

GRACIOUS SNAKES ALIVE! *(The following information was emailed to homeowners on May 18, 2006).* The big Rattlesnake Round-up in Sweetwater, Texas is held annually on the 2nd weekend in March. This year, while capturing approx. 2,000 snakes, apparently, they didn't catch 'em all.

Just this week, we have had two sightings (and killings) of rattlesnakes on the trails and in the yards at Roseheart. Please use caution venturing off the trails, or working in your yard. As we break into phase 3 & 4, we are disturbing their natural habitat; in addition to the fact that the days are getting warmer and the snakes are looking for shade and moisture.

According to the Texas Department of Health, these guidelines will help lessen the chance of a snake bite:

- * Although most snakes in Texas are not venomous, avoid handling or playing with snakes unless you have been properly trained. (Do we really need to be told not to play with snakes?)
- * Keep landscape or campsite well manicured.
- * Wear long pants and boots when in areas known to have snakes.
- * Watch where you step and place your hands when outdoors. Do not place them in areas where snakes may be resting unless you can see it is safe.

If someone has been bitten by a venomous snake, it is important to seek medical attention promptly. Call 9-1-1 or the Texas Poison Center Network at 1-800-POISON-1 (1-800-764-7661) for information about which medical centers in your area have the appropriate antivenin. If possible call ahead to the medical center so the antivenin can be ready when the victim arrives. Remove any jewelry over the affected area, before any swelling begins. Do not cut, suck or disturb the wound at all. Stay as calm as possible, and keep the bitten limb below your heart level.

The contact info for the South Texas Poison Center is:
The Univ. of Texas Health Science Ctr - San Antonio
Department of Surgery
Mail Code 7849, 7703 Floyd Curl Drive
San Antonio, TX 78229-3900
Emergency Phone: (800) 222-1222

(This information comes from the Texas Department of State Health Services, Infectious Disease Control Unit: Snakes) This Bites - Venomous Texas Snakes

Snake Bite Statistics

About 7,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes in the U.S. annually.

Only 0.2% (1 out of 500) venomous snake bites result in death

On average, 1 to 2 people in Texas die each year from venomous snake bites in Texas.

Roughly half of all venomous snake bites are "dry." That is, the snake does not inject venom into the victim.

Statistics from National Ag Safety Database

Venomous Snakes in Texas

There are two types of venomous snakes found in Texas. First, pit vipers are the most common type of venomous snakes in Texas and include the copperhead, cottonmouth and rattlesnake. Pit vipers get their name from the infrared radiation receptors located in a "pit" on each side of the snake's face. Additionally, pit viper pupils are vertically elliptical and they have a single row of scales located on the underside of their tail.



The second type of venomous snake found in Texas is the coral snake. Coral snakes are members of a group of snakes called Elapids that are characterized by having a short, permanently erect fang located along each side of the upper-jaw. However, the coral snake does not have to "chew" its victim to inflict a painfully venomous bite. The Texas Coral Snake is the only member of the Elapids that is found in Texas and can easily be identified by the red, yellow

and black color bands along the snake's body. The Texas Coral Snake is the only snake in Texas with touching red and yellow bands.

Symptoms of Envenomization by Snakes

There are many biological and environmental factors that determine the quantity and toxicity of an individual's snake's venom. People also react differently (immunologically) to snake venom. It is difficult to identify a set of standard symptoms for snake bite victims because of these variations. Listed below are some symptoms

that many victims of snake bites share, but remember that not every victim will have all of these symptoms.

Common Symptoms of Snake Bite

- blurred vision
- convulsions
- dizziness
- excessive sweating
- fainting
- fang marks
- fever
- increased salivation
- localized pain and burning
- muscle contractions
- muscle incoordination
- nausea and vomiting
- numbness and tingling
- rapid pulse rate
- skin discoloration
- swelling in the bite area
- thirst
- tissue death
- weakness



First Aid for Snake Bite Victims

If someone has been bitten by a venomous snake, it is important to seek medical attention promptly. Call 9-1-1 or the Texas Poison Center Network at 1-800-POISON-1 (1-800-764-7661) for information about which medical centers in your area have the appropriate antivenom. If possible call ahead to the medical center so the antivenom can be ready when the victim arrives. It is also important to identify the kind of snake that bit the victim. Even taking a dead snake with you to the medical center is appropriate if it can be done without further risk or injury. Extreme caution should be used when bringing in a snake because even though the snake may be dead, its reflexes may still allow the snake to bite.



What to do for snake bite victims.

Keep calm.

Suck or squeeze as much venom as possible directly from the wound. Venom is a protein and can be taken orally with no ill effects. (DO NOT make cuts over the snake bite).

Wash the bite area with soap and water if possible.

Limit movement of the bitten limb (DO NOT apply tourniquet or other restriction devices).

Keep the bitten limb below the heart.

Remove jewelry or constricting clothing before any swelling begins.

Seek medical attention immediately.

Get a tetanus shot.

What NOT to do for Snake Bite Victims

Do not make cuts over the snake bite. This often leads to more tissue trauma and damage.

Do not apply a tourniquet or other constricting device.

Do not apply a cold pack or ice to the snake bite.

Do not apply an electrical shock to the snake bite.

Do not take pain reliever or other medications unless instructed to do so by a physician.

Do not drink alcoholic beverages.

Do not administer antivenom in the field. Treatment for snake bites is best conducted in an appropriate medical facility.

Snake Bite Prevention

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** Wear long pants and boots when in areas known to have snakes.*

** Watch where you step and place your hands when outdoors. Do not place them in areas where snakes may be resting unless you can see it is safe.*

More Information

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/junior_naturalists/snakebit.phtml

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/junior_naturalists/moresnakes.phtml

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/species/southerncopperhead/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nasd/docs/as31600.html>

<http://www.kingsnake.com/venom/>