

Skunks

- There are two skunk species in BC: **spotted skunks** (*Spilogale gracilis*) (Lower Mainland only), and **striped skunks** (*Mephitis mephitis*) throughout the province
- **BC skunks are not known to carry rabies**
- As Schedule B and Furbearer animals under the *BC Wildlife Act*, skunks can only be trapped using devices listed in the BC Hunting & Trapping Regulations, and only between October 15 and February 28



Understanding Skunks

Skunks are shy, slow-moving, nocturnal animals with poor eyesight and limited climbing skills. Their main defense is to spray, used only as a last resort or when startled.

Skunks...

- have one litter of 4-6 babies each spring
- babies leave the den at 6-7 weeks old and often remain with mother for 3-6 months
- den in winter and when raising young



Did you know?

Skunks mostly eat insects, but also fruits, nuts, and small rodents – nature's pest control! Signs of skunks include cone-shaped pits or clawed-up areas of earth.

Common Conflicts

Skunks are attracted to garbage, compost, and fallen tree fruit. They can dig underneath decks and sheds to den. Skunks can also become trapped in ground level window wells or other depressions, and being poor climbers, are often unable to escape without help.

Humane Choices

The BC SPCA does not support killing skunks for nuisance reasons.

Relocation of adult skunks should only be done outside the breeding season within the animal's home range, and as per the *BC Wildlife Act* (within 10km). Killing is rarely necessary and control methods should be selected to cause the least harm to the animal's welfare. If attractants have not been removed, more skunks may arrive, so follow-up monitoring is needed.

The BC SPCA strongly encourages non-lethal, non-contact methods. Prevention and exclusion comes first, followed by deterrence, and if necessary, eviction. Eviction should be done carefully to avoid potentially orphaning young.

Conflict Resolution

If animal is at risk, cage traps may be used for relocation within home range. Skunks may be taken to a wildlife rehabilitator for treatment if needed. If skunk is in critical distress, a veterinarian or rehabilitator may euthanize. For more information, *flip page over*.

If pets or people have been sprayed by a skunk, clean with a mixture of 1L 3% hydrogen peroxide, ¼ cup baking soda, 1tsp liquid laundry or dish soap - rinse with water and repeat if necessary.

Recommended Actions & Methods

Prevention & Exclusion Before any conflict, and to prevent future issues	Remove potential food sources <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Secure garbage bins and composts; collect fruit fallen on ground✓ Bird feeders not overflowing, no pet food outside Maintain sheds and garages <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Block access to underneath porches, decks and crawl spaces✓ Remove wood and brush piles✓ To confirm den use: loosely cover hole with leaves, newspaper or straw; if present, skunk can push it away and re-open
Deterrence If babies are mobile (approx. 60 days) or there are no babies	Use mild humane harassment techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Place apple cider vinegar-soaked rags in plastic container with holes in lid, place containers in den or entry points✓ Close entry when skunk (and family) move out
Eviction If skunk accidentally trapped	Aid animal in getting free <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Sedation, by a veterinarian or wildlife rehabilitator, may be needed if skunk is tightly stuck (e.g. dumpster drain)✓ If trapped in window wells or other depressions, place plank at <45° angle with towel wrapped around it to increase traction✓ If mobile, skunk can be gently scooped out with a snow shovel✓ Place smelly food inside a box with a rope secured to it, lower into area; once skunk inside, pull box up, allow to walk free
Eviction If skunk denning in building	Evict the animal <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Use a one-way door so skunk can leave, but not re-enter✓ Do not install when there may be dependent young in den, or if necessary, be sure to use reunion techniques✓ Leave door in place for 2-3 nights✓ Follow all prevention and exclusion steps above

These are legal, regulated methods - but they are **not recommended*** as they can cause animal suffering, may be high risk to non-targets, and/or are difficult to administer; legality must also be confirmed according to local bylaws and/or regulations

- Carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide - using pure gas cylinder into sealed chamber with regulator
- Shot to brain of trapped or free-ranging animal
- Killing neck snare
- Spring trap (e.g. Conibear-style)
- Manually applied blunt trauma that induces immediate unconsciousness
- Penetrating captive bolt
- Cervical dislocation

*email wildlifecontrol@spca.bc.ca for information on these methods

It is **illegal** to use...

- Bait poisons or chloroform
- Drowning or suffocation
- Leghold or foot snare
- Carbon monoxide by vehicle exhaust
- Electrocution of conscious animal
- Freezing (including dry ice)

