

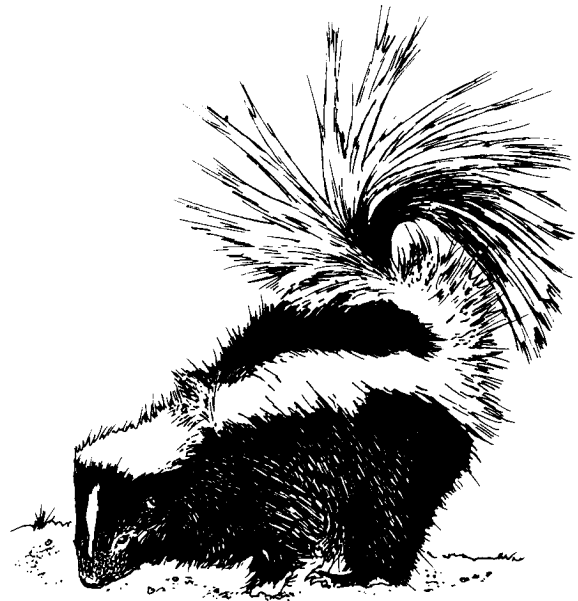


Banishing Skunk Odor

Some Tips for Deskunking People, Pets, and Spaces

It happens. You, or a customer, or more often a customer's pet, has a run-in with a skunk! Sometimes a threatened skunk will spray under a porch or in a crawlspace or garage with the smell getting into the house. Skunks have even been known to spray automobiles. Nobody's happy living with skunk odor.

Besides the smell, there can be health concerns for those who have come face to face with a skunk. Skunk "musk" is a yellowish, oily liquid that is sprayed from two sacs located on each side of the anus. The fluid can temporarily blind and stun people or pets sprayed in the face, causing watery eyes, nasal irritation, and even nausea. The smell can cause breathing problems for asthmatics.



Deskunking surfaces and furnishings: Some commercial odor-masking products are simply deodorizers that cover up the smell. Others claim to "neutralize" the odor instead. Freshwave[®] (also sold as Ecosorb[®]) can be sprayed on surfaces and also is available as a slow-acting gel or candle. Epoleon N100[®] is diluted in water and then sprayed or wiped onto surfaces. Dilute Neutroleum alpha[®] can be used when washing clothes and fabrics, as well as on surfaces.

Draperies or upholstery covers can often be dry-cleaned, or cleaned in place with cleaning fluids or household bleach (test on an inconspicuous portion of the fabric first). Be careful not to combine deodorizers and cleaning products unless the labels allow you to do so. The more porous the surface, the harder it will be to get rid of the odor. Concrete, wallboard, and unpainted wood will likely need more than one treatment.

If the smell is very strong, or to treat large areas like attics or crawlspaces, electric

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foggers are sometimes used. The smaller droplets stay airborne longer, penetrate into crevices more easily, and require less product. At a droplet size of 15 microns, 16 ounces of neutralizing solution should treat 1,500 square feet.

Ventilation is very important to help dissipate the odor. Change the air filter on the HVAC system after you have finished the initial treatment since it can hold and recirculate the odor for some time.

Deskunking pets and people: There are dozens of home remedies for getting rid of skunk odor, everything from bathing in tomato juice to dousing with vinegar. Most of these simply cover up the skunk odor with another odor. There is a homemade solution though, discovered by a chemist, that effectively neutralizes skunk odor -- Mix 1 quart 3% hydrogen peroxide, 1/4 cup baking soda, and 1 teaspoon liquid dish soap. Apply this to skin, hair, or pet hair and allow to remain for 3-4 minutes before rinsing off. Use the mixture as soon as it is prepared and do not save it for re-use. A temporary lightening of hair may occur. Veterinarians and pet supply stores also have commercial products for use on pets.

Cleaning clothing: Clothing should be soaked in dilute liquid laundry bleach and then washed, or dry cleaned, as appropriate. More than one cleaning may be necessary and if sprayed directly, it's best to just throw out the clothes. Neutroleum Alpha can also be used in the washing machine to deodorize clothes. Shoes, hats, or other nonwashable items should be hung outdoors in fresh air, or they can be buried for a few days in dry soil or an absorbent material like kitty litter.

Time is probably the most important factor in removing skunk odor. It can take a week or two for the smell to dissipate and it can be noticeable again during high humidity (or if the pet gets wet!). You likely will have to do more than one treatment of surfaces or spaces. If the odor doesn't seem to go away, it's also possible that the skunk may have resprayed under or near the house.