



# Oklahoma School IPM

## Skunks



There are two species of skunk found in Oklahoma. The striped skunk, which is more common and frequently comes into conflict with humans, and the spotted skunk. Both of these weasel family members are well equipped with a powerful scent gland that can shoot an acrid and foul smelling liquid as far as 6 to 10 feet away. Though skunks are often unwelcome, they are beneficial since they consume large quantities of destructive insects and mice. However when they burrow under a structure, venture inside, or come into direct contact with people, they cannot be tolerated.

**Biology:** Skunks are about the size of an adult house cat. Striped skunks are black, generally with two white stripes extending down their



back. Spotted skunks are also black, but with white spots or streaks.

Skunks are nocturnal, hunting at night for insects, small rodents, mushrooms, berries, pet food and garbage. They also love eggs and will readily raid any bird nests they find

Skunks usually breed in the spring and after 9 weeks of gestation give birth to four to six young (kits). They don't hibernate, but will

seek shelter from colder weather in dens, hollow logs, and under porches and buildings. Skunks are frequent carriers of rabies along with other diseases such as leptospirosis, listeriosis, canine distemper, canine hepatitis, Q-fever, and tularemia.

**Management:** Skunk control is best achieved by removal and relocation, exclusion, or destruction—in that order. Only pest management professionals should conduct any removal or destruction of skunk



infestations. School personnel can help prevent skunks from becoming a problem by exclusion methods. Properly constructed foundations will prevent skunks from digging beneath buildings. However, openings that may be present should be screened with quarter-inch hardware cloth to help prevent skunks from gaining access. Additionally overgrown shrubbery should be cut back to eliminate cover. Garbage cans should have tight-fitting lids. Finally uneaten food placed out-of-doors for pets should be removed by nightfall.

