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NF 91-15

## Removing Skunk Odor from Clothing

Rose Marie Tondl, Extension Clothing Specialist

Having an encounter with a skunk calls for immediate action.

### REMOVING SKUNK ODOR

To remove odor from fabrics time, air, soap and water, and ammonia in water are recommended. Since the skunk's spray is an oily compound, it can be removed by methods used to remove oily soil, or the odor molecule can be destroyed with a weak acid. The use of white vinegar, dry-cleaning fluid or household chlorine bleach in a weak solution is suggested for removing skunk odor from clothing or pets. Use these products in separate steps, not together. Tomato juice, an acid, is sometimes recommended for washing pets, but do not use on clothing.

Other recommended treatments include washing items with a strong soap, a heavy-duty liquid detergent, or borax. For articles that can not be washed or dry-cleaned, such as shoes, bury them in fine, dry soil for several days. The fine particles of soil will absorb the odor, leaving the original article odor free. Kitty litter, sweeping compound, and other fine-particle materials should also work. Consider burying clothes that have been hit directly with skunk spray.

There are commercial products available for removal of skunk odors. Check with local pet supply shops or small animal clinics. Check whether these products can be used on clothing as they could damage fabrics causing color or texture change.

Neutroleum Alpha\*, a non-toxic substance, controls odors and is available in concentrated or water soluble form.

The water soluble form is less expensive and more flexible than the concentrate. The product, when diluted, may be used in the washing machine to remove skunk odor from clothes. It can be diluted and used as an area spray or used at full strength by saturating materials such as cotton or lamp wick. For an area spray, add two ounces of Neutroleum Alpha to one gallon of warm water. The entire area or odor-causing mass should be covered thoroughly with spray. Generally one application is sufficient.

The saturated materials can be suspended in or near the contaminated area so air circulation can move the volatile deodorant throughout the area. The saturated materials are effective for about three weeks.

A product called Skunk-Off can neutralize odor. Use it on dogs and other pets, your clothes, car and home. It is safe, and non-toxic and will not irritate or otherwise damage sensitive tissues of eyes, ears, or nose. The residue washes out easily.

Another product called Odor-Mute is available in granular form. It is to be dissolved in water and is clean, odorless and non-poisonous and is applicable to both pets and clothes. Again, testing for possible damage to fabrics is advisable.

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\*Neutroleum Alpha can be ordered from USDA, Animal Damage Control, P.O. Box 81886, Lincoln, Ne 68501. Phone (402) 434-2340

Reference to commercial products is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended or endorsement implied.

File under: TEXTILES, CLOTHING AND DESIGN

B-2, Care

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