

# MEDIA RELEASE

The Australian Veterinary Association



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## Snakes seeking spring sun a threat to animals

With the arrival of spring, snakes can catch animals unawares as the warmer weather and dryer conditions put an end to their winter hibernation.

Australia's peak veterinary body, the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) suggests animal owners should take precautions to prevent deadly encounters with snakes.

AVA spokesperson, Dr David Neck said that snakes tend to be their most active at the end of the day.

"Snake bites tend to occur in the late afternoon or early evening.

"Snakes in barns are probably looking for mice or rats, so keeping your barn clean can help to avoid this problem. They tend to be attracted to rodents and rubbish to hide under.

"Outside, keep a close eye for snakes in bushy areas or near water. It's best to try and keep horses, cattle and sheep away from bushy areas if possible.

"Dog owners should avoid snake-prone areas, particularly if they are walking their dog at the end of the day. Snakes can also venture into backyards, and over the spring and summer months even city dogs and cats can be at risk," he said.

Dr Neck said it's important for animal owners to be aware of the signs of a snake bite as owners may not actually see their animal being bitten.

"The onset of signs in dogs is generally faster than it is for cats."

Signs of a snake bite in cats and dogs include:

- Sudden weakness followed by collapse
- Bleeding puncture wound
- Swelling in the bitten area
- Pain and discomfort
- Neurological signs such as twitching, drooling and shaking
- Vomiting
- Loss of bladder and bowel control
- Dilated pupils
- Paralysis.

“Horses, sheep and cattle are also susceptible to snake venom. Signs include muscle tremor, laboured breathing and dilated pupils followed by paralysis.

“If you think your animal has been bitten contact your vet immediately. The chances of recovery are much greater if treatment is delivered early. If you can’t get veterinary attention immediately, applying a pressure bandage over and around the bite site can help slow the venom spreading to the heart,” he said.

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*The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the national professional association of veterinary surgeons in Australia. Founded in 1921, the AVA today represents 7000 members working in all areas of animal science, health and welfare.*