



Underground Reptiles, Inc.
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Frequently Asked Questions About Skunks

1. Do they still have their stinkers? Our answer is, "We may be crazy, but we are not suicidal!" Domestic/pen-raised skunks are descented at about 4 weeks of age, before they leave the breeding farm.
2. Do they make good pets? **Though skunks are not for everyone** (as well as cats, dogs, birds or children!) for those people with patience, understanding and a sense of humor, they are wonderful, funny, affectionate and cuddly pets.
3. Do they deal well with children? As a general rule, this answer depends on the child. With a calm, reasonably quiet child who is willing to listen and learn about them, skunks generally do extremely well with kids. However, a grabby, aggressive, chasing child or a child too young to follow instructions could, in fact, be bitten. Skunks look more like a stuffed toy than a living, breathing, feeling creature to a child. Please consider NO pets until children are older.
4. How long do they live? With the proper diet and veterinary care, skunk ownership is a long term commitment. We know of one pet skunk in Alabama that was 22 and one in Georgia that lived to be 23 old.
5. Are they destructive? No, not as a general rule. The rare skunk with a poor diet, may chew wallpaper or the sheetrock behind it. The veterinary explanation for this is a trace mineral deficiency. They don't chew wires or claw furniture. They may steal your clothes, towels or bedspread to soften THEIR bed!
6. Are their teeth and claws sharp? Yes, their teeth are sharp and no, their claws aren't. They have "digging" claws like a dog, not "ripping" claws like a cat. Their teeth are sharp and they can bite. With gentle handling, good diet and a good home, and after they learn about our hands during feeding, they rarely bite. A hyper, immature baby may nip by accident until it learns to accept hand feeding.
7. Can they be de-clawed? **ABSOLUTELY NOT!** A skunk's claws are the same as our fingers. Imagine you trying to crawl around on your fist or trying to hold food with no fingers. How would you get something that was choking you out of your throat?
8. What do they eat? Their diet should be widely varied. We don't enjoy eating the same thing day after day---neither do they! 90% of their TOTAL diet should be a wide variety of vegetables. The remaining 10% should consist of low-fat yogurt, low-fat cottage cheese, small amounts of fruit, a vanilla wafer a day OR a graham cracker, a dog biscuit, baked or boiled chicken or turkey, baked, broiled or water packed fish, popcorn, high fiber (low sugar, low fat) cereals. Learn to read labels!! Many preservatives, especially sulfur dioxide and MSG, are dangerous and possibly fatal to skunks. NO CHOCOLATE OF ANY KIND---EVER!!! Chocolate is deadly to animals. No seed hulls or nut hulls. They can perforate the intestine and cause death. No raw meat. No red meat or pork. No cat food of any kind ever, unless recommended for certain medical problems, by a vet. It is much too high in indigestible protein for a skunk. No beef dog food. We recommend chicken-based or lamb and rice-based products.
9. Can they be housebroken? Skunks are naturally corner-trained. Place a litter box with either newspaper or UNSCENTED litter in the corner that THEY choose and they will use it there.
10. Do they need to be spayed and neutered? Do not let a pet store convince you that your skunk has already been "fixed"! They have only been de-scented!! **They still need to be neutered or spayed by 4 months of age.** Having only one breeding time per year, the heat/rut cycle is terrible on their systems and it is not uncommon for a female to die during the heat cycle. They become more and more unpleasant as the cycle approaches. Un-neutered males tend to get much, much more aggressive as their cycle approaches and some become "friendly" with stuffed toys, cats and your foot! You should know that a male holds the female with his teeth, so your foot is NOT a good option!!

11. Do they need shots? The current shots recommended by our vets are: Galaxy DA2PPvL+CV and Eclipse 4. These encompass all the dog and cat vaccines. At the present time, there is no approved rabies vaccine for skunks in the United States. There is a vaccine in Canada that is 98% effective, versus the 70% efficiency rate that we have, but the USDA hasn't approved its use here! Rabies is contracted by being bitten by a rabid animal or eating the carcass of a rabid animal. Our pets are kept in the house and, if taken outside, are closely watched, so we have no problem.

12. Do they make any noise? Their "vocabulary" is varied: from a soft bird-like whistle to the loud, raucous screech of a Macaw. The soft sounds are generally curiosity or affection and the loud noises are pain, anger, fear or competition. They usually are virtually silent animals.

13. Aren't they all black and white? NO, NO and NO!!! Skunks come in every color except green and blue! There is every shade of brown, black, gray and blond. There are albino skunks, that have pink eyes and there are white skunks, that have dark eyes. There are even lavender skunks. They can have 2 stripes or 4 or 6, or more. They can have spots and swirls mixed in amongst the stripes. Their tails are all different shapes and sizes. They are as different as we are!

14. How much do they weigh? There is no more an average weight for skunks than there is for people. Their skeletal size differs, but a loosely "average" weight is between 7 and 10 pounds. An extremely long, tall skunk will weigh more than a tiny, petite skunk. Again---just like us!!

15. Can they be trained to do tricks? A "natural behavior" may be enhanced, such as standing on the hind legs to reach food. This could easily be turned into "dancing". Their desire for snacks can lead to many "tricks". One of our skunks will use a peanut dispenser repeatedly. With patience on the owner's part, they can learn just about anything you want. It takes patience, NOT SWATTING, because skunks DO NOT deal well with corporal punishment!

16. Can they be disciplined? They will get even, if they're hit!! A common way is for them to climb up on the bed and leave an unpleasant "surprise" on the pillow of the offender! They may wait a good long while, but rest assured that they will get even. They may also bite fiercely and walk away with their head up as if to say, "So there! "That'll teach you to hit ME!" Skunks will come when they're called----if they want to ---- or if you make a noise related to food! Refrigerator doors, can openers and microwaves make excellent "skunk calls"! A stern voice and a loud clap will work wonders. They love to please and an unhappy voice from their owner makes them pay attention. Some owners use a squirt bottle for discipline.

Skunks are not for everyone. They take tremendous amounts of love, time and patience. But, for those who are willing to give, skunks make the greatest, funniest and most affectionate lap babies in the world. They are our hearts! REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION – www.SkunksAsPets.com

Thinking about getting a skunk? You need to have the proper permits already filled out and approved before you can take one home. Visit our website to download the appropriate permit application and paperwork. www.undergroundreptiles.com/skunks.htm

Even if you are not sure, please go ahead and fill out the permit application so you can take one home should you decide to. You can also place a 50% non-refundable deposit down to reserve a skunk and guarantee that you will get one. We only get skunks ONCE a year, and SELL OUT, so make sure to reserve one if you really think that you want one.

Top 3 Reasons To Own A Skunk

3. Because you want to scare visitors to your house by pretending not to know where it came from ☺ (just kidding!)
2. Because you have plenty of time to spend with your new skunk
1. Because you want a pet that wants to be loved on and will love on you

Top 3 Reasons To NOT Own A Skunk

3. Because you want a novelty pet.
2. Because what you really want is a puppy or a kitten
1. Because you decided you wanted one on a whim or an impulse