Remove Skunk Odor by Deodorizing, Neutralizing Home, Clothing

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When alarmed or threatened skunks can spray people, pets and automobiles. They also are known to spray inside basements, garages, window wells and under porches. The musk they spray is a yellow-tinted oily liquid that can temporarily blind and stun individuals sprayed in the face. Victims also may experience watering eyes, nasal irritation and nausea. Asthmatics may experience breathing difficulties. Fortunately, the rabies virus is not transmitted through skunk musk.

When deodorizing, consider removing the source of the odor, ventilating the area with fresh air and washing or applying deodorants to the source of the odor. Air fresheners can be used to mask residual odor in the air and laundry detergent may be used to remove residual odor in fabrics. Never overlook the act of taking a shower and washing clothes to get rid of skunk odor. Other treatments include washing items with a strong soap, a heavy-duty laundry detergent or borax. Be sure to follow any directions that are specific to washing a particular fabric.

A chemical solution that neutralizes skunk odor contains 1 quart of 3 percent hydrogen peroxide, 1/4 cup baking soda and 1 to 2 teaspoons liquid dish soap. The ingredients should be mixed in an open container. Never mix the ingredients in advance because the oxygen released from the hydrogen peroxide could cause a closed container to explode. This solution can be used externally on pets or people. Avoid getting the solution in the eyes. Allow the solution to remain on hair for five minutes before rinsing with water. Repeat as necessary and do not use the solution on clothing because it may discolor the fabric. Although widely believed, tomato juice does not effectively neutralize skunk odor. The skunk odor only seems to disappear because the tomato smell is so strong.

Hang clothes that cannot be washed or dry-cleaned, such as shoes, outside to allow fresh air to carry the odor away. Over time the odor will decrease, provided the material is not re-exposed to skunk musk. Any cleaning fluid or household chlorine bleach can be used separately to remove skunk odor from fabrics.

When deodorizing a house, be sure to change the air filter of the furnace or air conditioner. Sometimes air filters can be contaminated with the odor and continue to disperse the smell throughout the house. A variety of odor control products are available in stores, such as Skunk-Off, Odor-Mute, Nature's Miracle Skunk Odor Remover and Freshwaver. Always read and follow all product label directions and warnings.

Skunk odor may reactivate during periods of high humidity. However, if the odor does not decrease in a week or two, the skunk may have resprayed or died on the property.

Select Shade Trees to Meet Personal Landscape Objectives

Shade trees provide much-needed comfort when temperatures begin to rise. However, shade trees contribute to the landscape in other ways and should be carefully chosen to obtain maximum benefits.

Besides keeping the landscape cool, shade trees add beauty to the landscape. Shade trees can also help homeowners save energy by reducing cooling and heating costs. For example, trees planted on the south or southwest corner of a house will provide shade during the warmest part of the day and decrease the cost of running an air conditioner.

It is important to remember that different trees create various amounts of shade. Honeylocust, for example, creates a filtered shade that allows patches of sunlight to reach the ground beneath. Sugar maple, on the other hand, has very dense foliage that may prevent some turfgrasses and forbs from growing under the canopy. If turf quality is a concern, it may be best to select grasses such as certain selections of fescue or bluegrass that better tolerate shade.

"The key to planting shade trees is to think ahead," says Dennis Adams, UNL forestry specialist. "Before planting a shade tree, visualize what the tree will look like in the years to come. Certain species may grow too large to be planted close to buildings and will have to be cut down."

The type of shade tree planted depends on personal preference. However, select species that are hardy and adapted to Nebraska. Hardiness is generally not a problem with native trees, such as bur oak, hackberry and green ash. Exotic trees may be used, but check their hardiness zone before investing the time and money.

Source: Dennis Adams, forestry specialist

Honeylocust

Burr oak acorn

Sugar maple

Hackberry

Green ash

Tree photos by Paul Wray, Iowa State University; except Honeylocust by Linda Haugen, USDA Forest Service; all at www.forestryimages.org

Take Steps to Reduce Severe Weather Damage on Homes

Severe weather season makes it even more important to make home repairs and renovations to lessen the impact and damage costs from high winds and other aliments.

According to Shirley Niemeyer, Ph.D., UNL housing and environment specialist, "Severe thunderstorms, wind and hail can do damage to house exterior surfaces, drive in rain, break windows and damage roofs. Straight winds or downbursts, with winds of 58 miles per hour or greater, can cause significant damage to well-constructed homes and remove roofs from structures."

Additional bracing and support reinforces roofs and can prevent wind damage.

Winds in Nebraska can reach hurricane category levels with at least one wind speed recording in Nebraska at 114 mph. As a comparison, hurricane category one wind speeds are at 74-95 mph and category two at 96-110 mph.

"Vertical winds associated with tornadoes can be strong enough to temporarily levitate heavy objects, such as roofs and even homes" says Niemeyer. "Although damage to homes from disasters can't be completely prevented, it can be reduced."

Changes in materials can help reduce damage to homes from wind and thunderstorms. Some insurance companies may even provide reduced insurance costs when certain types of disaster resistant materials are used. For example, some metal shingles and roof types are more resistant to hail and fire.

Install impact-resistant windows that have a better chance of surviving a windstorm and hail. Also, larger eave overhangs may protect windows from hail, high winds, falling objects or trees.

According to the Institute for Business and Home Safety or IBHS, doors should have at least three hinges and a dead bolt security lock with a bolt at least one inch long. Door frames should be anchored securely to wall framing and sliding glass doors should be installed with impact-resistant doors made of laminated glass, plastic glazing or a combination of plastic and glass.

If replacing a roof, make sure both the new roof covering and the sheathing it attaches to will resist high winds, hail, and wind-driven water. Old coverings should be removed down to the bare wood sheathing. Inspect the sheathing for needed repairs and how well it is anchored to the roof structures. Add screws and additional fasteners or nails to secure the sheathing. In tests, a few nails through sheathing that miss the trusses can expose the home's interior of the home to major damage if the sheathing is caught and lifted by winds.

Install a roof covering designed to resist high winds and shingles that are more resistant to hail like some types of metal shingles. Modified asphalt shingles also are likely to perform well in hailstorms. Ask about hail impact tests, wind-driven rain and wind resistance and compare various shingles.

Seal roof sheathing joints with self-stick rubberized asphalt tape to provide a secondary moisture barrier. If the roof sheathing needs added protection, glue the sheathing to the rafters and the trusses. The addition of hurricane clips can make roof structures more secure.

"Points where the roof and the foundation meet the walls of the house are very important in resisting high winds and the pressure put on the entire structure" says Niemeyer. "Make sure the walls are properly anchored to the foundation."

IBHS also recommends anchoring the roof to the walls with metal clips and straps. Make certain that the upper story wall framing is solidly connected to the lower framing in multi-story homes. A construction engineer or architect can help to determine if joints need retrofitting. Securing or bolting the house sill plates to the foundation and the roof to the wall also may result in less wind damage and may help lessen peripheral damage from nearby tornadoes.

Garage doors are highly vulnerable to wind damage, especially garage doors more than eight feet wide. Permanent wood or metal stiffeners can be installed. IBHS suggests contacting the door's manufacturer for recommendations about temporary center supports that can be attached when severe weather threatens and then removed easily.

Wind breaks also are important to direct wind currents and buffer winds. Weak trees and limbs that may damage the home if hit by high winds should be removed. Remove trash and objects from around your yard or home that could become wind borne or secure them to the ground.

Finally, review your homeowners or renters insurance with your agent to clarify what is and is not covered such as mold following a rain and wind incident or tornado.

SOURCES: Shirley Niemeyer, Ph.D., housing and environment specialist; Institute for Business and Home Safety; FEMA; J. Ayscue, Natural Hazards Research Working Paper #94