, if you shine a flashlight up ahead, and swing it left and right, you'll likely catch the reflection of the skunk's eyes in plenty of time to turn around. You may also want to discourage your dog from rummaging in drain-pipes, under bushes, and in other dark areas while on your walk. These are the areas where skunks hang out during the day, and then emerge at night. With a bit of warning, you can usually just quietly reverse course and all critters will happily go their own way. However, having your own personal "de-skunking" kit on hand will be a welcome relief for the times you have no warning!