



First Aid for Snake Bite

Snake bite is an acute medical emergency and it is important to act quickly and effectively.

- Stay calm, safety comes first – check that the snake is not still near the victim.
- Keep the victim as still as possible and immediately apply a pressure bandage.
- Start the bandage over the bite site and continue to the end of the limb leaving fingers or toes exposed. Work back over the bite site to the top of the limb until the entire limb is covered. Immobilise the limb.
- Ring 000 for medical assistance.
- **Mobile phones: ring 112**
(please see important note under Contacts section)
- Bring transport to the victim if possible, or carry the person on a makeshift stretcher. It is important that the person is kept as still as possible.
- Identification of the snake is unnecessary as the antivenom is effective for all three species of Tasmanian snakes.
- Once the pressure bandage is in place, treat the victim for shock; i.e. keep warm, monitor breathing and heart rate. Do not give food or drink.
- If person loses consciousness, place victim in coma position on the unaffected side and keep airways clear.
- Monitor fingers/toes – if they turn blue or white and go cold, the bandage is on too tight.
- Do not cut or suck the bite site.
- Do not release the bandage until victim has received advice from qualified medical practitioner.

What not to do!

- Do not apply a tourniquet
- Do not suck or cut a snake bite
- Do not attempt to catch the snake
- Do not let the victim walk about

Most people get bitten when they attempt to kill or handle a snake, or may have accidentally trodden on it. The last person to die from snake bite in Tasmania was bitten by a Tiger snake in 1966.

The best thing to do if you see a snake, is to stand very still and let it go on its way or if safe to do so, back away from it very slowly.



Blotched Bluetongue (*Tiliqua nigrolutea*)

Contacts & Assistance with Reptiles*

North West Coast

All About Reptiles0418 170 952

Central North Wildlife Care & Rescue Inc..... 0409 978 064

Statewide

DPIW Wildlife Management Branch 1300 368 550

(Office hours only)6233 6556

RSPCA1300 139 947

Emergency (Snake bites only) 000

Emergency Mobile Phones.....112

EMERGENCY MOBILE NO. IMPORTANT NOTE

If your carrier does not have service but another carrier does, the emergency number will automatically use that. However, if there is no service at all in the area you won't get through.

If you are going into the bush, always let someone know when you are leaving, due to return and where you are going. Always carry an EPIRB and two bandages if you are going into remote areas.

(*Please note: snake relocations will incur a fee)

This information brochure has been designed and published by Michael and Jackie Thow of All About Reptiles which is a private business who is dedicated to the education and caring for reptiles under government permits, we provide rescue and relocation services by qualified and insured snake handlers who provide long term care for permanently injured reptiles and exotic reptiles that find their way in to Tasmania.

For more information about the group please ring:

0418 170 952

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Living with the SNAKES OF TASMANIA



Tiger Snake (*Notechris scutatus*)



Copperhead (*Austrelaps superbus*)



White-lipped snake (*Drysdalia coronoides*)

Encountering Snakes

Snakes may be seen in the most surprising places including towns and industrial areas, particularly during summer when water is in short supply.

Its best to leave them alone.

Although most will only be passing through, snakes do occasionally take up residence in suburban yards. During prolonged dry periods, they are attracted to gardens in search of water, shelter and food (i.e. lizards, frogs, goldfish and mice/rats).

To minimise their presence around your home:

- Keep your lawns mowed.
- Minimise rubbish and garden waste.
- Stack wood away from the house.
- Do not have standing water in bowls or ponds close to the house.

Your pet cat may bring a snake indoors to show it off to you – keep cat flaps closed.

If you find a snake at home

- Stay calm.
- Do not approach the snake and secure children and pets safely away from the area.
- Keep the animal under constant observation if safe to do so, and ring for help.

Roles and Values

Like most native mammals, birds and reptiles, Tasmanian snakes are protected by law. They are an important source of food for the larger birds of prey and do an excellent job of controlling introduced pests such as rabbits, rats and mice which have a detrimental effect on farms and natural bushland.

Habitat Loss

Reptiles depend on native bush for their survival. As more bushland is cleared for homes, agriculture and industry, animals have to adapt to the new environments to find food, shelter and breeding sites. Unless areas can be reserved to provide habitat, snakes will be seen more often in gardens and urban areas.

First Aid for Reptiles

- Snakes and Bluetongues frequently get caught up in strawberry netting. Do not attempt to free them. If it is a hot day, throw a towel over them, keep them shaded, cool and moist (light spray with water) and call an expert snake handler.
- Bluetongues may be injured by family pets or lawnmowers etc: Carefully scoop the animal into a secure cardboard box with a towel in the bottom to prevent sliding, and keep in a cool dark place and call wildlife rescue.
- Injured snakes should only be handled by experts. Keep the snake under surveillance and ring for help from a handler.

Lizard or Snake?

The completely harmless lizard, the She-oak skink (*Cyclodomorphus casuarinae*) is only found in Tasmania and is often mistaken for a small snake. This is mainly because as well as flicking its tongue, it can tuck its legs and move along the ground with snakelike motion.



Myths & Legends - True or False?

- A snake's forked tongue is poisonous **False**
- Snakes are attracted by milk **False**
- Snakes are slimy **False**
- Snakes go after chicken eggs (They are after mice & rats) **False**
- Snakes will chase or attack you **False**
- Bluetongue lizards keep snakes away **False**
- The only good snake is a dead snake **FALSE!**

Fact File

- Tasmania has three species of snakes, the Tiger snake, Copperhead and White-lipped snake (formally known as whip snake), which are widely distributed throughout the State.
- All three species are venomous.
- Snakes cannot regulate their body heat, they need to warm up in the sun, and become sluggish in cold weather.
- Snakes breed and birth in March/April and then go into hibernation for the winter, emerging in spring when temperatures warm up. Snakes will hibernate anywhere that is warm and dry and do not eat until they emerge from their torpor.
- Tasmanian snakes give birth to live young and do not lay eggs.
- Snakes generally give birth every second year.
- Copperheads give birth to 6–12 young; Tiger snakes between 20-30 and White-lipped snake approximately 2-6 young. Only a small percentage of the young survive to adulthood.
- Baby snakes are as venomous as adult snakes (just produce less).
- Snakes usually hide from the hot sun between 10am and 2pm, but will move around on cloudy days.
- Some snakes can live up to 30 years.
- Snakes will eat each other, frogs, tadpoles, lizards, small birds and marsupials, mice, rats and rabbits.
- Most snakes are good climbers and have been found in roofs and up trees.
- Tiger snakes and Copperheads are amongst the top 10 most venomous snakes in the world. Their venom is designed to quickly kill their prey in order to minimise the potential for injury to the snake.
- Both Copperhead and Tiger snakes have wide colour variations ranging from black to yellow, red and brown.
- Snakes are immune to their own venom.
- According to the records, no Copperheads have been responsible for any snake bite deaths in Tasmania.