



## Snakes

Snakes are on the move now the weather has warmed up. Snakes don't usually bite without provocation, and should be left well alone. 90% of bites occur when someone is trying to catch or kill a snake. Of course inquisitive dogs or cats look pretty threatening to a snake and so pets are at risk. Especially if they try to capture or kill a snake.

We live in a snake prone area but not all vet clinics stock anti-venom as it is very expensive. Even if snakes are not usually found in your area it is a good idea to find what clinics have anti venom in stock. Enter the name of the clinic in your phone and know the opening hours and address. If a snake bite should occur you may not have much time to get help.

If you live in a snake prone area and don't have pet insurance it could be a wise investment. A snake bite could easily cost thousands of dollars. In fact most pet emergencies are very expensive and unless you have a good amount of savings then it could be extremely stressful. Chat to your vet about pet insurance. They may not be able to recommend any specific insurers but they can help to explain policy wordings which can be a bit confusing. Not all pet insurers are created equal & after all they are insurance companies so it's important you find the best match for you.

So what to do if a snake bite is suspected? Firstly keep calm & don't try to kill the snake or pick it up for identification (you are no help to your pet if you get bitten). In most cases a description is all that is needed and the local vets or emergency service will usually be aware of the types of snakes found in the area. If you know where your pet has been bitten apply a pressure bandage to that area (Bandage firmly above and over the site, down the limb and then back up the limb). Phone the vet or get someone to phone the vet for you so they can prepare for your arrival. Drive safely to the vet without delay. Keep your pet calm and where possible keep them still (confinement is often the safest option). In some cases venom is not injected during the bite so the vet may just observe the animal before treatment.

Remember snakes are a protected species so should not be killed (and do not attempt to capture a snake). If you have a snake on your property call the wildlife helpline (In Perth it's called Wildcare and the number is 9474-9055) it's a good idea to have the number of your local wildlife helpline on your fridge and stored in your phone. There are a number of trained volunteers who will come out and safely relocate the snake for you. And if you like snakes like I do (in the wild) then you may wish to take up some training yourself? I have attended a number of courses and captured tiger snakes, death adders and dugites & find them very interesting, and not as scary as people may imagine. The more you know about an animal the easier it is to understand its behaviour and the less frightening it is.

If you're not into close contact with snakes then think about extra training with your dog. Teach them to leave wildlife alone. Some Dog Training classes will teach the 'leave it' command which can be applied to all manner of things including unknown objects or wildlife.