

SNAKES & PETS

In the warmer summer months from September to March, snakes become much more active and pet owners need to be careful to safeguard their pets from snake bite, as well as know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of snake bite.

Dogs will often try to chase or kill snakes resulting in bites usually to the dog's face and legs. Cats, being instinctive hunters, are also quite susceptible to snake bites.



The sort of reaction your pet has to a snake bite is determined by a number of factors: the species of snake, the amount of venom injected and which part of the body your pet has been bitten. Generally the closer the bite is to the heart the quicker the venom spreads to the rest of the body.

Signs & symptoms of snake bite include:

- Sudden weakness followed by collapse
- Shaking or twitching of the muscles and difficulty blinking
- Vomiting
- Loss of bladder and bowel control
- Dilated pupils
- Paralysis
- Blood in urine

If you think your pet has been bitten by a snake you should keep them calm and quiet and take them to a vet immediately. Early treatment is the key. If your vet is some distance away, if practical, you can apply a pressure bandage – a firm bandage over and around the bite site - to help slow the venom spreading to the heart. Do NOT wash the wound or apply a tourniquet.

If you can identify the snake, tell your vet what type of snake it is - but don't try to catch or

kill the snake. If it is dead, take a photo of it and get it identified by a reptile specialist, otherwise there is a blood, urine and swab test (of the bite site) that can identify whether your animal has been bitten and the type of snake responsible.

Once the snake has been identified your vet can administer anti-venom. Please be warned that anti-venom is expensive and can result in a large veterinary bill, so it is best to try and keep your pets safe and away from snakes in the first place.

Precautions



- Prevention is always the best control measure, consult a trainer and have your dogs trained to leave wildlife alone if you notice they have a tendency to chase or kill wildlife
- Use a leash when exercising dogs in bushland (particularly near water) or near sand dunes during the warmer months of the year.
- Keep cats inside at night and be vigilant if you notice them hunting or playing with something alive
- Snake proof your bird cages and pet enclosures with 1cm x 1cm steel mesh. It is astonishing what snakes will squeeze through to get an easy meal. Pythons are very strong so ensure there is no way for them to lift or push through openings.