

## Skunks

**Notes -** Skunks are not found on the San Juan Islands but do occur on the adjacent mainland. If you live in the San Juans and detect a musky, skunky smell, it is most likely being produced by a fox.

Skunks are effective diggers and are opportunistic when it comes to food. They eat anything from meats to fruits/veggies and bugs, and often scavenge garbage. They have underground dens year-round for daytime resting, hiding, and birthing/rearing of young. They do not hibernate; but lower their body temperature and stay inside dens during extreme cold, plugging the entrance with leaves and grass for insulation. They give birth in late April and May. At around 2 months, mom leads the young out at night to forage and hunt. At 3 months of age the young are independent.

### **Issue – seen in yard**

**Notes –** Skunks can cover a large area in search of food, and will visit several yards in the course of a single night. They eat a number of garden pests so can be beneficial to have around. They will only spray if they feel threatened.

**Suggestions –**

- ▶ Keep dogs indoors or leashed at night to prevent them chasing skunks.
- ▶ Don't leave pet food or human food scraps in yard.
- ▶ Put compost in a secure container
- ▶ Secure garbage cans
- ▶ Remove brush piles, lumber piles, and rock piles that a skunk might find suitable to live or hide under.

### **Issue - person or pet is sprayed**

**Suggestions -**

- ▶ Wash with cold water as soon as possible to remove the irritation and some of the smell.
- ▶ Wash with carboic soap, tomato juice, or diluted vinegar.
- ▶ A home remedy: 1 quart of 3 % hydrogen peroxide solution. ¼ cup baking soda, 1 teaspoon of Dawn liquid soap. Mix in large open container (it bubbles so avoid a closed container. Use the entire mixture while it is still bubbling, apply the solution, work into lather and leave it on for 30 minutes. Follow with a long hot shower. Depending on the severity of the spray, the process may need to be repeated a few times.

### **Issue – Under deck!**

**Suggestions-**

- ▶ May be taking temporary refuge. Leave it and it will leave after dark.

▶ If trying to live under deck and does not have young -use bright light or talk radio to get animal to move on, (See details in raccoon section) then....

▶ Close off potential entries under porches, houses, sheds, and structures, using ¼ inch hardware cloth, boards, or other sturdy material. The bottom edge should be sunk at least 8 inches into the ground then make a 90 degree turn to the outside for another 10-15 inches to prevent skunks digging through loose soil under the barrier.

### **Issue- digging under slab or foundation**

Suggestions-

▶ Lay large flat stones or patio pavers on the surface of the soil next to the slab.

▶ Hammer 2 foot lengths of 3/8 inch rebar spaced every few inches into the ground along the base of the slab.

### **Issue – Breaking into chicken enclosures.**

Suggestions.

▶ Surround area with secure fencing. The fence should run an additional 8 inches into the ground then make a 90 degree turn to the outside of the fence for another 10-15 inches, to prevent animals digging under wire.

▶ Reinforce bottom of chicken house with metal flashing or wire, sunk into the ground as described above, so skunks can't dig under bottom edge.

▶ Install 2 electrified wires, 6 and 10 inches above the ground, around the perimeter of the coop.

### **Issue-digging up newly planted lawns or gardens looking for worms and grubs.**

Suggestions-

▶ Sprinkle cayenne pepper or a granular repellent (like Repel) around area. (Use caution if you have pets)

▶ Put up temporary fence till plants are well grown.

### **Issue – Trapped in building.**

Suggestions -

▶ Close off access to other interior rooms, open exterior doors and leave to let it find its own way out.

▶ If necessary, slowly encourage the skunk to move in a preferred direction by holding a large towel, large garbage sack, or cardboard in front of you. If the skunk appears agitated e.g. stamping back feet or turning back and raising tail, retreat immediately.

