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To: Rains County Leader

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HOMEOWNER'S GUIDELINES TO SKUNK CONTROL

Over the past ten days or so I have noticed an influx of dead skunks on the road and have smelled them numerous times during the night. If you have been to our office over the past few days you will understand why I am writing this article. We have one that has decided to take up residence under our building. Getting rid of them is a big chore so the best skunk control that I can think of is prevention.

Skunks usually breed in the spring, from February to May. A second mating may occur later, if the skunk did not find a mate, or fails to impregnate. Young are usually born in May or June, with the average litter being 5 to 8 babies. During the fall months skunks are usually looking for food and places to den. Skunks are usually nocturnal, coming out well after dark. If you find skunk out during the daytime hours, that is one indication of rabies.

Always be wary of skunks because they are the primary source of rabies in Texas. Human and domestic pet contact with skunks should be avoided at all times. **Also do not forget to vaccinate all pets for rabies. Again, prevention is your best defense.**

Skunks are often attracted to residential areas by the availability of food, water and shelter. They can be encouraged to leave by reducing or eliminating these attractants.

Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Do not leave pet food or water outside at night. Remove all remaining food scraps and water bowls each evening. Store pet food in animal proof containers inside the garage or home.

- Pick up trash, and ensure that garbage cans possess tight-fitting lids. Tie trashcans down to prevent tipping or keep them in the garage or other structure until the morning of trash pickup.
- Harvest your garden vegetables as soon as they are ripe. You can install motion-detection lights to discourage midnight feeding by skunks and other animals.
- Skunks causing lawn and turf damage may be encouraged to leave by controlling grubs, worms, and other subsoil insects. Chemicals to control these insects may be obtained at hardware or garden supply stores.
- Remove large woodpiles or junk piles to prevent skunks from making a den under them. Store items up off the ground, at least 18 inches. Cover compost piles completely and tightly with a heavy tarp.
- Burrows underneath raised decks, porches, and sheds are favorite den sites for skunks, particularly beneath structures having latticework or heavy landscaping covering the perimeter, which provides perfect cover and protection from predators. You can fence out skunks from these areas by using ½ inch hardware cloth or chicken wire. Dig a trench 6 to 8 inches deep and 8 to 10 inches wide around the base of the deck, porch, or shed. Then attach the top of the hardware cloth or chicken wire to the lower side of the structure with fencing staples and extend it down into the trench and across the bottom of the trench in an "L" away from the base of the structure. Finally, refill the trench. Skunks are very good diggers and will readily dig under improperly-installed fencing.
- Skunks will also nest in crawlspaces if they can. Be sure all openings are sealed with vents, hardware cloth, or boards. Check these regularly to be sure they are in good repair.
- Discourage nesting by placing a nylon stocking filled with mothballs or an ammonia-soaked rag in den sites or burrows. Attach a long string to these items for easy removal. Make sure the animals have vacated before filling in any burrows. Filling in a hole with an animal still inside will cause a horrible, cruel death as well as a repulsive stench. To be sure the skunk has withdrawn from the site, sprinkle a dusting of white flour around the burrow and look for telltale exit paw prints.
- If you encounter a skunk, especially during the day, do not approach or harass the animal. Leave the animal alone, and it should depart, most likely during the evening or night. If the animal remains out in the open during the day for more than a day, it may be ill or injured, and Animal Control should be call immediately. NEVER HANDLE A SICK OR INJURED WILD ANIMAL; ALWAYS CALL FOR PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE.

- Be persistent in your weekly efforts to skunk-proof your property. Skunks won't nest if the property is undesirable to habitation or the environment is harassing to them.

PREVENTION IS THE BEST POLICY FOR SKUNK CONTROL