

Department of Health

Be snake wise!

10 December 2019

Snakes are on the move in the NT. While the peak activity period runs from September to April, they are always a danger.

Royal Darwin Hospital infectious diseases physician and snake expert Professor Bart Currie said the RDH emergency department receives on average one to two snakebite patients per week at this time of year.

Nationally, there are about 3000 admissions to hospitals each year with about 300 proven venomous bites and 2-3 fatalities each year on average.

“Brown snakes have been responsible for four of the last five snakebite deaths in the NT,” Prof Currie said.

“I encourage all NT residents to have a snake bite first aid kit in their house and vehicle and undertake a first aid course.

“If you are bitten by a snake, keep as still as possible, call 000 and apply a pressure bandage firmly to the entire limb or wound area. After bandaging, splint the limb to help reduce movement and remain as still as possible,” Prof Currie said.

Wildlife Consultant Chris Peberdy said bites can be prevented by wearing of covered footwear and long pants when in areas that you are likely to encounter snakes.

“Most serious bites involve the victim attempting to kill or catch the snake. DO NOT touch or interfere with snakes,” Mr Peberdy said.

Gloves and long-sleeves should also be used when conducting outdoor activities (not just for snakes but for soil borne bacteria also).

The Northern Territory Government funds snake removal services in Darwin and Darwin rural (1800 453 210), Katherine – Reedy’s Reptiles (0407 934 252) and Alice Springs – Alice Springs Reptile Centre (0407 983 276) which are free and available 24/7.

In other areas, contact your local Parks and Wildlife Office or NT Police on 131 444.

“I recommend Territorians add the relevant numbers to their mobile phone contact list,” Mr Peberdy said.

The Department of Tourism and Culture, Parks and Wildlife have fact sheets available about common Top End and Central Australian snakes: <https://nt.gov.au/environment/animals/wildlife-in-nt/snakes>

Media contact: Russel Guse 0436 933 810

Media note: A video on snake awareness and first aid is available at <https://vimeo.com/354476534/12a630f99e>

Video courtesy of Menzies School of Health Research.

Photos courtesy of Chris Peberdy.

[Northern Brown Snake](#) (jpg 137 kb), [Coastal Taipan](#) (jpg 192 kb), [Death Adder](#) (jpg 1 mb), [King Brown snake](#) (jpg 174 kb), [Northern Death Adder](#) (jpg 137 kb)