

# DEWNR PROCEDURE



Government of South Australia  
Department of Environment,  
Water and Natural Resources

Ref: MIGD 0168220

## Venomous Snake Intervention (Snake Catching) Procedure

### What guides this Procedure?

- DEWNR Venomous Snake Intervention (Snake Catching) Policy.
- DEWNR Take from the Wild Policy, Procedures and Standards.
- *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* Sections 54(s0), 53(1)(d) and 58(1).
- *National Parks and Wildlife Act Regulations 2001*.

All snakes native to South Australia (venomous and non-venomous) are protected and cannot be taken from the wild or kept without the appropriate permit(s) issued by the DEWNR (snake catchers permit).

### What is the scope of this Procedure?

This Procedure applies to all Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (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 (Elapidae) snakes which have attacked, are likely to attack, are in a dangerous proximity to, or are causing reasonable anxiety to any person.

### What is the context of this Procedure?

A permit system implemented under the provisions of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* enables intervention with venomous snakes (capture, relocate or kill) in order to lessen the potential risks to people, whilst recognising that these reptiles are an integral part of the natural environment and play an important role in wildlife ecosystems.

It can be difficult for some people to distinguish a venomous snake from other reptiles which are essentially harmless, as there is significant variation in colours or body markings within many species. Occasionally snake catchers may also be asked to intervene with other species of reptiles (e.g. pythons or large lizards in residential areas or legless lizards which are sometimes confused for snakes). Three species of pythons are represented in South Australia, these are not generally considered dangerous (unless they are very large) but they can inflict painful bites so should only be handled by someone with experience in handling snakes. These reptiles should be released as soon possible, at a time that minimises stress and into suitable natural habitat.

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## Who is responsible for what?

**Chief Executive:** Approval of the Policy that is related to this Procedure.

**Group Executive Strategy and Advice:** Approval of this Procedure.

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

**Fauna Permit Unit:** Granting permits involving the keeping of native animals.

## What steps do I need to take to comply?

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's Fauna Permit Unit will issue permits to catch venomous snakes to applicants to meet the required criteria.

## What steps do members of the public need to take to comply with this procedure?

### Applications for a snake catcher's permit:

- applicants must address the pre-requisites for obtaining a permit,
- an assessment of the person's experience and training will be undertaken at the time that the person applies for a Snake Catchers Permit.

### When making an assessment whether or not to issue a snake catcher's permit DEWNR will take some or all of the following requirements into consideration, that the applicant:

- holds, or has a held, a Class 3 (specialist) Keep and Sell Permit with a level 2 or 3 venomous snake endorsement (or equivalent in other jurisdictions) and/or can demonstrate significant experience in capturing and handling venomous snakes (e.g. have actively assisted in at least 10 snake catching call outs over a period of not more than 12 months),
- can provide documentation showing that they have completed a recognised snake handling training course,
- has arrangements in place for the secure housing and transportation of venomous snakes,
- can provide:
  - a copy of their accreditation for completing a first aid course, issued by an approved first aid training provider. The first aid course must have included a training component on treating snake bite,and/or
  - evidence of their competency certified by a medical practitioner who specialises in this field.

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A person who is not employed by a snake catching business but is employed or contracted by a company, and undertakes wildlife management as part of their duties, is able to obtain a snake catchers permit if they:

- can provide a letter from their employer stating the nature of their duties, their requirement to catch and handle snakes as part of those duties and also describing the boundary limits of the work site/s involved.
- can provide documentation showing that they have completed a recognised snake handling training course,
- has arrangements in place for the secure transport and temporary housing of venomous snakes
- can provide a copy of their accreditation for completing a first aid course that was issued by an approved first aid training provider (and/or certified medical practitioner who specialises in this field). The first aid course must have included a component on treating snake bites,

## Public Liability Insurance

A significant level of expertise/knowledge is required to catch venomous snakes. Permit holders must fully understand the risks and take steps to instigate all reasonable measures to mitigate those risks to themselves and others. DEWNR encourages all permit holders to hold current Public Liability Insurance which covers their snake catching activities for personal injury to another person (other than employees) or damage to property owned or controlled by someone else. DEWNR may ask permit applicants to provide a certificate of currency for Public Liability Insurance.

DEWNR does not have guidelines or standards on how to be a snake catcher. However the following sections may be provided to permit holders by the Department to guide their actions.

## Capture and release of snakes

Snake catchers should use catching and handling methods and equipment in a manner which minimises the risk of injury to the snake and the risk of bite to the handler.

Any net traps must be set or used so as to minimise a) any harm to a trapped animal and b) the risk of catching off-target species. Any traps used must be checked frequently. As soon as is reasonably possible after a snake is observed to be trapped or entangled in a trap, the animal must be removed.

Snake catchers are required to 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.

## Transport of venomous snakes

Snakes must be transported in a manner which minimises the risk of injury to the snake or risk of escape, this includes:

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- Snakes and/or their containers must not be left in direct sunlight.
- To avoid death from desiccation in warm weather, calico bags should regularly dampened or placed in an insulated container.
- Venomous snakes must be housed individually.
- Snakes should be placed in an appropriate calico bag or container that prevents the escape or physical injury.
- Bags must be checked (stitching, ties etc) prior to use.
- Always double tie calico bags and double bag the snake (or singled bagged and placed in a secure container).
- Anyone who has not undertaken a recognised course in venomous snake handling must not, under any circumstances, handle snakes and must be prevented from coming into direct contact with bags holding venomous snakes.
- Bags are to be placed into a secure container. Clearly label both the bag and container with an appropriate warning (e.g. DANGER – VENOMOUS SNAKE).

## **Quarantine and management of biosecurity risks for snakes to be released back into the wild.**

- Any equipment, transport containers etc. that comes into direct contact with snakes is to be thoroughly cleaned between uses or its use restricted to avoid cross contamination,
- Snakes must be considered to be in good health (look and behave normally and appear uninjured) prior to translocation and release.

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## Other relevant documents

- DEWNR: Keeping Venomous Snakes Policy
- DEWNR: Snake Safety Fact Sheet:  
[www.environment.sa.gov.au/managing-natural-resources/Plants Animals/Living with wildlife/Snakes](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/managing-natural-resources/Plants_Animals/Living_with_wildlife/Snakes)
- 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](http://www.yellowpages.com.au)

## Contact

DEWNR Fauna Permit Unit, telephone (08) 8124 4930 or email: [dewnrfaunapermitsunit@sa.gov.au](mailto:dewnrfaunapermitsunit@sa.gov.au)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tim Goodes'.

Tim Goodes

GROUP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Strategy and Advice

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