

Digest

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NEWS MAKERS, NEWS STORIES, NEW STUFF



A Black and White Issue

NEWS

He's cute. He's cuddly. He's willing to recline in your lap while you're sitting on the couch.

He's a ... skunk?

Lest you scoff, Deborah Cipriani is quick to add that they make the best kind of pets. (Continued on page 12)

DANIEL VASCONCELLOS

A Black and White Issue

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“What’s not to like about skunks?” she says. “They use a litter box, they’re smart, and one look at them keeps burglars away.”



The North Ridgeville resident’s devotion to the oft-avoided mammal led her to found SkunkHaven eight years ago, a non-profit rescue and assistance shelter that offers a home to the critters most people view as nuisances.

“I guess I was destined to help skunks,” Cipriani says, recalling the huge stuffed toy one her parents gave her when she was a child. She’s quick to dispel the misconception that all skunks, well, stink.

“Domestic ones that are bred are de-scented,” she explains. “The scent sac is surgically removed three to five weeks after they’re born.”

And, she cautions, “It’s illegal to

keep wild skunks as pets.”

SkunkHaven provides 24-hour emergency support for pet skunks in need and provides information to new owners about nutrition (a diet that’s 40 percent fresh fruits and vegetables and 60 percent meat and other protein is recommended) and first aid (children’s aspirin, Pepto-Bismol and Kaopectate work wonders on a variety of ills). Staffers offer advice on how to ease the discomfort of the arthritis and bone loss skunks are prone to have.

Cipriani also treats wild orphans before releasing them back outdoors, and she’s often called upon to help homeowners tangling with wild skunks that have made their presence odoriferously known. To keep them at bay, she recommends spraying the areas they frequent with a mixture of 8 ounces castor oil, 8 ounces liquid dish detergent and a gallon of water.

“If the skunk is underneath their porch, all homeowners have to do is

play loud bass music at dusk,” she adds. “Skunks hate it.”

On September 13 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., more than 400 skunk enthusiasts from as far away as New Jersey, California and Holland will congregate at Cipriani’s haven for her eighth-annual SkunkFest celebration. Given the stamp of approval by the Ohio Department of Wildlife, the fund-raiser for the shelter features educational exhibits about the revered pets, samples of skunk-friendly products, and a critter costume contest. Four lucky skunks will be crowned King, Queen, Prince and Princess of the fete. Admission to the event is a donation of paper towels or boxed natural cereals.

“People think skunks are this smelly little animal, but after you educate them, they look at skunks in a different light. Once people see skunks up close and personal, they change their minds,” she says.

For more information about SkunkHaven and SkunkFest, visit www.skunkhaven.net. — Steve Herrick