

Baby Skunk Information

Compliments of:



Congratulations

Nothing is quite as exciting than bringing home your new baby skunk! You will be happy to know that there are a group of experienced skunk owners who are willing to share information, and stories about pet skunks. Sometimes what seems like an insurmountable problem to the newcomer, is actually just a phase the skunk is going through. The tips and tricks experienced skunk owners give, can make the difference between keeping your new baby for life or having to give the baby up because your expectations were not met. At the end of this booklet, there will be contact people and resources so you can further educate yourself. Here is some basic information to get started.

Before Baby Comes Home

- 1) Please check the laws in your state regarding owning a pet skunk. Pet skunks are classified as captive wildlife so you may be required to obtain a permit or meet other specifications. For the safety of your new baby, make sure you are in compliance with your state's requirements.
- 2) Be aware that most states require mandatory reporting of a skunk bite. Once a bite is reported, your skunk will be tested for rabies. This is a death sentence for your skunk. There is no approved rabies vaccine for skunks, and no quarantine available if your skunk bites someone. Never allow anyone a chance to be bitten by your skunk.
- 3) Plan what type of diet to feed your skunk. Diet is very important, as it directly affects both the animal's lifespan and quality of life. A species appropriate diet is highly recommended. Skunks are omnivores with a digestion system of a carnivore and the diet of an insectivore. They will eat most anything, even if it is not good for them. Pet skunks need the same high protein diet that wild skunks eat.
- 4) Locate a Veterinarian who can care for your skunk. It is important to verify that the Veterinarian you choose has experience treating skunks, and to find out what their policy is if your baby were to bite a staff member.
- 5) Provide a safe area for your skunk. Protect your baby skunk from other animals and don't leave them unsupervised with small children. Consider setting up a safe area in your home for he or she to stay in when you are away. Most baby skunks can climb, so consider using a baby gate, an enclosure, or set them up with their own room. Plan for the type of bedding you want to use. Most skunks prefer a covered bed like a cat condo or you can use a small carrier with the front removed, lined with a towel. Start with one room at a time, skunk proofing your home. If you must confine your baby to a crate or cage, make sure

there is enough room for a litter area and don't keep them in there for more than few hours. Caged skunks do not make good pets! Skunks are very curious animals and you will need to secure drawers and cabinets within their reach. Magnetic baby locks should keep even the most determined baby out of your cabinets. Be prepared for your baby to climb, not only on your furniture, but he or she may also climb into the refrigerator, dishwasher, or even the oven. You might want to block access to the rear of large appliances because you don't want them in the habit of sleeping or going potty in hard to clean areas. Close up all holes, block access to crawl spaces, and tighten any floor level vents. Remove all plants known to be poisonous to pets. Remove any chemicals, including household cleaners out of reach of the skunk.

6) Assemble a first aid kit before your baby's arrival. The following items have been useful to get started. An infant thermometer, nail clippers, colloidal silver for wounds, syringes for giving medicines or de-wormer, electrolyte water, activated charcoal for accidental poisoning (needs emergency veterinary care), peroxide to clean minor wounds, cotton balls, Quick Stop to stop bleeding after nail trimming, Vaseline in case of rectal prolapse (needs veterinary care).

7) Keep a list of emergency phone numbers of experienced skunk owners. They may be helpful if you need help deciding how serious an issue is, or if you can't reach your Veterinarian after hours.

Baby's Arrival

So today is the big day, your permit has been approved and your baby is coming home. How exciting! Hopefully you will have plenty of time to spend with your baby skunk. He or she will grow quickly, so you want to enjoy this time of their life. Follow your baby around as he or she explores the house and you will quickly find out what wasn't skunk proofed. Your baby will likely be scared and miss the comfort of snuggling with other skunks. He or she will need time to get use to you, so hold him or her as much as possible. Make sure he or she has at least one stuffed animal to snuggle with when you can't hold them. Frequent short interactions throughout the day are better than one or two long interactions as your baby will need rest periods. Do NOT play rough with your baby skunk. Many baby skunks go through a nippy phase. How the owner reacts to this will directly affect the personality of the skunk later on. Experienced skunk owners will tell you it takes most of the first year to properly socialize a pet skunk. Some may even take a year and a half. Starting with realistic expectations is critical for a successful outcome. Pet skunks are a long term commitment!



Health Care

So you did your research and picked out an experienced Veterinarian. What is next? You should make an appointment so everyone can get acquainted. Your Veterinarian is your partner in keeping your new baby healthy!

Parasites

All baby skunks come with roundworms! Some will come with coccidia (small single cell parasites). Please do not assume that you will see parasites in the skunk's stool as that can be a fatal mistake. They also do

not always show up when tested. One of the leading causes of death for young skunks is from parasites. They can build up causing prolapses, seizures and death. It is important that your Veterinarian dose the de-wormer until the skunk gets to be at least 4 pounds. Be aware that the wrong de-wormer can kill a skunk! Strongid (Pyrantel Pamoate) is recommended until the skunk reaches 4 lbs, then Panacur (Fenbendazole) is recommended as it kills more types of parasites. You will need to de-worm your new baby at least 3 times, several weeks apart like you would a puppy so make sure to get enough medicine from your Veterinarian. After that, you should be able to de-worm twice a year. If there are other household pets, you might want to do everyone together. Once you switch to twice a year, the de-worming cycle is as follows: skunks between 4 and 10 pounds will get Panacur for 3 days in a row, wait exactly 2 weeks and repeat for 3 more days. Wait 6 months and give for 3 days, wait exactly 2 weeks and repeat for 3 more days. If you prefer the liquid Panacur, you can get that from your Veterinarian along with the correct dosage by weight of the animal. You can purchase Panacur C granules online. You will need 2, of the 1 gram packs to properly de-worm your skunk. Each box contains 3 packs so you will be able to give it for 3 days. It is tasteless and easily mixes with food.

Neuter and Spay

Your pet skunk has been de-scented by the breeder, but in most cases, you will need to have your new baby neutered or spayed by six to 8 months of age. Females can develop Pyometra, a life threatening infection of the uterus, if not spayed. Both males and females can become aggressive when mating season arrives. Please do not miss this important step as hormones, plus their natural instincts, can cause them to act in a way that may not make them a good pet.

Vaccinations

Your baby will need to be vaccinated against canine distemper. I have mine done once, when they are between 16 and 20 weeks, others owners start sooner. At 16 to 20 weeks, the immunity acquired from mom is gone. You need to understand the risks of giving vaccinations too early and also the risk in waiting. Almost every year, I hear from someone who lost a baby skunk from anemia within days of a vaccination. On the other hand, canine distemper is almost always fatal. Prior to the vaccination, request that your skunk be given a dose of Benadryl to lessen the chance of a reaction. Be prepared to sit in the Veterinarian's office for at least 30 minutes afterward, so help will be available if needed.

Currently, there are no vaccines specifically for skunks. Many owners prefer a ferret vaccine for distemper or a puppy vaccine. Combination canine, or feline vaccines are not recommended. Rabies vaccines will not protect your skunk from being seized if they bite someone and are not recommended. Pet skunks should always be housed indoors where they are not exposed to rabies.

Titers, a blood test that can identify the presence of antibodies from a previous vaccination, can be done annually starting 3 years after vaccination. Titers should be done to Dr Dodd's protocol or at her lab, Hemopet. If that is not an option, you might want to consider getting one more canine distemper at age three if the skunk is healthy. Never vaccinate an unhealthy skunk!

Seizures

A small percentage of baby skunks will develop seizures. Seizures occur more frequently in babies that are fed a low protein, or a high carbohydrate diet. You'll know your baby is having problems if he or she appears groggy, or falls over. The best thing you can do is remain calm, and talk to him or her soothingly. Rub your baby's feet and make sure they are not cold. A drop of syrup rubbed on the gums can often stop the seizure. Once the baby has returned to normal, offer a high protein treat. Make sure you notify your

Veterinarian as soon as possible as any seizure is serious! The number one cause of seizures in pet skunks is improper or incomplete de-worming.

Prolapses

Prolapses in skunks occur because of improper or incomplete de-worming. This can happen a day or so after de-worming a skunk with a huge parasite load. The dead and dying parasites cause a blockage that are a medical emergency! In cases where the prolapse won't stay in, your Veterinarian may decide to put a stitch, until it heals. Some skunk owners feel they can handle this but in my experience, most, if not all, prolapse cases require a Veterinarian as soon as possible. Until you can get to your Veterinarian, the most important thing is to carefully get the intestine back in where it belongs. Make sure the area is clean, then apply a bit of KY Jelly or Vaseline on the tip of your sterile, gloved finger, apply light pressure, and slowly push it back in. Hold for a few minutes. While healing, keep your baby on a soft food or liquid diet until healed. Do NOT feed a high fiber diet to a skunk with a prolapse as it can make it worse.



Medicines

Skunks are very sensitive to certain medications. Never give an NSAID, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug, pain reliever to your skunk! NSAIDS to avoid are: Aspirin, Metacam, Meloxicam, Carprofen, Ketoprofen or any other NSAID. Tramadol has been safely used for pain relief for years in skunks. Dosage is same as a cat.

The Fluoroquinolone family of antibiotic drugs also should NOT be given to skunks. This includes: Cipro, Danofloxacin (Advocin, Advocid), Difloxacin (Dicural, Vetequinon), Enrofloxacin (Baytril), Ibafloracin (Ibaflin), Marbofloxacin (Marbocyl, Zenequin), Orbifloxacin (Orbax, Victas), Sarafloxacin (Floaxsol, Saraflox, Sarafin) or any other Fluoroquinolone family of antibiotic drugs.

Things to Remember

Cleaning

Cleaners and household chemicals can be a danger for your skunk. Consider using natural cleaners like vinegar and baking soda. Because skunks are sensitive, some products marked pet safe, still may not be safe for skunks. Bleach should not be used on their bedding or any surface they will have access to. Peroxide is a good substitution for bleach.

Socialization

Skunks are crepuscular, which means they come out at dawn and dusk. Your baby will sleep a lot as he or she will grow quickly to their adult size by the time they are 8 months to 1 year old. The average adult skunk sleeps 20 hours a day. You will want to spend plenty of time with your baby. This is referred to as socializing the baby. The amount of time spent socializing your baby, will determine what type of pet you end up with. Frequent play times are best since your baby will need sleep. You should also have set meal times as your baby needs to eat 4 to 5 times per day.

Skunk Sitter

It can be difficult to travel with a pet skunk as they are not legal in most states. Make sure you have a safe place to leave your skunk if you have to leave town unexpectedly, or have a trusted pet sitter to care for the skunk in your home. Hopefully, you live near another skunk owner and you can exchange skunk sitting for each other. Someone who pet sits dogs and cats may not be comfortable with caring for captive wildlife. It is best to have a plan in advance as you don't want to have to board them somewhere that will cage them, or you may have an angry skunk when you return!

Potty Training

Most skunks are easy to potty train as they prefer to go in a corner. They will let you know which ones they want to use and the smart owner will cover the area to protect the floor. They most likely will require multiple pans as baby skunks do not travel very far to go potty. Most skunks will need to go right before, or right after, meals. You can start out using a ferret corner style litter box but most likely will need something larger as baby grows up. Purina make a dog litter box in two sizes that works well for adult skunks. Newspaper is cheap and easy, but puppy pads or paper litter will work too. If you must use clay litter, make sure it is unscented, and only the non-clumping kind. Pine litter is not recommended. Skunks prefer a clean litter box, and some will go right next to the box if it doesn't meet their standards.

Safety

- 1) Please never allow your other pets to have unsupervised access to a baby skunk. Instinct rules, even with domestic animals, who may see your new baby as an annoyance, or even a tasty snack.
- 2) Baby skunks should not be allowed to go outside without careful supervision. If you treat your lawn with chemicals, it will not be safe for your skunk to walk on. Be aware that hawks and other predatory birds can grab the skunk and fly away with a tiny baby.
- 3) Skunks are also predators, and may be a threat to other small pets like rabbits, birds, pet rodents or ferrets. Never set up a food chain in your home!
- 4) Baby gates are great for confining your new baby while they learn good potty habits. They can also be a danger for your baby. Choose carefully and consider lining the gate with acrylic, so no little parts get stuck between the rails of the baby gate.

5) Most skunks will bond with only one family member, usually the one who feeds them, or interacts with them the most. This is normal. If there are small children in the home, please keep the baby skunk out of reach of the children. The first year mortality rate is high for babies, and if they are dropped or stepped on, they may be severely injured or die!

Supplementation

Your baby should be able to get all the nutrients he or she needs from a species appropriate diet but not everyone has the time to make a detailed food plan. If it is overwhelming to develop a healthy food plan, keep in mind Below is some guidelines on supplements for skunks. Make sure your Veterinarian is aware of any supplements given.

Vitamins

There are no available RDAs, or Recommended Daily Allowances, for skunks. We know that like most mammals, they do not convert beta carotene, also known as Pro-Vitamin A, to Vitamin A. Because they are crepuscular, they are not exposed to much sunlight. Even when they are exposed to sunlight, they have a double coat that would block absorption. They get Vitamin D naturally from eating insects exposed to the sunlight. It is not recommended to try to supplement individual vitamins for pet skunks. Nutrex Spirulina is a blue green algae that contains an impressive amount of vitamins, minerals and amino acids. 200Mg is an appropriate dose for a kit or junior skunk. Most skunks find the tablets tasty.

Minerals

It has been suggested that skunks need 250mg of calcium a day. This is NOT true, 50 to 90 mg is a more accurate estimate. It is important to remember that calcium also needs magnesium, phosphorus and Vitamin D for proper absorption. A skunk's natural diet is very high in magnesium and the calcium/magnesium ration is closer to 1:1. Too much calcium can lead to problems like bone calcifications of the discs and heart valves, bone spurs and kidney stones. The most common problem caused by unbalanced calcium supplementation is Metabolic Bone Disease. MBD is still common when the owner feeds a low protein, high carbohydrate diet. MBD will cripple and eventually kill your skunk if not caught early. Food Grade Diatomaceous Earth is a good product with a balanced mineral profile.

Trace minerals are vital and it can be a bit tricky to know if they are getting enough. Concentrace or other brand liquid minerals can either be added directly to the skunk's food at 1 drop per 5 pounds or into the water bowl (50 drops per gallon of water).

Taurine

Some people claim that skunks should get a minimum of 200mg of Taurine a day. This is not true as this amino acid is not common in a wild skunk's diet. The information that skunks have an usual need for Taurine was extrapolated from studies done on cats. Feeder insects make up at least 80% of a skunk's natural diet and contain Methionine and Cysteine that the body uses to synthesize Taurine. A species appropriate diet contains the full range of necessary amino acids so individual supplementation is not necessary.

Feeding Time

What to Feed

A species appropriate diet for a skunk will be similar to what a wild skunk eats, which is small portions of foods primarily, protein and fat. When selecting your skunk's food, please keep it natural! A species

appropriate diet will provide your skunk what he or she needs to thrive. You will get the most nutritional value for your dollar and make sure your skunk is getting a well rounded diet that includes enough protein, fats, calcium, vitamins and minerals. Below are some good choices of protein sources for your skunk.

Animal protein sources include: Stomp Skunk Food, pinkies, quail eggs, mealworms, super worms, crickets and other feeder insects. Chicken necks, chicken hearts and gizzards can also be incorporated. If started young, wild caught sardines, wild salmon or other wild fish can be incorporated into the skunk's diet. Avoid canned fish unless it is marked BPA free and does not contain GMO oils. Olive oil or water packed is okay.

Because skunks are omnivores, they can have some plant foods. Sprouts are similar to the vegetation a skunk would eat in its natural environment. Sprouts are highly digestible due to their high enzyme content.

Good plant food choices are: nuts and seeds (served raw, unsalted, shelled and hulled), chick peas and other beans (soaked) and buckwheat (sprouted). Raw hemp hearts are particularly useful as they are high in magnesium.

Ideally, you do not want to mix the vegetation portion with the animal protein because they have different absorption rates. Skunks have an acidic gut and a short digestive track, both which allow raw foods to be consumed safely. The acidity of the gut is not conducive for bacterial growth. The short digestive tract allows raw food to process through before bacteria has time to grow. Vegetation has a slower digestion rate, as it ferments in the gut, which will slow down the process of the raw proteins getting through the digestive tract before bacteria has time to grow.

What NOT to Feed

Skunks have no dietary need for carbohydrates. In a skunk, carbohydrates convert to fat, and are stored, rather than burned as fuel for the body. This leads to inflammation and obesity. Both inflammatory related diseases and obesity will seriously shorten your skunk's lifespan and increase your vet bills.

If something is not safe for dogs, do NOT give it to your skunk! Never give caffeine, grapes, raisins, onions, and foods sweetened with sugar alcohols such as xylitol. Processed foods are usually low in available nutrients and are not suitable for skunks who eat small portions. Dog or cat kibble is NOT recommended for a skunk. Extruded kibble will damage their teeth and often discolors the white of their fur. No canned food unless marked BPA free and no high sodium foods. Skunks are lactose intolerant, so dairy is NOT recommended for that reason and also because the calcium/magnesium ratio is unbalanced. No foods containing corn, wheat, soy, oats, rice or any other grains. Any food containing grains should NOT be given to your skunk. Absolutely no GMOs (genetically modified foods) should be given to skunks.

There is much incorrect information on the web stating that skunks should eat a diet of mostly vegetables. This is very wrong! Most vegetables are high in carbohydrates and poorly digested. There is no produce department in a wild skunk's habitat. An unbalanced diet will result in poor health and a shortened life for your skunk. A species appropriate diet is your skunk's best chance for a long, healthy life!

Suggested Feeding

Babies should be fed 4 to 5 times a day. Start out with 3 to 4 nickel size portions. Feel your skunk's stomach after eating. They should NOT look like a pot bellied pig and the stomach should NOT feel hard. You can always add to the portion but you cannot take food away once eaten. It is dangerous to overfeed a tiny animal. Below is a sample food plan for a 6 to 8 week old skunk.

Meal 1)

Stomp Skunk Food Chicken (portion is about the size of a Kennedy Half Dollar)

Meal 2)

1 tsp dried mealworms

Meal 3)

Stomp Skunk Food Duck (portion is about the size of a Kennedy Half Dollar)

Meal 4)

6 to 8 live super worms

Unlimited substitutions for any meal

Stomp Skunk Food Chicken or Duck, mealworms, super worms or other feeder insects

Limited substitution #1

Sprouts served no more than once a day. A portion is about the size of a Kennedy half dollar. Skunks seem to prefer the spicy blends best. A smaller amount of sprouted buckwheat can be used also. Top with 1 scant teaspoon of only one of the following: chopped almonds or other raw, shelled, unsalted nuts, or raw, unsalted pumpkin seeds (hulled) or raw hemp hearts. If you are going to feed sprouts, you will need to buy either a sprouter, or a few mason jars. Do not serve the ones sold in stores as they can contain mold and most skunks won't eat them.

Limited substitution #2

A serving of chicken hearts or gizzards about the size of a Kennedy Half Dollar, served no more than 4 times per week. Most skunks will prefer one over the other. You can either serve raw or lightly steam them stirring constantly no more than 2 minutes. Do not cook them.

Limited substitution #3

2 Quail Eggs, served raw no more than 4 times per week. You may have to crack the eggs the first time, but after that enjoy the show.

Limited substitution #4

A serving of wild salmon or herring or sardines about the size of a Kennedy Half Dollar, served no more than 2 times per week. If they are canned make sure it is marked BPA free, and NOT packed in GMO oils like canola, corn, cottonseed or soy. Fish is not a favorite of most skunks, and you will probably have to start them young if you want to incorporate it.

Conclusion

This suggested food plan is for babies only! Do NOT give fruit or any sweet foods until 4 months. By then, you should know whether the skunk is prone to seizures. If your skunk has not had any seizures by 4 months, it should be safe to add a small amount of berries to the food plan. One scant teaspoon is a portion size and can be added to the plant meal, but not served with animal protein. If you are serving a plant meal, it should be given with nuts or seeds as the protein source.

After the age of approximately 4 months, meals should be cut back to 3 per day. Between 6 and 8 months, you will drop to 2 meals per day. By 8 months of age, most skunks have reached their adult size. If they

haven't and they appear very small and or are very active, keep them on 3 meals per day. As your skunks grows, the portions will gradually increase. When the skunk reaches it's adult size, which is between 8 months and a year, you will decrease portion sizes.

Please do NOT feed your skunk as if he or she were a human baby. The result will not be healthy pet. Nature dictates their nutritional needs and humans cannot change them to something more convenient.

For further information on the care of your skunk, including diet, and general care information please visit:

www.petskunkmessageboard.com

www.mephitisadvocate.com

Note: the information provided above is based on my experience and opinions as a long time skunk owner for the last 35 years. I am NOT a Veterinarian. Please discuss all health care issues with your Veterinarian. I cannot stress how important it is to make sure the Veterinarian you choose has experience with a pet skunk's unique medical problems.

My dear friend Mary Vice Copeland, author, and longtime skunk advocate, passed away suddenly on April 27, 2015. She will be very much missed by many! Mary's many years of service to the skunk world has provided so many with the much needed information to properly care for their skunk. She didn't ask for that job but she did it better than anyone I know. Her book can be purchased from Amazon and has valuable information for new skunk owners.

Maria Ellis

“Domestic Skunks, Book 1 – Babies” Now Available on Amazon!

STOMP Pet Skunk Food, Pet Skunk Support Factors, Food Grade Diatomaceous Earth and other pet skunk products can be purchased at the links below.

www.justskunks.com

www.petskunkfood.com

www.petskunksupplements.com

www.foodgradede.com

Please feel free to contact the following persons if you have a question about your skunk:

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Jennifer Lowell- skunkielove@gmail.com

Lynnda Butler- (954) 290-6009

STOMP Pet Skunk Food

Introducing **STOMP**, a species appropriate pet skunk food designed to meet the nutritional needs of the pet skunk. For years skunk owners have had the time consuming task of putting together a wholesome, balanced diet for their skunks. This was no easy chore with mostly outdated and conflicting information available about the nutritional needs of pet skunks. **STOMP** is made from fresh, minimally processed ground chicken or duck including organs and bones, enriched with Vitamin D and omega 3 fatty acids from herring oil and naturally preserved with Vitamin E. Next it is freeze dried for maximum nutrient availability.

STOMP, pet skunk food is available in both Chicken and Duck 6 oz., resealable packages. Each bag is 6 to 10 days of food for a pet skunk depending on their size and activity level.



Ingredients	
Ground chicken with bone, chicken heart, chicken liver, herring oil, mixed tocopherols, d-alpha-tocopherol.	
Guaranteed Analysis	
Crude Protein, min...	41%
Crude Fat, min.....	35.5%
Crude Fiber, max...	1.2%
Moisture, max.....	8.5%



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