

DEODERIZING AFTER A SKUNK ENCOUNTER

A Skunk Remedy that Works

Here's a new way to "de-scent" pets that get into tangles with skunks. Paul Krebaum works in a lab in Lisle, Illinois, that uses alkaline hydrogen peroxide to scrub hydrogen sulfide from waste gas streams. The alkaline hydrogen peroxide also destroys chemicals called thiols in certain situations.

One of Krebaum's colleague's cats had an unfortunate encounter with a skunk. After trying the standard remedies, like tomato juice, the cat still smelled too bad to let back in the house. As a chemist, Krebaum realized that skunk spray is composed mostly of low-molecular thiols, and suggested using a version of the alkaline hydrogen peroxide mixture to wash the cat. It worked like magic, and the cat was allowed back into the house.

Tom McCutcheon, a biologist with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture who often gets calls from people whose pets get mixed up with skunks, heard about the incident. He went out and found a road-killed skunk, doused the entire animal with the same mix of chemicals, and ended up with a completely deodorized dead skunk.

Here's the potion:

1 quart of 3% hydrogen peroxide (from a pharmacy)

¼ cup baking soda

1 teaspoon liquid soap

Mix together and wash, keeping the mixture out of the animal's eyes, nose and mouth. Follow with a thorough tap water rinse. DO NOT CAP CONTAINER AFTER MIXING.

(Source: Natural and Environmental Resource Report, American Farm Bureau Federation, August 1995)