



## **SKUNK CARE**

There are many different species of skunks but the most commonly kept pet is the Striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) which can live 8-10 years if looked after correctly. This skunk originates from North America where it lives a solitary life, spending the day asleep in a sheltered den, and waking in the evening to start foraging for food. Although, skunks can be trained even to use a litter tray, they are essentially still wild animals and can become easily frustrated in a domestic setup. They will therefore, need a lot of interaction, and supervised exercise and playtime outside of their cage. Anyone considering getting a skunk should also be aware of the foul smelling secretions which they will spray when stressed.

**De-scenting a skunk is illegal in the UK.**

### **ACCOMODATION**

- Skunks are very active and destructive animals so should be housed in a large cage or pen when unsupervised. These animals can however, be great escape artists so ensure their enclosure is well-secured
- The enclosure should contain a covered sleeping area which can be a cardboard box or plastic tub for them to hide away
- It is also important to provide plenty of toys to entertain these intelligent pets. It is however, important to bear in mind that skunks will easily demolish many pet shop toys, so only sturdy toys should be used.
- As much supervised exercise time as possible is very important to entertain these intelligent pets.
- Even when supervised do not forget their curious nature. Prevent access to anything that can be chewed, eaten or destroyed.

### **COMPANIONS**

- Skunks are not social animals, so will be happiest kept alone.

### **WHAT TO FEED**

- Skunks are omnivorous animals, in the wild foraging on berries, grasses, nuts, and insects as well as any small mammals, birds or reptiles they may find
- In captivity therefore, they should be fed a varied diet usually based on low-fat dry dog food with additional fresh fruit, vegetables, mealworms and other insects
- Skunks should be fed at least twice daily

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- Water should always be freely available and changed daily.

## **VACCINATIONS**

- No vaccines are licensed for use in skunks, but it is always best to seek veterinary advice for your individual pet, as dog and cat vaccines may be recommended in some situations

## **NEUTERING**

- Neutering of both male and female skunks can be performed from 5 months of age, and may be advised to reduce aggression in the male or prevent reproductive disease in females

## **PARASITES**

- Skunks are susceptible to fleas, mites and worms just like cats and dogs.
- Regular parasite treatment with dog or cat treatments may therefore be recommended, depending on your skunk's individual setup.

## **SIGNS OF ILL HEALTH**

- A healthy skunk will be bright and alert with clear open eyes, ears and nostrils. Your skunk should also be keen to eat and drink, and pass faeces regularly.
- It is important to become familiar with your skunk's normal appearance, movement and behaviour, in order that signs of illness can be noticed at an early stage.
- You should look out for any changes in appetite or faeces passed, as well as changes in weight, behaviour, coat condition or breathing. Other signs of illness include discharges from the eyes, nose or mouth. Bleeding or discharges from anywhere should be assessed by your vet. Limping, change in grooming behaviour or wounds should be assessed by your vet.
- If you have any concerns contact your vet as soon as possible