



7 Crescent Street Penguin 7316

ABN 15989957221

penguinvet@gmail.com

Ph [03] 64 371331

[www. penguin.vet](http://www.penguin.vet)

[www. penguinvet.com.au](http://www.penguinvet.com.au)

[facebook.com/PenguinVets.](https://facebook.com/PenguinVets)

Snakebite in Tasmanian Pets

In Tasmania you need not identify the culprit snake

We have 3 endemic snakes [Tiger, Copper-head, Whip] ... their venom is similar, and the same antivenene used. *More than 80% of pets survive snake bite if treated quickly; their chances drop if left untreated, and they often die*

Signs may include

1. Worst cases will collapse, may vomit. Some die within minutes. These are the pets it may be very hard to save
2. Sometimes they are initially agitated, but soon ...
3. Weakness: tremor, unsteady gait, loss of bark/miaow ... they drop/flop, are very slow to rise, then cannot rise, cannot even lift their head, and enter coma.
4. Fixed, 'dilated' pupils
5. Vomit, salivation, drooling
6. Cannot swallow
7. Blood fails to clot ... you may see blood in the urine, or a nose bleed
8. difficulty breathing*
9. Cyanosis ... blue lips, gums and tongue ... very serious
10. a Cat may just 'go missing'. Some are obviously weak, but owners may not notice a problem until it is not responsive when stroked, cannot swallow, or has an altered miaow.

Death can occur within minutes, after a few hours, or a few days, depending on the amount of venom injected and whereabouts on its body the animal has been bitten.

"If your pet can't stand up and walk over to you when you call it, that is an emergency, regardless of the cause."

What to do if your pet has been bitten by a snake

Seek immediate veterinary help. **Ring the vet** and explain you have a snake-bite victim, so they can be prepared, and give you relevant advice.

Keep your pet Calm and Still ... any movement by the animal will hasten spread of the venom. A pressure bandage, as recommended for people, may help in theory but in fact may distress the animal and **speed up** venom transfer. Talk to the pet, stroke it, keep it calm, and CARRY IT, perhaps using a pillow, blanket or drawer as a stretcher

It may not be easy to actually locate the bite: and you do not need to. Your observations, and the vet's examination will usually define the issue. Sometimes a snake-bite detection test, blood-CK or urine test may be needful.

Snake-Bite Kit =
A stretcher [taut blanket, a tray or drawer]
A car
A phone, with a vet's number in its memory

Treatment usually involves intravenous fluids, administration of anti-venom and use of other indicated therapies for minimising allergy, pain, or [dis]stress.

Improvement may be evident within 24-48 hours but even-so full **recovery will take several weeks** ...

confinement & strict rest with a non-abrasive diet, and close observation will be needed to ensure hypotension, paresis, slow blood clotting, muscle damage, and kidney impairment have all settled. Oftentimes re-assessment and sequential blood or urine tests are needful to monitor recovery.

Q&A about snakebite

- **Can a pet survive a snake bite without anti-venom?** Sometimes.
If only a small amount of venom has been injected: for instance, if the snake has only just bitten something else, or if the bite is into a heavily furred or poorly vascular region [such as a fat depot]. But pets are often bitten on their nose or paw: both highly vascular.
When antivenene is not available, intensive care with IV fluids, oxygen, ancillary therapy and close monitoring MAY save your pet: but the chances are much reduced.
In either case, immediate veterinary help is the key.
- **Do the bite marks always bleed?** No.
oftentimes the bite cannot be found. Do not waste time looking for it!
- **What if the pet ate the snake?**
Come straight in. The dog may have been bitten first.
- **The pet killed a snake a few days ago and now has blood in its urine.**
Your pet may have been bitten by that snake, and is best checked for other signs.
OR there may be quite another cause for that blood ... “Red-urine” is always serious, let us take a look!
- **Does a previous snake-bite confer immunity?** No.
Pets may suffer snake-bite 2 – 3 times, equally serious each time
- **Should you ‘bleed’ or suck out the wound?** No.
Bleeding will only cause further weakness, hurt and stress to the animal. Very little venom will actually be retrieved.
- **Snakes hunt down their victims?** No,
They respond to what they perceive as an attack, to protect themselves.
- **Are some pets more prone to snake bite?** Yes
 1. Those living amidst scrubland, bushland
 2. Young, inquisitive puppies
 3. Hunting breeds and terriers ... and the older, slower ones may be more at risk
 4. Cats: they share the same hunting grounds and prey [rodents, lizards, small birds, insects]; and some cats will actually stalk snakes!

Simple steps to help avoid snakes:

Keep lawns and grass short.

Keep rubbish to a bare minimum.

Move woodpiles away from dog areas.

Keep dog areas free from ‘hiding’ areas.

Do not let your dog off leash in high-risk areas such as bush-land.

Leave water features empty around this time of year.

Keep cats indoors.