

Snake avoidance for dogs

Be mindful of where you walk your dog

Keep your dog away or under control near potential snake shelters and hang-outs. These can be rocks, logs, hollow trees, long grass, rabbit and wombat hollows, culverts, rubbish piles, etc. Be extra cautious anywhere near waterways. If you take your dog for a swim seek out areas with flat and open ground, that does not offer any hiding spots for snakes. For example, Tiger snakes prefer wet areas and enjoy eating frogs, while Brown snakes prefer drier environments and are attracted by mice and lizards.

Walk in the morning

Walk your dog in the morning, rather than in the afternoon. Snakes need to warm up in after the cooler night, so they are more sluggish. However, stepping on them or confronting them even at this time is still not advisable and once we get the hotter nights, care must be taken at all times.

Walk your dog on pathways or roads for this time of the year or in mowed or grazed paddocks where you have a good view of the ground ahead. An added bonus to this is that you will also prevent getting grass seeds in your dogs ears and coat.

Don't provide snake habitat near your home

Avoid providing shelter or food for snakes. Keep the areas surrounding your home clear and clutter free, this will discourage snakes from taking up residence. Refer to Wildcare Information Sheet – Living with Snakes.

Watch out around the chook yard

In the warmer month keep your dog close to you when you go to the chook yard or out-buildings. Snakes love chook yards and out-buildings on farms. Chickens, or more specifically – chicken feed, attract rats and mice, providing the snake with some tempting meals. Feed your chooks just as much as they will eat in about 10 minutes and avoid having scraps lying around to keep your mouse and rat population under strict control.

Don't allow your dog to harass reptiles

Dogs frequently get bitten because they harass or attack a snake. Do not allow dogs to chase and harm lizards, skinks or turtles. One thing will lead to another. If your dog is allowed to harass and kill lizards and skinks, he will also attack and try to kill snakes.

Don't harm reptiles yourself

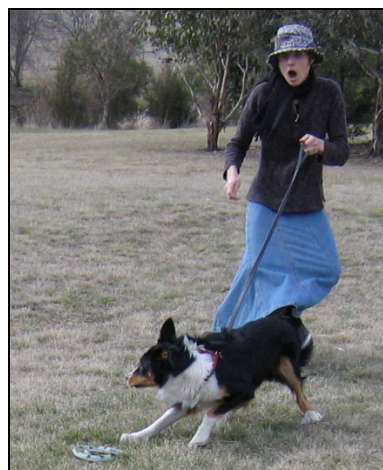
If your dog see you kill a snake, you will increase the chances greatly that he will take on the next snake by himself, because dogs can learn through observation, like many other animals.

Practice snake avoidance

Should you meet a snake with your dog, take your dog away as quickly as possible. You want him to learn that snakes are something that should be avoided. Costs will be high if he gets bitten and ends up at the vet. You can practice snake avoidance with your dog - see the example with Nicola and Caplin below.



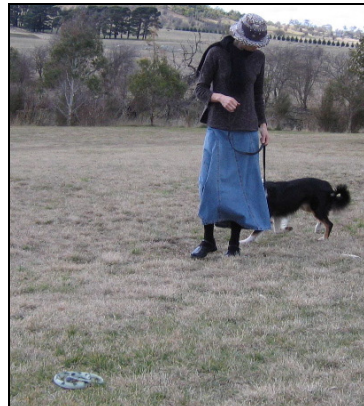
Step 1 - Caplin finds a snake



Step 2 - Nicola pretends to be very frightened



Step 3 - Nicola reassures Caplin



Step 4 - Caplin now will not go near the snake

If we move around our environment with care, understanding and respect we can reduce the chances of having a confrontation with one of our scaly friends.

Heike Hahner is a dog trainer and a dog behaviour consultant. If you have any further queries about how to teach your dog to avoid snakes call:

CANINE COMMUNICATIONS
Dog Training & Behaviour Consulting
Heike Hahner
hhahner@bigpond.com
Phone: 02 4842 7143