



Become Snake-Smart to Protect Your Dog



SHY AND RARELY AGGRESSIVE, snakes bite only when injured or sensing a threat - such as defending themselves against curious dogs. While all dogs are at risk for snake bites, field dogs are especially vulnerable as they probe holes in the ground, sniff under logs, explore riverbanks and dig up leafy patches on the forestfloor.

In the United States, there are four venomous snake species: Cottonmouth (also known as Water Moccasin), Rattlesnake, Copperhead and coral snakes. Bites from these snakes can cause intense pain, disfigurement and even death.

The degree of damage inflicted by a venomous snake is determined by many variables, including:

- ✓ Snake's age and species
- ✓ Intensity and depth of the fang penetration
- ✓ Amount of venom injected
- ✓ Location of the bite
- ✓ Size of the dog

While nonvenomous snake bites leave teeth marks in the shape of a horseshoe, venomous snakes create fang marks on victims

Snake bite symptoms

- Bleeding, bruising and swelling around the site of the bite wound.
- Excessive swelling on the area of the body where the bite occurred. For example, if the bite was on the head, the dog's entire head may begin to balloon within a matter of minutes.
- Color changes to tissue surrounding the wound such as red, blue, and black as the tissue dies
- Signs of shock such as pale gums, cool skin, and tremors
- Weakness, lethargy, confusion and lack of coordination
- Vomiting
- Slow respiration

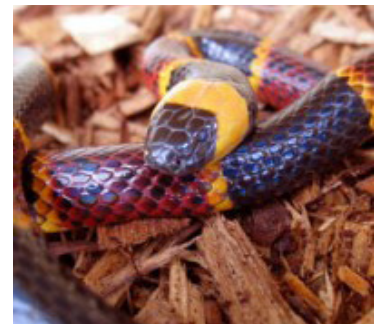
If your dog is struck by a snake

- ✓ Seek immediate treatment from your vet or emergency animal clinic. Identifying the snake that bit your dog can help your veterinarian determine treatment, but is not necessary.
- ✓ Don't cut into the bite wound, suck out the venom or apply a tourniquet to the area.
- ✓ Don't apply ice or heat to the wound.
- ✓ Restrain and calm your dog to slow the spread of venom

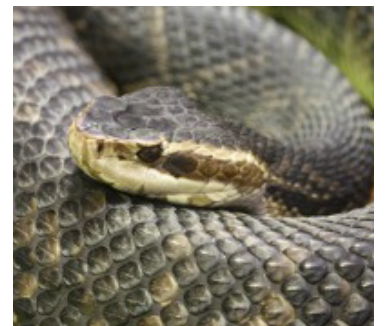
Copperhead Snake



Coral Snake



Cottonmouth Snake



Rattle Snake



Snake-Smart

Medical treatment

Among the snake-bite treatments your veterinarian may administer are: an antihistamine to increase blood pressure and reduce reaction to the snake bite, pain medication, blood transfusion if blood coagulation has decreased to life threatening levels, and antibiotics to reduce secondary infections from occurring. He may also provide oxygen therapy, address shock, or order blood tests to assess your dog's organ function and possible organ damage.

Most dogs will stay in a pet hospital for at least a day for observation. If the bite reaction was severe, your dog may need to stay a few days until stabilized.

Prevention

- Snake proofing teaches dogs to avoid contact with snakes, reducing the risk of being bitten. Various snake-avoidance methods train dogs to associate the smell, sound and site of a snake with a negative correction. Experts recommend annual re-testing to ensure the dog still recalls the aversion conditioning.
- A vaccine for rattlesnake bites may be especially useful for field dogs, who tend to encounter snakes with greater frequency than other dogs. The vaccine, which remains controversial, is aimed at creating protective antibodies to help neutralize venom after a bite.

This article is provided by the AKC Canine Health Foundation whose mission is to advance the health of all dogs and their owners by funding sound, scientific research and supporting the dis-



AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB
**CANINE HEALTH
FOUNDATION**
PREVENT TREAT & CURE



semination of health information to prevent, treat, and cure canine disease. For more information or to support their work visit www.akcchf.org.

