

Venomous Snake Intervention (Snake Catching) Policy

What guides this Policy?

All reptiles native to South Australia are protected under the provisions of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (the Act) and cannot be taken from the wild or kept without the appropriate permit(s) issued by the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR).

The Act does allow for anyone to kill a venomous snake (Elapidae) which is posing a potential risk to people.

South Australia is home to some of the most venomous snakes in the world and many live close to human settlements. It is unusual for snakes to come into conflict with people but occasionally their presence can be a cause for concern. Snakes tend to be inconspicuous by nature. They will try and avoid confrontation with a human by either moving away and hiding, or lying still until the person has moved away. However, like most wild animals, snakes will defend themselves if they are startled or feel threatened.

Most snake bites happen when people are trying to catch or kill a snake. Authorised snake catchers (permit holders) can assist the community to safely avoid potentially dangerous encounters with venomous snakes.

National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972

- Section 54(2) of the Act states that "It is lawful for any person without any permit or other authority under this Act, to kill any poisonous¹ reptile that –
 - (a) has attacked, is attacking or is likely to attack, any person; or
 - (b) is in dangerous proximity to any person; or
 - (c) is, or has been, in such proximity to a person as to cause reasonable anxiety to that person.
- Authority to capture reptiles in conflict is given under Section 53(1)(d) of the Act.
- Authority to release reptiles captured under this policy is given under Section 55 of the Act.
Authority to keep and trade in protected reptiles taken under this policy is given under Section 58(1) of Act.

¹ In this context 'poisonous' means 'venomous'.

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Conditions relating to the keeping and trading in native fauna and keeping of records are applied under the *National Parks and Wildlife (Wildlife) Regulation 2001*.

What is the scope of this Policy?

This Policy applies to all DEWNR staff in the administration of matters on behalf of the SA Government, Minister and Department relating to the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (the Act); specifically the capturing, translocating or taking into captivity of venomous snakes which have attacked, are likely to attack, are in a dangerous proximity to, or are causing reasonable anxiety to any person.

Who is responsible for what?

Chief Executive: Approval of this Policy.

Group Executive Director Strategy and Advice: Approves the accompanying Procedure.

Executive Director Conservation and Land Management: The periodical review of this policy.

Fauna Permit Unit: Granting permits involving native animals.

What do I need to know?

DEWNR staff, who have not undertaken a recognised training course in venomous snake handling must not, under any circumstances, handle any venomous snakes. Any trained DEWNR staff undertaking any activities involving snakes must comply with the DEWNR Safe Work Practice – Outdoor Activity: Snake Handling (Venomous and Non-Venomous).

DEWNR will only issue snake catching permits to persons who meet required criteria.

DEWNR will issue permits to suitably qualified persons to achieve one or more of the following objectives:-

- Provision of a service for the safe removal of snakes causing a nuisance or danger to any person,
- Provision of a service to educate the public about venomous snakes and how to live with them,
- Provision for management of risks to ensure that the integrity of wild populations, natural systems and ecological communities are maintained, or
- Use of snakes as a biological resource within principles of ecologically sustainable development.

DEWNR will issue permits to mining or development companies for the safe relocation of reptiles that are posing a danger to or are in danger from, tools, equipment, vehicles, humans, chemicals etc.

If a snake is causing anxiety or is in dangerous proximity to any person, a snake catcher may capture the snake and relocate and release or euthanise the snake. In the case of relocate and release, snake catchers are required to

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release healthy, uninjured snakes within 24 hours, into suitable habitat, as close to the point of capture as practical (preferably within 2kms), away from occupied buildings, (homes, offices, factories, schools, etc.). Animals may be euthanised on animal welfare grounds (e.g. if it is injured) or if there is no appropriate release site available.

Snake catchers may also take venomous snakes from the wild (subject to being issued a take from the wild permit) for the purpose of medical use e.g. to manufacture venom production and snake blood serum.

Non-endemic (exotic) snakes

- Any non-endemic venomous snake (a snake which is not native to South Australia) found in the wild must not be released back into the wild.
- Any sightings must be reported to either a regional natural resources centre, NRM Biosecurity or the Pest Alert Hotline (refer to section on **Where do I get more information**). If practical, the animal should be captured and a determination will be made whether it will be euthanised or kept in captivity by an approved institution.

Permit Application Fee

A regulated application fee, as per section 53(1)(d) of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* will apply to all applications for a Snake Catchers Permit.

Where do I get more information?

- DEWNR: Keeping Venomous Snakes Policy
- DEWNR: Snake Safety Fact Sheet: http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/managing-natural-resources/Plants_Animals/Living_with_wildlife/Snakes
- DEWNR Fauna Permit Unit: telephone (08) 8124 4930 or email: dewnrfaunapermitsunit@sa.gov.au
- Natural Resources regions: <http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/home>
- NRM Biosecurity: telephone: (08) 8303 9620 email: nrmbiosecurity@sa.gov.au
- National Pest Alert Hotline: telephone 1800 084 881 (24 hour hotline)
- DEWNR Safe Work Practice – Outdoor Activity: Snake Handling (Venomous and Non-Venomous)
- DFW Safe Work Practice – Emergency Management: Snakes and Snake Bite Procedure.
- For snake catching services look under 'snake' in the Yellow Pages website, www.yellowpages.com.au

Tim Goodes

A/CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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