

SNAKE SAFETY:

What to do when you see a snake

Your safety. When you see a snake, never approach it or try to scare it off. This can provoke the snake to try and defend itself.

Call a professional. If you decide that the snake should be removed call a professional. If this is the option you have chosen then the following steps can be critical to ensuring the snake is found when the catcher arrives.

- 1. Have someone watch the snake from a safe distance 100% of the time.** This is crucial. Snakes are very fast and can disappear in a matter of seconds, even in short grass, their colouring can also make them blend in to sticks and rocks etc. If the snake disappears, relocating it can be a very difficult and sometimes an unlikely accomplishment.
- 2. Keep your distance.** The person watching the snake needs to keep a safe distance so that they don't unintentionally make the snake feel threatened. If the snake does decide to move on to another spot you can follow the snake to keep it in your sights, but from a distance. Sometimes it helps to have more than one person watching the snake (or the area that the snake was spotted, for example if it went into a bush, having people watch the bush from different sides can increase the chances of the snake being spotted if it leaves).
- 3. Keep vulnerable family members away.** Make sure that any young children, Dogs, cats etc. are kept away. Children can be curious, Dogs and Cats can be defensive. Keep them in the house, (or a separate room if the snake is in the house).
- 4. If the snake is in your home.** If the snake is in your home, Let us use the bathroom as an example. Follow the same steps as before. Have someone watch the snake whilst keeping their distance. Call a professional and keep vulnerable family members away. Try to prevent the snake from moving to another room by rolling up some towels and putting them under the doors, close cupboards, toilet lids and anywhere else where the snake may want to try to escape or hide. If you are not comfortable being in the room with the snake, there is no need to put yourself in that position. Close the door and put a rolled up towel under it. You can maybe watch it through the window outside. If this is what you are comfortable doing I would try to find someone to watch the snake from the rooms window and also at the door. If the snake makes its way to the door and gets into the rest of the house, by the time you get back inside to monitor it, it could be anywhere.



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When to call a snake catcher

You can call a snake catcher at any time for general advice, we are always happy to talk about snakes. Anytime you see a snake is also a good time to call a snake catcher. Not every snake needs to be removed from a property. There are a lot of factors that are used to determine if the snake should be removed.

- 1. If there are young children and or pets such as dogs and cats.** This is the most common reason, most people decide to have the snake removed. For Families with children and pets, if they see a snake in their yard they want the peace of mind knowing that it has been relocated to a place where it won't come into contact with the household again.
- 2. If the Snake is in the house.** A common reason to call a snake catcher is if the snake has made its way into your home. Commonly found in kitchens and bathrooms (making their way in through the plumbing). This situation will require a professional to make sure that the snake has been safely removed from the home.
- 3. If the snake is in the yard.** This situation doesn't always require the snake to be removed. The decision comes down to the people living at the property. If they feel threatened by the snakes' presence, if they are worried for other family members' safety, also the exact location of the snake. If the snake is in a common area for foot traffic, (in the chicken coop, by the clothes line etc), or in a less used area of the property, (down in the paddock, by the wood shed in summer etc).
- 4. If the snake is in the workplace.** A common place to spot a snake during work hours is on construction/building sites, down manholes, if you work as a gardener, or any general outdoor work. The decision for the removal of a snake from a job site should be made by the Manager or Property owner. As soon as the snake is spotted notify the appropriate person in the company to decide on the action they want to take.

What to do if you are bitten by a snake

This will be a very basic what to do and what not to do if bitten by a snake.

DO NOT MOVE: Snake venom flows via the Lymphatic system not the blood stream. If you are bitten the most important thing to do is to NOT MOVE. Every time you walk or move your arm you will push the venom further through your system. The best thing you can do is to sit down and get help to come to you.

FIND HELP: These days most people have a mobile phone. Call 000 and they will talk you through the rest. Even if your phone is out of reception range calling 000 should still put you through to the emergency department.

THERE IS NO NEED TO IDENTIFY THE SNAKE: Anti-Venoms have come leaps and bounds in the past decades. Today one Anti-Venom will treat all Australian Native Snake Venoms. So gone are the days where you had to identify the snake or test the patient to work out the correct Anti-Venom.

APPLY A COMPRESSION BANDAGE: If you have a Compression bandage in your pocket then apply this. If it is in your car or first aid kit a minutes' walk from you call 000 first and follow their recommendations.

Note*** If you are bitten on the hand and have jewellery such as rings or bracelets take them off as swelling can be common from bites making it very difficult in the near future to remove them safely.



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Tips on how to deter snakes

There are no guarantees that anything you do or buy to deter snakes will result in a snake never coming to visit. But there are some things that you can do that will make it less inviting for them.

Snakes mainly feed on mice and lizards, but some species also eat other snakes. So if you can limit the food sources for mice, then there will be less mice and then less reason for a snake to come for dinner.

Ways to help keep the mouse population down in your home:

- Don't leave food scraps laying around – keep all food in containers.
- Only feed your pets what they will eat in the next few minutes. You may need to feed your pets a few times a day, but this will stop having pet food sitting around for the mice to feast on.
- If you have chickens or ducks etc – Feed them as far from the house as possible.

Snakes are also attracted to water sources, especially on a hot summer's day. Things like bird baths and ponds are a good easy source of water for a snake. They are always nice features in an Australian garden, if you decide to have one then please always be alert when near them. Another easy source of water for a snake is your Dogs water bowl. This also goes for chicken water bowls. I would recommend changing your chicken's water bowl out for chicken drinker nipples. There isn't a huge amount you can do about your dog's water source. Your local pet store might have a solution.

Snakes Like cover. Another crucial way to make your property less inviting for a snake is to keep your property tidy. This means keep your grass short, don't leave piles of building materials around (like bricks, tin, Timber ect). Keep your firewood storage a good distance from the house and yard. Snakes are common prey to predatory birds. They like to move between bushes and cover as much as possible. Limiting these spots of cover and or having large open spaces between will lessen the appeal of your yard to a snake.

If the snake can easily move from cover to cover in short distances, can easily pop out to bask in the sun and have a drink of water close by, and also a plentiful food source, then your home will be a snakes 5 star hotel.



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Tips on snake behaviour

An interesting fact about Venomous snakes is that they don't have an endless supply of venom. The venom that snakes evolved has been designed for hunting their prey, not for defence. This means that their hunting style is reliant on the venom working. If they don't have any venom they won't be able to successfully hunt. A Venomous snake will strike at its prey and let the venom do its work. This is different to pythons and other non-venomous snakes who will constrict their prey. Most snakes (depending on the size and time of the year) will only eat once a week or once every two weeks. This means they have evolved to give themselves a long period of time to develop more venom to replace what they have used.

What does this mean for the snakes relationship with you? If the snake was to bite you then it will have to wait to develop more venom before it can feed again. So a snake will generally only bite a human or non-prey animal like a dog or a cat in a life threatening situation. This can range from the snake being attacked by a dog, to it simply being startled enough when you step on it or put your hand near it. The snakes' personal experience plays a huge part in this. Some snakes have no reason to be fearful of humans so will be very docile. Other snakes may have been attacked previously, or been stuck in a chicken coop or bathroom for days and desperate for escape, making them very grumpy.

Yes snakes can be docile.

Yes snakes can be aggressive.

When dealing with any wild snake it is best to contact a professional who has experience reading snake behaviour.

Because of the snakes limited venom supply, most snakes will give a few warning strikes to inform you to back off. If you don't back off it may interoperate that as life threatening and decide to defend itself.

Remember Snakes are wild animals and think like wild animals. They will try and escape in a direction that is away from you first. If the snake is cornered, and its only way out is through you, then that is the way it is going to want to go.

Common Myths:

Bluetongues and Stumpy-tail lizards:

There is a common saying that if you have these lizards around you won't have snakes. This is false, snakes like tiger snakes actually eat lizards.

Snakes always travel in pairs. This is a common misconception. Snakes keep to themselves and can be very territorial. Most snakes leave their children as soon as they are born or hatched from the eggs (depending on the species).



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