

A skunking is a medical event — not just a smell.

A direct spray to the face is not an odor problem. It is a toxic chemical assault — and its effects are delayed, surfacing hours to days later. Duke was perfect until that skunk. Forty-eight hours later, his body began to fail. We believe that was no coincidence — and the fact that no one would even investigate it is exactly why this page exists.

72

hours — the minimum a sprayed dog should be watched closely (per the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center). But the danger doesn't always stop there.

0–3 hours

Drooling, squinting, red or swollen eyes, vomiting, face-rubbing. The obvious part — and where most people stop worrying.

3–24 hours

The thiols in skunk musk can begin destroying red blood cells — Heinz body anemia and methemoglobinemia. This is the silent, dangerous phase.

Up to 72 hours

Anemia can deepen. Without bloodwork and supportive care, a heavily-sprayed dog can crash. A documented case ended in a fatal seizure.

Days to weeks later

This is where we lost Duke. His blood calcium climbed, his body strained, and every vet looked everywhere except the skunk. What skunk toxin does over weeks has never been studied — and that void is where dogs slip away.

WHAT WE BELIEVE — AND WHAT NO ONE WOULD INVESTIGATE

Duke went from perfect to fighting for his life in 48 hours, the moment a skunk sprayed him in the face. We are certain that skunk set it in motion. No one could prove it did — but no one could prove it didn't, because no one was willing to look.

Signs to take seriously — call a vet now

- **Pale or brown gums** — chocolate-tinged gums are a red alert — red blood cells are failing.
- **Dark or red urine** — coffee- or blood-colored urine means cells are breaking down.
- **Excessive thirst & urination** — sudden heavy drinking can signal rising calcium or kidney strain.
- **Appetite loss & weakness** — not eating, listless, or unwilling to get up.
- **Fast, heavy breathing** — panting or labored breaths as oxygen runs low.
- **Vomiting** — worrying on its own — urgent alongside any other sign here.

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING

**After a heavy skunking, don't wait for symptoms.
Ask for bloodwork — and watch your dog closely for 72 hours.**

If your dog gets sprayed

- 1 Keep them outside**
Don't let a soaked, skunky dog into the house — the musk spreads to everything and keeps off-gassing.
- 2 Mix it fresh**
Use the peroxide formula below. Plain soap, water, or tomato juice will not neutralize the oils.
- 3 Flush the eyes**
Rinse eyes gently with cool, clean water. Keep the peroxide mix away from the eyes.
- 4 Then watch — 72 hours**
Check the gums and urine. Any sign from page 1 → vet immediately. Don't wait it out.

The de-skunk formula

The chemist's recipe (Krebaum) — it oxidizes the smelly oils into odorless, rinsable compounds.

- **1 quart fresh 3% hydrogen peroxide**
- **¼ cup baking soda**
- **1–2 tsp liquid dish soap**
- **For big dogs, add 1 quart of warm water**

Work it deep into the fur, leave 5 minutes, rinse thoroughly. Repeat if needed.

IMPORTANT

- Mix it fresh and use it right away. Never seal it in a closed container — pressure builds and it can burst.
- Keep it out of eyes, nose, and mouth.
- It may lightly bleach fur and fabric.
- A dog that smells skunky again after drying is still releasing toxins — keep rinsing.

What to ask your vet for — after any heavy or facial spray

- ☐ **Baseline bloodwork now.**
A CBC and chemistry panel on arrival — not “wait and see.”
- ☐ **Watch for Heinz bodies & methemoglobinemia.**
Ask them to look specifically for oxidative red-blood-cell damage.
- ☐ **A full 72-hour monitoring plan.**
Repeat bloodwork if anything shifts; IV fluids or a transfusion if anemia develops.
- ☐ **Put the skunk in the record.**
Insist the timeline — healthy dog, then sprayed, then sick — is written down and investigated, not waved off as unrelated.
- ☐ **Don't ignore other exposures.**
Skunk encounters can also transmit leptospirosis, bite bacteria, even rabies — ask about testing.
- ☐ **Be heard.**
If you're not being taken seriously, say it plainly — or get a second opinion. You know your dog.

The workup he deserved

If a dog has unexplained high blood calcium (hypercalcemia), this is the diagnostic protocol the veterinary profession itself publishes. Ask for every step by name. These are the tests that tell a curable parasite or infection from a death sentence — and Duke never got them.

- 1 **Confirm it — measure ionized calcium.** ☐
Total calcium can mislead. Repeat it fasted; the ionized fraction is the number that matters.
- 2 **The hormone panel — PTH + PTHrP + ionized calcium, together.** ☐
A “normal” PTH alongside high calcium is itself abnormal. A normal PTHrP does not mean stop looking.
- 3 **The vitamin-D panel — calcidiol + calcitriol.** ☐
The one that finds a treatable cause: high calcitriol points to a granuloma, infection, parasite, or vitamin-D poisoning — not typical cancer.
- 4 **Imaging — chest x-rays + abdominal ultrasound.** ☐
A granuloma and a tumor can look identical on a scan — which is why the next two steps are non-negotiable.
- 5 **Don't stop at “looks normal.”** ☐
Aspirate lymph nodes, spleen, and liver even if they seem normal; check bone marrow even if the blood count is fine.
- 6 **Biopsy the mass. No exceptions.** ☐
No dog gets labeled “cancer” without cancer cells confirmed under a microscope. A scan is a suspicion. Cells are proof.
- 7 **Rule out the great pretenders.** ☐
Addison's disease (ACTH-stimulation test), vitamin-D toxicity, and kidney disease all raise calcium.

IF YOU TAKE AWAY THREE THINGS

PTHrP · the calcitriol / vitamin-D panel · a biopsy

They are cheap. They are routine. Demand them before you accept any verdict.

Why the system failed him

1. A parasite can wear cancer's face.

A body that can't clear a parasite or infection walls it off in a granuloma — a mass that looks identical to a tumor on a scan (*Spirocerca lupi* is literally nicknamed “the carcinogenic nematode”). And granulomatous inflammation produces the same high-calcium bloodwork as cancer: immune cells make active vitamin D unchecked — a mechanism documented in dogs with parasitic and fungal disease. The tests that tell them apart — calcitriol, PTHrP, infectious panels, a biopsy — are cheap. Duke never got them. That isn't bad luck. That's the trap.

2. Follow the money: who trains your vet?

The pet-food giants — Purina, Hill's, Royal Canin — fund the nutrition centers, residencies, research, and conferences that shape veterinary education, while formal nutrition training gets only a few dozen hours in a four-year degree. That is on the record: the AVMA itself published “Learning Under the Influence,” and the WSAVA's own nutrition committee warns that most pet-nutrition research is industry-funded. Most vets are not villains — the ones who tried to help Duke were kind people. But the system that trains them carries commercial fingerprints, and its incentives quietly reward lifelong management over cheap prevention and root-cause answers. Duke deserved a system more curious about the cause than comfortable with the label.

You are your dog's only true advocate. Push for the test that wasn't run. Get the second opinion. Trust what you know about your own animal. That is the lesson Duke paid for.

— for Duke (2019–2024), and for yours.

Sources: Merck Veterinary Manual (“Hypercalcemia in Dogs and Cats”; “*Spirocerca lupi*”); dvm360 — skunk-spray toxicosis (ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center); Today's Veterinary Practice (“A Practical Approach to Hypercalcemia”); VET.CT; JAVMA case reports; AVMA “Learning Under the Influence” (2011); WSAVA Global Nutrition Committee. Full linked citations at dukedev1116.com. Educational information, not veterinary advice — always work with a veterinarian you trust.