

# Skunks Must Be Bred Domestically

**W**e need more domestic production of pet skunks to protect the public from the unlawful traffic in the sale of wild caught skunks. I am aware of the rabies problem in the wild caught skunk and certain parts of the country have already banned the keeping of skunks because of it. This type of legislation is not the answer to rabies control. The control should be on the procurement of wild skunks.

Domestically raised skunks practically never have rabies because they are never allowed to roam unattached. And unless direct contact with an infected animal is made, rabies is an impossibility. Only through the bite of an infected animal can the disease be transmitted. However, many lawmakers consider only the statistical facts and seeing skunks high on the list of animals infected with this disease, pass laws which prohibit the keeping of skunks as pets. If this sort of legislation goes unheeded, are we to expect that eventually only zoos may maintain pets?

All state conservation departments and the National Public Health Department are concerned about the danger of rabies from wild caught animals to the unsuspecting pet lover. It is true that skunks in the wild are easy targets for the spread of rabies; any animal captured in the wild is a potential carrier of this disease. By nature, a skunk is not a coward and never runs from an enemy, always stand-

ing his ground by bluffing or emptying his six-shooters at his enemy. If the enemy is a rabid animal, the skunk is likely to be bitten and infected. If the skunk happens to be a female with a litter, she will probably infect her entire nest before dying; consequently, anyone picking up the babies and selling them as pets would be spreading disease.

It is against most state conservation laws to remove any wild animal from its natural habitat and confine it as a pet. Therefore, if your pet skunk has not been domestically raised by a licensed game farm, it more than likely is not a legal possession. It can be taken away from you at any time, regardless of the amount you have spent on descenting fee or veterinarian bills. This is another reason why these pets should be raised domestically.

A big problem for the purchaser is to determine whether he is getting a domestically raised animal when he buys a skunk. My advice would be to beware of advertisements selling skunks for \$10.00 \$15.00, or \$20.00, regardless of what the ad may say about the animal being *pen raised*. Some day I hope to set up a fool-proof method of pedigreeing skunks to protect the potential buyer and I am now open to suggestions from persons engaged in the breeding of these interesting little creatures.

Having raised skunks successfully for a number of years, I found that the mini-

mum a breeder can charge for a skunk is \$25.00 to \$30.00. Even then he must have had a very successful year.

I am not writing this editorial to encourage everyone to start breeding skunks. Rather I am devoting this to the sole purpose of explaining that we need more true animal loving people to breed these handsome little creatures. We also need to educate people to purchase only domestically raised skunks. If the public will demand the domestically-raised animals, and will pay a fair price for them, the breeder can make a profit and continue his operation.

In conclusion, to prevent adverse legislation from creeping in, to continue to increase the demand for this excellent pet, and to aid in protecting the pet buying public from a dreaded disease, we must ban together and say "only domestically raised skunks will be sold." If this is carried out one hundred percent, the danger of contracting rabies (the reason for the adverse legislation) from the nation's pet skunk population would practically be nil. A domestically raised skunk, properly inoculated, can not spread this disease. A combined effort by the breeder, and retailer, and the pet skunk purchaser can only accomplish the job. Without this united effort, it is highly possible that more and more areas will prohibit the keeping of skunks as pets, and this should not happen. ★

The writer shown feeding his variously-marked domestic skunks.

