

Baby Skunk Information

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The most comprehensive and up to date information regarding skunks and skunk care on the web!

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If you are a first time skunk owner you may soon wonder where the manual is. Good news! There is now such a manual called "Domestic Skunks, Book 1 – Babies" from which this pamphlet is based. There are also several websites with all kinds of advice and tips on taking care of your baby skunk. In fact there is a whole network of people who share information, pictures and stories about pet skunks. There are even live chats where you can speak to other skunk owners. If you do not have internet access, the contact people listed here will get information printed out for you. The "how to" is constantly evolving. Even if you were to read everything, you may still have questions or run into situations that you could use some help with. More good news - there are fellow skunk owners who have gone through the learning curves and are happy to be of assistance. You will find listed a website and contact people so that you can educate yourself and make informed decisions. In the mean time here is some basic information to get you started.

Before Your Baby Comes Home

Permits. Please check the laws in your state regarding owning a domestic skunk. In Florida, you should have at a minimum the Personal Use Permit, which is free. However, if you will have your baby in public at any time, you need to have the Class III Exhibition Permit. You can go to website for more information. Also know that most states mandate that if a bite is reported, your skunk must be tested for rabies. This is a death sentence for your skunk. Never let anyone have the chance to be bitten by your skunk.

Vet care. Find a vet who can and will take care of your skunk. There are only a few in this area. Your skunk has already been de-scented, but you will need to have your new baby neutered/spayed before it is six months old. Estrus in particular can be very dangerous and young females can develop pyometria if not spayed. Your baby will need to be vaccinated against canine distemper. Only the ferret canine distemper vaccine Purevax by Merial is safe for skunks. There is no approved rabies vaccine for skunks. Your skunk will also need to be protected from roundworms. Skunks are treated with a de-wormer such as Strongid, Panacur or Evict. Evict is available from a pet store. Use only products with the active ingredient pyrantel pamoate. Dosage is based on weight. It's a good idea to have a vet you feel comfortable with selected before you bring a baby home. It is also important to know what your vet's policy is if your skunk were to bite him or a staff member.

Skunk proofing. Skunks are very curious animals and, just like a human toddler, will be compelled to explore their entire environment. This means you will need to secure all low drawers and cabinets. Even many baby locks leave a gap large enough for a determined skunk to get opened. Sometimes it's best just to secure the doors with packing tape until your skunk is bigger. You'll be surprised where this little ball of fur can go. Not only will he/she climb on all of the furniture, he/she may try to climb into the refrigerator or dishwasher when you open them, so be prepared. Try to find a way to keep her from getting behind the fridge, stove or washing machine. Block up any holes or crawl spaces as well as your dryer hose. Potted plants are sure to be dug in and may be eaten. Many plants are poisonous to pets. Get anything that might be harmful off the floor and out of reach. If you have floor vents, they must be screwed down tightly. Skunks can and will tear through a window screen. Recliners can crush a small animal like a skunk. Any food for other animals or people should not be left out where the baby skunk can get to it.

The following tips may save you some headaches. You may want to protect the underside of your box spring and your sofa or block off access. Skunks love to tear at the cloth and climb in and nest and sometimes potty in there. If you have a fireplace, make sure to secure it so your skunk can not get to it. Make your garbage can inaccessible either by putting it up on a cabinet or getting one with a lid and a

pedal to open it. Be extremely careful with doors leading to outside. A skunk can easily sneak out without you being aware. Once a skunk gets outside, if it is not found immediately the chances of getting it back become slim. Skunks are not like cats and dogs that find their way home eventually. "Domestic Skunks, Book 1 – Babies" goes into greater detail about skunk proofing.

Providing a Safe Area

Protect your baby skunk from other animals and don't leave them unsupervised with children. You may want to set up a safe area in your home for when you are away. Baby skunks can climb and this is a factor if you are considering a gate or a pen. Don't overwhelm baby with too much area in the beginning. Start with one room and introduce new rooms as baby gets more comfortable with its surroundings.

If you must confine to a crate or cage make sure there is enough room for a litter area. As they get older, try not to keep them in there for more than a few hours. They really need free run of as much of the house as you can give them.

First Aid Kit

You should have your first aid kit assembled before baby's arrival. The following items should help you get started. Thermometer, Colloidal Silver for wounds, Eye Dropper and syringes for giving meds, Corn syrup, molasses, karo syrup - helps with seizures, Children's Benadryl liquid form for allergic reactions, Pedialyte or Smart Water - replaces electrolytes and helps with dehydration, Activated Charcoal - for accidental poisoning,

Rubbing alcohol - sterilization of wounds, Cotton balls, Q Tips, gauze and bandages, Quick Stop - stops bleeding, KY Jelly, Vaseline, Preparation H - helps with rectal prolapse, Bachs Rescue Remedy - reduces stress.

Emergency phone numbers - You'll be surprised how hard it is to find a number you know by heart when there is an emergency.

The New Arrival

Take the time to be with your baby skunk. He/she will never be this little again. Follow her as she explores the house. The skunk will quickly show you what isn't skunk proofed. Baby skunks have a natural inclination to follow their mother and as it gets older, you may find your little one following you around. There is a lot you can do to be comforting. Give them some time to get use to you. Hold them constantly, take a nap together, carry them around with you while you do chores and **gently** play with them. It will help you bond and keep him/her from being hard to manage later on. Like any infant, your new baby likes toys almost as much as you like giving them. Especially appreciated are stuffed toys about their size that they can wrestle with and drag behind the couch. **NEVER** play rough with your baby skunk. This only teaches them bad habits that will be hard to break later. Most skunks love blankets or something to curl up under. And although not really a toy, crickets are great fun and will get those pouncing instincts going.

Doing the business. Skunks can be fairly easy to litter train. They naturally seek out corners. Very quickly, they will inform you which corners they prefer. There will be several. You may disagree with some of the choices, but this is an argument you are destined to lose. Line the pan with fresh newspaper, puppy pads or paper litter, and try to change it after each use. If you use clay litter, it must be the unscented, non-clumping kind.

Setting the schedule. Skunks are basically nocturnal and will sleep most of the day. Optimally, they will be active for about five hours. Any less and they will tend to become fat, sedentary and eventually, unwell. It's very important that you set aside plenty of time to pay attention to your skunk so that you both get full enjoyment from each other. You also want to establish feeding times. Your skunk thinks this means whenever it sees you, but plan on feeding your baby every four hours for the first several weeks and then gradually less often.

Things to watch out for – Seizures and Prolapse. Even the best-cared for animals can develop problems. Unfortunately, a small percentage of baby skunks sometimes develop seizures. Most outgrow them in their first year. Seizures can usually be treated through diet and occur more frequently in babies that are fed a low protein, high carbohydrate diet. You'll know your baby is having problems if she appears glassy-eyed, groggy, or stumbles. The best thing you can do is remain calm, turn off the lights, and talk to him/her soothingly. Rub Karo syrup on the gums to help get the blood sugar back up. Once the baby has returned to normal, offer easily digestible proteins such as worms, crickets or a few pieces of STOMP. If you become concerned, call your vet. If your vet is not available, call someone on your contact list for advice.

Prolapse can occur for a few reasons. The most important thing is to safely get the intestine back in where it belongs. Make sure the area is clean, then apply a bit of KY Jelly on the tip of your finger, apply light pressure and slowly push it back in. Hold for a few minutes to give it time to resume its normal form. If that doesn't work, you can try Preparation H the next time.

Worm infestation is a common reason for prolapse. Be sure to give your baby a proper de-worming. Put baby on a soft food diet for a few days and slowly resume back to a normal diet if no other problems occur. If the problem becomes persistent, you should see your veterinarian.

What's for dinner? *Skunks are carnivores, but they will eat most anything even if it is not good for them. They thrive on a principally high protein diet with proper fats. NEVER give a skunk cat, ferret or dog food or kibble of any kind. Kibble damages teeth and has no viable nutrient availability usable to a skunk (or any animal).*

Remember that chocolate and caffeine can be poisonous and potentially fatal to skunks. Grapes have caused kidney failure and even death for some skunks. Shells and husks (for example sunflower shells and peanut shells) can perforate a skunk's intestines, and onions can cause anemia.

Meals - *There is one basic guideline you need to keep in mind when selecting your skunk's food. Keep it NATURAL. Nature will provide your skunk everything it needs to thrive and has been doing so for thousands of years. You need to 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, taurine, vitamins and minerals.*

Grains have been erroneously recommended as a diet staple, but that advice is not only incorrect, it is dangerous to the health of your skunk. Skunks have no dietary need for carbohydrates. In a skunk, carbohydrates convert to fat and lead to inflammation. Inflammation is the number one cause of disease and death in skunks. While some websites will also recommend a diet of mostly vegetables, they are high in carbohydrates and have a slow absorption rate. This is why we recommend sprouts, which is closer to the vegetation a skunk would eat in its natural environment. Sprouts also have higher digestive enzymes for better nutrient absorption.

There is a very good chance your baby will get all the nutrients it needs from its species appropriate diet. If you need to supplement the diet for any reason, please use the following guidelines.

Calcium – *It has been suggested that skunks need 250mg of calcium a day. In actuality, 60 – 90 mg is a more accurate estimate. It is important to remember that calcium also needs magnesium, phosphorus and Vitamin D to absorb properly. Too much calcium or calcium not given properly can lead to problems such as bone calcification, bone spurs & kidney stones. The most common problem improper calcium supplementation leads to is Metabolic Bone Disease which has become quite prevalent in the domestic skunk community feeding a low protein, high carbohydrate diet. There are 3 good options to use as a calcium supplement; crushed egg shell, food grade Diatomaceous Earth (DE), and Pet Skunk Support Factors.*

Taurine – *It is also suggested that skunks get a minimum of 250mg of taurine a day. Taurine is a water soluble amino acid that occurs naturally in organ meat & muscles. Many vegetation sources and insects have methionine and cysteine that the body uses to synthesize taurine. Heat destroys taurine so it is essential that meats be fed raw.*

Protein – *Optimal choices of protein include pinkies, meal worms, super worms, crickets and beetles. Lesser forms of protein are nuts, turkey, chicken, eggs, cheese and natural peanut butter in small amounts.*

The protein portion of the meal should be fed alone and be the entire meal. You do not want to mix the vegetation portion with the protein because they have different absorption rates. This can create two different problems.

1. Skunks have an acidic gut and a fast digestive system, both which allow raw foods to be consumed safely. The acidity of the gut is not conducive for bacterial growth. The fast digestive tract allows raw food to process through before bacteria has time to grow. Vegetation has a slower digestion rate, which will slow down the process of the raw proteins getting through the digestive tract before bacteria has time to grow.

2. The slower digestive rate of vegetation means less nutrients will be absorbed by competing with the protein at the same time.

Vitamins – *It is not known exactly how much of each vitamin is recommended for domestic skunks. If you are feeding the proper diet, your skunk is getting the vitamins it needs. Although carrots and yams convert to Vitamin A in the human body, the same is not true with skunks. Fatty fish and eggs are*

sources of Vitamin D. Food sources of Vitamin E include nuts, organ meats, seafood and eggs. Sources of Vitamin K include beef liver and cheese. If your skunk is getting a well rounded diet, he is already getting these fat soluble vitamins from his food.

Minerals – Trace minerals can be a bit tricky to know if they are getting enough. Willard Water (dark), Diatomaceous Earth and Sea Salt (NOT regular table salt!) are good sources of trace minerals. You can also get trace mineral drops and add to the drinking water.

Cod liver oil is a source of Vitamin A and D, both which can be over dosed. A better choice that is rich in Omega 3's and good for the heart is Fish Oil. Choose a high quality brand that won't contain heavy levels of mercury, such as Carlson's or Nordic Naturals.

Suggested Feeding Chart

Choose 1 from each category – Babies should be fed 4 times a day

Protein – 1 Serving per day – Should be split between meals

STOMP! Insects Egg Gizzards/Hearts Cheese

½ ounce 6 – 8 Mealworms ½ raw 1 ounce per day - 1 teaspoon

2 – 4 Superworms ½ boiled not all in one meal

4 – 6 Crickets Twice a week

Fat – Choose 1 serving per day (can be split between meals), except chicken neck

Raw chicken neck Nuts Flax Seed Oil Coconut Oil Extra Virgin Olive Oil

1 neck twice weekly 2 per day ¼ teaspoon ¼ teaspoon ¼ teaspoon

Calcium – 1 serving per day except Chicken Neck. Yogurt & Cottage Cheese should be full fat, not low fat or no fat. Full fat gives a serving of Vitamin A. Can be split between meals.

Yogurt Cottage Cheese Cheese Egg Shells Raw Chicken Neck

½ teaspoon ½ teaspoon ½ ounce ¼ teaspoon 1 neck twice a week

Vegetation (Sprouts) – ¼ cup per day, not to be fed with protein – Choose a variety

Nuts – Raw, salt free and chopped nuts should be given as snacks throughout the day. They are an important source of Omega's and good fats.

This suggested chart is for babies only! No fruits or sugary foods are on here until "seizure season" is over. After the age of approximately 4 months, meals should be cut back to ¾ cup of vegetation a day, split between 3 meals. At around 6 months of age, depending on the metabolism of the skunk, meals can be cut ½ cup vegetation, split between two meals.

Healthy treats, such as nut pieces should be hidden around the house for fun hunting that keeps them active.

Pet Skunk Support Factors are recommended to be the only supplement given. Do not mix with other supplements!

Safe Cleaning

Normal cleaning products are dangerous for skunks. Skunks can not handle chemicals. Try using what your grandmother (or great-grandmother) used, such as vinegar and baking soda. Even some products that say pet safe are not safe for skunks. "Domestic Skunks, Book 1 – Babies" has in depth information, tips and recipes for safe cleaning.

Skunk Sitter

Be prepared for the unexpected. Have a plan if you are called out of town. Know who you can call on to take care of your pet... and make sure that person knows what can happen if a bite is reported. You may need a skunk sitter if you go on vacation. It can be hard to take a skunk along since they are illegal in so many states.

For further information on the care of your skunk, including diet, training, seizures, general care information and a chance to chat with other skunk owners please visit:

www.StripedBandits.com

If you have any problems accessing the website, you can contact any of the persons below to help you.

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

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"Domestic Skunks, Book 1 – Babies" is now available to purchase.

\$15.50 price includes domestic postage

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