

Raising a Stink Over Skunks

by Joseph Carbonneau

At Equinox Country Club we have a moderate population of Japanese Beetle grubs inhabiting about 2 acres of roughs. Although I have tried numerous insecticides to control the grubs, I have remained unsuccessful.

Of all the problems created by these pests, the most serious is the attraction of skunks. The skunks invade the course, seeking the Japanese Beetle grubs as a food supply. By digging into the ground for grubs, they leave behind an unsightly stand of turf. The solution to eliminating this problem lies in either shooting the skunks or trapping them. My choice was the latter.

We started out by constructing six 8'' x 8'' x 30'' box traps out of ½'' plywood. One end was left open with a hinged door attached. A string was attached to the door which in turn was hooked to a bait tray from the outside of the box. A piece of band iron was incorporated as a door latch and a handle was added to the top. A ½'' hole was then drilled in the back so that the skunk could be prompted to leave at the time of release. The traps were put out at the first sign of skunk activity and were baited with peanut butter. It took approximately a couple of nights for the varmints to get accustomed to the traps.

The traps were then checked in the morning and the traps that were tripped were carefully placed in the back of a truck and transported 3 to 4 miles from the course. At the time of release, randomly selected skunks were marked by a dot of yellow marking paint shot through the ½'' hole in the back of the trap. The door was then opened and a dowel inserted through the hole in the trap to hasten the skunk's departure. In a good week we trapped from 10 to 14 skunks, making a noticeable difference in skunk activity on our turf. So far we have trapped a total of 50 to 60 skunks with only a few returning. Having the trap only 8 inches high makes it hard for the skunk to lift its tail and spraying is difficult. Thus far, not a skunk has raised a stink.

This form of control has reduced our problem of turf devastation from the pesky skunk in his quest for the Japanese Beetle grub.

Credit: Our Collaborator, August '85



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